

Trends

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IN HIGHER EDUCATION

DEMOGRAPHICS | ECONOMICS | ENVIRONMENT | GLOBAL EDUCATION | LEARNING | POLITICS | TECHNOLOGY

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DEMOGRAPHICS

Observation

The mental health of students attending college is increasingly becoming a cause for concern, in both the US and Canada (*Canwest News Service*, March 26, 2008, www.canada.com; *American College Health Association—National College Health Assessment: Reference Group Executive Summary Fall 2007*, Baltimore: American College Health Association (2008)).

- Campus shootings appear to be simply the most visible sign of a population that is reporting more depression, anxiety, and major psychological disorders. The rate of students reporting ever being diagnosed with depression has increased from 10 percent in spring of 2000 to 16 percent in spring of 2005 (*American College Health Association—National College Health Assessment*, www.acha-ncha.org/pubs_rpts.html#fa06).
- Over 90 percent of campus counseling center directors report that the recent trend toward greater numbers of students with severe psychological problems continues to be true on their campuses, with 8.5 percent of enrolled students seeking counseling in 2007 (*National Survey of Counseling Center Directors 2007*, The International Association of Counseling Services, Inc., Monograph Series Number 8Q).

Our Thoughts

The number of students who seek and need mental health services is only likely to rise. Increased awareness and decreased stigmatization for treatment contribute to this trend, but don't explain it all. How can campuses provide appropriate help? (*Inside Higher Ed*, July 11, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/views/2008/07/11/broad).

- The ratio of counselors to students is 1 to 1,969. While smaller schools have better ratios, there are clearly not enough counselors to address the needs of students. (*National Survey of Counseling Center Directors 2007*, The International Association of Counseling Services, Inc., Monograph Series Number 8Q).
- Ironically, the passage of the new GI bill is only likely to exacerbate the problem as veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan return to college with an increased likelihood of stress-related disorders and physical disabilities (*Inside HigherEd*, July 10, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/07/10/veterans).
- A poll conducted in March 2008 of 2,253 undergraduates at four-year institutions indicated that 80 percent of students said they felt stressed. They reported that 16 percent of their friends had talked about suicide and 11 percent had made an attempt. Over a quarter of the respondents had considered talking to a mental health professional since starting school (mtvU-Associated Press College Survey, March 2008, conducted by Edison Media Research, www.edisonresearch.com).

DEMOGRAPHICS

Observation

Institutional financial aid has become a vital link to recruitment and retention as public funding for higher education, including federal grants, cannot keep pace with costs, particularly for first-generation students (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 2, 2008, www.chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i34/34b00301.htm).

- During the 2005-2006 academic year, approximately 75 percent of the 2.7 million full-time, first time degree/certificate seeking undergraduates received financial aid (*The Condition of Education 2008*, www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008173.pdf).



- As many as 3.2 million college-ready students will forgo a bachelor's degree this decade because of financial barriers (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 1, 2008, www.chronicle.com/article/4419/more-low-income-students-will-miss-out-on-college-over-next-decade?utm_source=at&utm_medium=en).
- Student loans play an increasing role in financing higher education, with approximately 46 percent of students receiving loans in the 2005-2006 academic year (*The Condition of Education 2008*, www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008173.pdf).

Our Thoughts

The realities of paying for a college education are starker than ever. The costs of transportation, books, housing, and meals, along with tuition and fees, are pricing even more students out of a full-time education.

