



Trends in Higher Education

November 2004

The Society for College and University Planning publishes an environmental scan quarterly. We do so in the interest of providing our members and the broader higher education community with an ongoing analysis of trends that affect integrated planning in institutions. We hope that you find it useful and welcome your thoughts and comments, share them by email at trends@scup.org.

Trend: Demographics

Fact:

The gender shift continues to grow larger.

- In 2003, 712,000 women earned a bachelor's degree compared to 531,000 men.
- In 2003, 56 percent of ACT and 54 percent of SAT takers were women.
- Division I NCAA universities reported a 54 percent to 46 percent ratio of women to men.

Our Thoughts:

Admissions offices must now consider 'males' an underrepresented category of students—how will they successfully recruit them?

- Title IX woes and male team eliminations will continue to plague some schools—but the GPA average and graduation rates of athletes are rising with more female participation.
- Attracting more males may mean larger classes in engineering, business, and technology—and the need for more/better facilities.

Fact:

Generation Y dominates college (born between 1979 and 1994)

- 73 million Gen Y'ers are the focus of undergraduate & graduate education.
- Family and community come first for them.
- Gen Y'ers say computer technology wins as the most important advantage of their