- Financial aid packages contain more loans and fewer grant dollars. Students can't earn enough, even when working year-round, to continue to support their education without going into debt. The College Board reported that the percentage of students who had borrowed as much as they could rose from 57 percent to 73 percent between 1997 and 2007 (*Inside Higher Education*, www.insidehighered.com/views/2008/07/14/carey).
- Minority and first-generation students are hit hardest when trying to navigate the financial aid system, even the brightest. A recent study of Chicago Public School students indicated that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a distinct barrier to many students. Those who manage to complete it are 50 percent more likely to enroll (*The Christian Science Monitor*, www.csmonitor.com/2008/0319/p02s03-usgn.htm).
- Even if they manage to get into college, chances of underrepresented minorities graduating are only 45 percent, compared with the overall graduation rate of 53 percent. The 10-year default rate on loans for low-income students who borrow more than \$15,000 is more than 20 percent (*RedOrbit News*, www.redorbit.com/news/display?id=1398149; *Inside Higher Education*, www.insidehighered.com/views/2008/07/14/carey).
- We fear that many of the gains in higher education access are close to being lost. The ability to receive a return on an individual investment is becoming so delayed and public financing, other than loans, is so scarce that the economic effects of fewer graduates will be felt for many years.

ECONOMICS

Observation

Global economic indicators could hardly be more dire and economists are forecasting more of the same, some say for as long as two years (*Reed Construction Data News*, January 10, 2008; *The Globe and Mail*, April 21, 2008, www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080421; *China Daily*, June 26, 2008; *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2008/07/16/business/16fed.html).

- The jobless rate rose by 1 percent over the past year, standing at 5.5 percent in May. Planned layoffs in April jumped 68 percent in April from March, the highest increase since September 2006 (*Bureau of Labor Statistics News*, June 6, 2008; *Reuters*, www.msnbc.msn.com/id/244030901/).
- US citizens are traveling less by air in significant numbers, costing the economy at least \$26.5 billion in 2007 in business related travel (*The New Republic*, August 27, 2008, www.tnr.com/politics/story.html?id=78260c55-a850-478f-9ffd-b8023fd89459&k=56534; *Herman Trend Alert*, www.hermangroup.com/alert/archive_6-18-2008.html).
- Construction materials' cost increased at a 19 percent annual rate in the first five months of the year (*Reed Construction Data News*, July 8, 2008).
- Oil topped the inflation-adjusted record set in 1980 in March of this year. The US dollar has hit a new low against the Euro and stocks continue to tumble (*The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2008/07/16/business/worldbusiness/16markets.html?ref=business).

Our Thoughts

There are more wild cards in play than normal, so institutions that have done scenario planning may wish to revisit their assumptions about enrollment. Costs are rising faster than adjustments can be made.

- Colleges are already cutting back on what students are offered in the dining room to reduce the cost of food, but meal plans will certainly cost more (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, www.chronicle.com/daily/2008/05/2736n.htm; *Mexia Daily News*, www.mexiadailynews.com/variety/local_story_128102301.htm).
- Private colleges with small endowments and public institutions reliant on state or local funding and federal grants are likely to be hit the hardest, but no one will escape (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, www.chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i29/29a01701.htm).

- The cost of oil affects nearly everything on a campus, including the students who can afford to come. The mix of educational offerings could truly change when oil hits \$250 a barrel. National publics may become more regional, community colleges will grow in their role as “feeder schools,” online learning can only increase in acceptability, and it’s most likely that fewer students will be seen on every campus (*The New York Times, TimesDigest*, July 11, 2008, p 6; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, www.chronicle.com/free/200807/3704n.htm).

ECONOMICS

Observation

The relationships between campuses and communities are likely to grow stronger on a number of counts due to these economic shifts. Joint projects to save costs on energy are probably among the first we’ll see (*Change Magazine*, March/April 2008, “The Economic Impact of Colleges and Universities”, www.carnegiefoundation.org/change/).

- The University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh is part of a study at four Wisconsin campuses to determine how they can become independent from fossil fuels and transfer those lessons to the city of Oshkosh (*The Oshkosh Northwestern*, April 23, 2008, www.thenorthwestern.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080423.htm).
- Community colleges are eliminating Friday classes or consolidating schedules to help commuter students save on the cost of gas (*USAToday*, May 28, 2008, www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-05-28-college-gas_N.htm).
- Columbia University is providing \$21 million in educational and other services to residents of its Morningside Heights neighborhood (*The New York Daily News*, www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/2008/07/16/2008-07-16_columbia_university_to_spend_21m_on_neig.html).
- Like many states, Michigan’s 15 public universities are collaborating to create new businesses and support entrepreneurial education and internship programs (*The Detroit Free Press*, July 16, 2008, www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID+/20080716/BUSINESS06/807160403).

Our Thoughts

The changed landscape for energy costs is likely to continue driving campuses to find ways to be more sustainable in many areas.

- The environmental movement for buying locally will be reinforced by the reduced cost of transport, as well as potentially safer food supplies. How can campuses support the growth in local sources of food and other commodities (*Mineral Wells Index*, May 8, 2008, www.mineralwellsindex.com/statenews/)?
- Power production can move locally, too. Unused land is being considered for solar and wind energy generation. The American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment seeks carbon neutrality. The cost of oil may give all presidents the incentive to sign it (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, www.chronicle.com/daily/2008/07/3746n.htm; *Business Wire*, April 16, 2008, www.foxbusiness.com/article/point-loma-nazarene-university; *The Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 2008, www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-ap-nd-workingwithwind,0,3013745.story; *The Boston Globe*, February 24, 2008, www.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2008/02/24/).
- Campuses may find that sustainability and partnerships with their communities are essential for the economic health of the institution. We expect an increase in shared facilities, perhaps purchasing cooperatives, and combined transit plans (*Metro Magazine*, June 30, 2008; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, www.chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i36/36a00101.htm).

ENVIRONMENT

Observation

Being ‘green’ has become competitive as colleges are ranked on a variety of sustainable practices, including all three legs of the stool—economic, environment, and social equity (*Forbes Magazine*, May 2, 2008, www.forbes.com/2008/05/02/).

- The Princeton Review will issue ‘green’ ratings in its upcoming college guide, along with its ratings of student quality of life. Peterson’s is expected to follow suit (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 22, 2008, www.chronicle.com/daily/2008/04/2582n.htm).
- The Sustainable Endowments Institute recently published a review of the endowments of 200 colleges in relationship to their support of sustainable practices (*College Sustainability Report Card 2007*).
- The American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) now has signatories in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The leaders of the 526 signatories represent 25 percent of the total student population in the US (www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org).

Our Thoughts

Recruiting students may take a new turn as 13.5 percent now select a school based on sustainability concerns (The College of William and Mary, trobe.people.wm.edu/press%20release%20campus%20greening.pdf).

- A recent Web survey indicates that institutions that emphasize sustainable practices as a priority mission, and show it in their actions, have students that are more likely to take energy saving actions (The College of William and Mary, trobe.people.wm.edu/press%20release%20campus%20greening.pdf).
- The same survey indicates that 85 percent of the respondents are willing to pay \$20 more per month to live in a sustainable residence.
- As colleges record the energy savings from students' actions, we predict increased support for tying conservation to integrated sustainability planning. Conservation—changing behavior—as an energy strategy faded from view in the 1980s, but students overwhelmingly agree (70) percent that “the Earth’s temperature changes are driven by human beings” (The College of William and Mary, trobe.people.wm.edu/press%20release%20campus%20greening.pdf).

ENVIRONMENT

Observation

Businesses are taking climate change seriously, in some very public ways (*Knowledge@Wharton*, April 30, 2008, “‘No Place to Hide’: The Pressure on Companies to Address Global Warming Heats Up”, knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=1952).

- Peony Capital Ltd., a €400 million Beijing-based carbon trading fund is backed by Microsoft founder, Bill Gates. A report from the World Bank estimated that \$11.8 billion had been invested in 58 carbon funds as of March 2007, compared with \$4.6 billion in 40 funds as of May 2006 (*Knowledge@Wharton*, February 27, 2008, www.knowledgeatwharton.com.cn/index.cfm?fa=viewArticle&articleID=1791).
- Canada’s Environmental Minister announced new rules to regulate 17 key industrial sectors, including coal-fired plants and oil sands projects. The rules will require all firms to reduce by 18 percent their carbon emissions by 2010 and 2 percent per year thereafter until 2020 (*The Globe and Mail*, March 10, 2008, “Tough New Green Plan Targets Oil Sands”, www.theglobeandmail.com).
- ClimateCounts.org conducted a second review of 56 major corporations and their efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. The average company improved 22 percent from the 2007 survey with 84 percent of those surveyed reporting some actions addressing climate change (“Climate Counting More with Consumer Companies”, www.climatecounts.org).
- A McKinsey Global Survey reported similar findings with 60 percent of the global executives now regarding climate change as strategically important, and a majority considering it important to product development, investment planning, and brand management (*McKinsey Quarterly*, December 2007, “How companies think about climate change”).

Our Thoughts

Technology transfer needs to go back to colleges and universities, not just from institutions to businesses, if everyone is to make the advances needed to halt global warming.

- A number of studies are predicting that the solar power industry could become competitive within the next decade and that by 2025 it could provide 10 percent of US power generation. Higher education must help make this happen (*The McKinsey Quarterly*, June 2008; *Reuters*, www.uk.reuters.com/articlePrint?articleId=UKN1738063420080617).
- Biodiesel’s basic ingredient is a staple on campuses, processed fryer oil. Unfortunately, it’s become a target for thieves, so campuses now have to worry about storage and use of their fryer grease (*The New York Times*, May 30, 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/05/30/us/30grease.html).
- The Pew Center on Global Climate Change’s Business Environmental Leadership Council was created for companies that set specific targets for reducing carbon emissions and that publicly endorse the call for mandatory legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Perhaps Pew should consider working with the ACUPCC to ensure a united front between business and higher education on these issues? (*Knowledge@Wharton*, environment.wharton.upenn.edu/).

Observation

The effects of the Patriot Act continue to be felt in US higher education institutions through reduced numbers of global applicants. Meanwhile, the European Higher Education Area is moving nearer to reality and it represents a model being considered by many other nations (*The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 13, 2008, seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/358931_grads14.html; *European University Association*, March 21, 2008, EUA Newsletter 6).

- Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom are also experiencing downturns in foreign enrollments (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 1, 2008, www.chronicle.com/news/article/4417/Germanys-share-of-foreign-student-market-begins-to-stagnate?utm_source+at&utm_medium=en; *The Age*, April 29, 2008, www.news.theage.com.au/university-applications-decline/20080429; *University World News*, April 20, 2008, www.universityworldnews.com).
- The US Department of Homeland Security proposed a fee increase to \$200 for students to help fund costs for the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) that tracks students once they enter the US (*Inside Higher Education*, April 22, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/04/22/qt).
- Canada announced it will make available open work permits for international students who graduate from eligible postsecondary programs (Minister's Office, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, April 21, 2008, www.news.gc.ca/web/view/en/index.jsp?articleid=393209&categoryid=16).
- Germany hosted the first meeting of Asian and European education ministers to create closer links between their education and labor markets (*University World News*, May 25, 2008, www.universityworldnews.com).

Our Thoughts

Higher education is seen as a major economic driver and an economic asset throughout the world and the US may see its position eroding as the most trusted supplier.

- Europe is creating the model for world higher education through the Bologna Process with its clear indications of what paths through higher education look like and the skill and knowledge levels students need to obtain a degree. When it comes to fruition in 2010 it's likely to change how students view tertiary education options (*University World News*, June 1, 2008, www.universityworldnews.com).
- While the US government has promised to make SEVIS easier to use with those additional funds, the 9,000 attendees at the NAFSA: Association of International Education were highly skeptical that it would help, or that they would receive notice of technical changes in time to prepare for them (*Inside Higher Education*, May 30, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/05/30/nafsa).
- India and China are expanding their ability to offer access to postsecondary education at home and they are not going to stop building anytime soon. China now allows private colleges to 'make a reasonable profit' and throughout the world, for-profit education is expanding (*Inside Higher Education*, March 19, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/03/19/private; *University World News*, May 25, 2008, www.universityworldnews.com; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Volume 49, Issue 23, Page A4).

Observation

Online education has long been portrayed as the key to access for developing countries. While everyone wants to play—existing tertiary institutions and new for-profits—the ability to enter markets may be more constrained than many assume.

- A review of technology-enhanced learning in developing nations indicates that the potential of online education has yet to be realized due to inconsistently available infrastructure, larger problems of poverty and social instability, and the inability to incorporate necessary cultural changes (*International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, February 2008, Volume 9, Number 1, pp 8-12).
- While many wish to offer online courses in China, few US institutions are ready to patiently work their way through the ministerial approval process. The Southern New Hampshire University took over two years to gain approval for online MBA courses (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 4, 2008, www.chronicle.com/free/2008/04/2369n.htm).

Our Thoughts

Students who already have access to on-campus or in-person educational opportunities are the ones most likely to be able to use online education. They have computers, existing infrastructure, and know the culture of formal education.

- The cost of gasoline is moving US students to online courses, even though they prefer face-to-face. Rural students are most in need of this option, but Internet access isn't always there (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 18, 2008, www.chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i45/45a02001.htm).
- It's hard to know if even portable, hand-cranked, laptops can create access. Where will children who have to beg to survive find the time and energy to engage in educational experiences? It may be good public relations to create access points in developing countries, but just being able to get a computer is not going to change anything in many places.
- Open Universities Australia (OUA), a consortium of seven shareholder universities, has taken a different approach to online degrees—they're piloting their efficacy before offering them widely. Chinese students aren't allowed into an online course leading to a degree unless they score high enough on an English assessment. If OUA's pilot is successful, Chinese students will have another option for obtaining a degree from a land-based university (*University World News*, May 11, 2008, www.universityworldnews.com).

LEARNING

Observation

There is increasing public skepticism about the quality of the US K-12 public education system and its ability to prepare students adequately for either employers or postsecondary institutions. The percentage of 25- to 29-year-olds with high school diplomas has not moved in 20 years (*Teachers College Record*, March 6, 2008, www.tcrecord.org/PrintContent.asp?ContentID=15079; *USA Today*, February 26, 2008, www.usatoday.com/news/education/2008-02-26-dummy-fatigue_N.htm).

- Over the past twenty years, the centerpiece of improvement for K-12 education has been high-stakes assessments, particularly for high school diplomas. Research now shows that high-school exit exams do not improve achievement in reading or mathematics (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 13, 2008, www.chronicle.com/daily/2008/05/2820n.htm).
- Surveys also indicate that there is cause for concern about areas that are not always tested, such as science. A Harris Interactive poll of US adults in late 2007 found that 96 percent could not name a single living scientist, 44 percent graded the quality of US science education as "C" or lower (*T•H•E Journal*, March 2008, www.thejournal.com/theprintarticle?id=22314).
- Among high school students who graduated in the bottom 40 percent of their classes, whose first postsecondary matriculation was to four-year institutions, two-thirds had not graduated eight and a half years later (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 2, 2008, v 54, n 34, p B17).

Our Thoughts

No Child Left Behind is up for reauthorization and so far most of what it's done is label thousands of schools as failing and slowed growth in reading and math scores (*American Educational Research Association*, July 30, 2007, www.aera.net/newsmedia/Default.aspx?menu_id=60&id=3444). Are there any solutions that are scalable or are we willing to again leave higher education to an elite?

- A British study has confirmed that student engagement and achievement increase as K-12 class sizes fall to 20 or fewer students. The lowest-achieving students benefited the most (*Education Week*, March 25, 2008, www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/03/25).
- First-year college students are significantly less likely to return for sophomore year if 'gatekeeper' courses (ones with 90 or more enrollees) are taught by part-time instructors. In community colleges the effect was even stronger (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 27, 2008, www.chronicle.com/daily/2008/03/2276n.htm).
- We know what investments will make a difference, for college, workforce, and citizenship. What can postsecondary institutions contribute to create a system that makes change happen?

Observation

The clash between digital natives and immigrants continues as Facebook study groups and Internet access in law classes are challenged (*The Globe and Mail*, March 12, 2008, www.theglobeandmail.com; *Inside Higher Ed*, April 18, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/04/18/laptops).

- A significant majority (88 percent) of university graduates know how to use spreadsheet software, but only 65 percent use it as part of their job. Of the same group, 51 percent said they had actively looked for creative ways to use technology at work, but only 12 percent had received any formal training at work (*ZDNet.co.uk*, March 9, 2008, news.zdnet.co.uk/itmanagement/0,1000000308,39359204,00.htm).
- A 2007 Sloan Foundation survey of 2,500 colleges and universities found a 9.7 percent online enrollment growth, compared to 1.5 percent for the overall higher education student population. A survey of community college distance education administrators found that 70 percent felt that their colleges do not offer enough courses to meet demand (*Instructional Technology Council*, 2007 Distance Education Survey Results, www.itcnetwork.org).
- There are more than 100 virtual worlds designed for the under-18 age group (*Virtual Worlds Management*, April 11, 2008, www.typepad.com/t/trackback/2285836/28015492). Ohio University has created a Second Life campus that hosts study abroad students (*The Christian Science Monitor*, July 2, 2008, features.csmonitor.com/innovation/2008/07/02/study-abroad-through-second-life/).

Our Thoughts

The design of learning spaces can provide access to the digital natives' preferred technology and foster changes in faculty/student interactions. Focusing on physical design could offer the middle-ground for helping instructors make better use of technology for learning (*Summary Report of a Survey of Learning Space Design in Higher Education*, July 23, 2008, www.scup.org/annualconf/43/pdf/learningspacedesign_print.pdf).

- A recent meta-analysis of 650 studies strongly supports the pairing of verbal/text with visual/spatial in instruction to boost learning, particularly if teachers do not overload either system with input (*eSchool News*, March 26, 2008, www.eschoolnews.com/news/i=53243).
- A recent SCUP/Herman Miller survey of learning space design indicated that campuses see the adaptability of spaces and their ability to facilitate interactions as the most important aspects of design. While it may be most important, the healthfulness of learning spaces was where campuses saw themselves as performing best (*Summary Report of a Survey of Learning Space Design in Higher Education*, July 23, 2008, www.scup.org/annualconf/43/pdf/learningspacedesign_print.pdf).
- Likewise, while most respondents said that people who use learning spaces should have the largest role in design, in fact it's the people who manage the spaces who are most likely to have the largest role on campuses (*Summary Report of a Survey of Learning Space Design in Higher Education*, July 23, 2008, www.scup.org/annualconf/43/pdf/learningspacedesign_print.pdf).

Observation

After ten years the US Higher Education Act (HEA) has finally been renewed. Accreditation stayed largely unchanged (*Inside Higher Ed*, August 15, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/08/15/qt). Financial aid changes occurred last year in a special bill, the College Cost Reduction Act of 2007 (*Education Week*, April 14, 2008, www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/04/16/33hea.h27.html).

- The Spellings Commission appears to have lost on the issue of accountability and the reform of accreditation, but there are still plenty of constituencies backing change (*Education Week*, March 12, 2008, www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/03/12/27nga_ep.h27.html).
- An area that clearly needs to be addressed in accreditation is the increasing use of part-time and contingent faculty, particularly given the research on the effects of adjuncts on first-year students (*American Association of University Professors*, "Looking the Other Way? Accreditation Standards and Part-time Faculty," 2008, www.aaup.org/AAUP/comm/rep/accredpt.htm).
- Perhaps equally important, and largely absent from the bill, is a means of addressing the growing disagreement about what a specific degree means. A "bachelor's degree" may be obtained from institutions that are accredited, unaccredited, or diploma mills (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 14, 2008, www.chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i27/27a03601.htm).

Our Thoughts

Accrediting agencies have made changes over the years to better reflect institutional outcomes, instead of just their inputs. However, they'll need to go further and faster if they are to keep up with the quality efforts being undertaken in Europe (*Institute for Higher Education Policy*, May 2008, Adelman, C., www.ihep.org/Research/GlobalPerformance.cfm).

- The Bologna Process has created an initial set of student learning outcomes (qualification frameworks) that can be related to credits and curriculum reform. In an effort to make educational attainment as transparent as their economies, 46 European countries are giving meaning to what a student can do upon degree attainment (*Institute for Higher Education Policy*, May 2008, Adelman, C., www.ihep.org/Research/GlobalPerformance.cfm). US accreditation efforts for undergraduate education aren't even close.
- The efforts of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to create an international test of higher education learning have been largely dismissed by the US Department of Education, in spite of the Spellings Commission's push for standardized assessments of college students (*Inside Higher Ed*, April 21, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/04/21.oecd).
- Countries outside of Europe are looking to adopt the Bologna frameworks and as they do, US accrediting agencies may have no choice but to judge US institutions on how well their students meet these quality standards.

POLITICS

Observation

Higher education is facing more challenges than ever as federal and state legislators push accountability, even as they provide fewer public funds. Much is likely to stay unclear until after the election, but some issues will remain.

- A Minnesota case on property tax exemption found that unless a charity (not-for-profit) gave away assets, it was subject to payment of taxes (*The New York Times*, May 26, 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/05/26/us/26tax.html).
- At a meeting of the American Bar Association's Section on Taxation's Exempt Organizations Committee, Congressional aides and Internal Revenue Service officials made it clear that examination of the finances of colleges and universities is not going away soon (*Inside Higher Ed*, May 12, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/05/12/endow).
- Additional expenses for stopping illegal downloading are also likely on their way (*Chicago Tribune*, March 17, 2008, www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-schools-piracy-mar17,0,2798570.story).

Our Thoughts

Few of the initiatives coming forward are likely to come with more funding, although some may. How higher education will pay for the likely legislative mandates is as uncertain as is general funding for many institutions.

- While Congress debates whether to pay for improved security on campuses following the shootings of the last two years, institutions have no choice but to make it happen (*St. Cloud Times*, March 6, 2008, www.sctimes.com).
- Perhaps as worrying is that efforts by the Homeland Security Department to ensure coordinated communication among emergency responders is also lagging from lack of funds and guidelines for what their baseline capabilities must be (*Federal Computer Weekly*, April 21, 2008, www.fcw.com/online/new/152306-1.html).
- Meanwhile, the Federal Communications Commission has issued technical standards and other requirements for an emergency-alert system for mobile devices—just as campuses were creating their own, and finding that text alerts weren't always the best way to get people's attention (*Educational Technology Magazine*, April 2008, www.edtechmag.com/higher/updates/universities-might-have-to-modify-emergency-alert-sy.html).
- A survey of student affairs professionals on the Clery Act (campus crime reporting) indicates that many don't know its reporting requirements (*Inside Higher Ed*, March 27, 2008, www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/03/27/crime).

Observation

Hardware has essentially become ubiquitous, particularly now that mobile devices are nearly as capable as desktop computers were a few years ago.

- Virtually all colleges and universities are likely to be wireless within the next five years with the launching of the newest generation of Wi-Fi networks and the 802.11n standard, likely to be ratified by the IEEE this year (*eSchool News*, May 7, 2008, www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/news-by-subject/technologies/?i=53725;hbguid=de20a07c-cba9-4d5d-816f-6fa912dd9a53&d=top-news; *Centre Daily Times*, May 1, 2008, www.centredaily.com/business/technology).
- Internet availability in K-12 schools has become nearly universal, and with it, the desire for access to online classes—19 percent of 3rd to 5th graders say they're interested and 33 percent of high school students (*American Society for Association Executives*, June 2008, *Associations Now*, p 20).
- Access to bandwidth will become increasingly problematic, possibly as soon 2011. Last year, YouTube consumed nearly as much bandwidth as the entire Internet did in 2000 (*The New York Times: Times Digest*, March 13, 2008, p 5).

Our Thoughts

Funding for IT on campuses has switched its focus over the years from hardware for computer labs to server farms and wireless routers. The business of higher education wouldn't happen as efficiently without the operating systems that make electronic transactions possible. Those investments are the easy part of IT.

- EDUCAUSE's annual survey of issues in campus IT still finds e-learning/distributed teaching and learning near the bottom of the list of what respondents saw as necessary for the strategic success of their institutions and on what they spend resources (*EDUCAUSE Quarterly*, n 2, 2008, pp 14-30).
- Higher education is facing the growing expectation to deliver service, content, and media to mobile and personal devices (*The New Media Consortium and EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative*, "The Horizon Report: 2008 Edition"). Bandwidth access may be only one of the problems institutions face. We anticipate that legislators will start demanding that courses be available not just online, but on any device.
- The confluence of fewer tenured full-time faculty members and shifting student expectations may force institutions to blend commercial courseware and contingent faculty to deliver this content (*Innovate*, May 31, 2008, www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=533).

Observation

There is no question that a large percentage of students engage in what can be loosely called online social networking activities. Initial results of an EDUCAUSE survey found that 89 percent of students have a presence on Facebook (*Bytes From Lev*, June 10, 2008, blog.case.edu/lev.gonick/mt-tb.cgi/18006).

- A study of university admissions departments conducted by the Center for Marketing Research at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth found that 33 percent said they blogged for recruitment purposes and 29 percent had a presence in Facebook or MySpace (*The San Diego Union Tribune*, August 19, 2008, www.signonsandiego.com/news/education/200808-19-9999-1n19recruit.html).
- Sending emails is the least popular form of daily social communication, only 14 percent of 12-17 year-olds use emails, compared with 28 percent who send instant messages, 27 percent who use text messaging, and 21 percent who send messages via social networking sites (*Pew Internet & American Life Project*, December 19, 2007, "Teens and Social Media", www.pewinternet.org).
- Half of the students in the EDUCAUSE survey used their preferred social networking site for communicating about course-related activities (*Bytes From Lev*, June 10, 2008, blog.case.edu/lev.gonick/mt-tb.cgi/18006).

Our Thoughts

Higher education needs to find ways to leverage learning within the boundaries of students' engagement with social networking. Students are willing to use course management systems to keep up on grades and assignments, but they do their collaborative learning on Facebook (*Campus Technology*, May 28, 2008, www.campustechnology.com/articles/63319/; *Bytes From Lev*, June 10, 2008, blog.case.edu/lev.gonick/mt-tb.cgi/18006).

- Multiplayer online games appear to have the capacity to encourage scientific thinking. A study of discussion posts on World of Warcraft found that 86 percent of them focused on sharing knowledge to solve problems and 58 percent used systematic and evaluative processes (*eSchool News*, August 19, 2008, www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/?i=54917;hbguid=20da9e63-28e9-4878-884a-729eebcfd3f7).
- A study of 16- to 18-year-old students who used social networking sites (77 percent) revealed that the respondents view technical skills as the top lesson they learn from using such sites. Following technical skills, students cited learning creativity, becoming open to diverse views, and communication skills as what they were taking away from their interactions (*University of Minnesota News*, June 24, 2008, www1.umn.edu/umnnews/news_details.php?release=080619_3591&page=UMNN).
- The opportunity to help students understand the skills they are learning and practicing on social networking sites may be as important as using them directly for coursework or discussion (*University of Minnesota News*, June 24, 2008, www1.umn.edu/umnnews/news_details.php?release=080619_3591&page=UMNN).

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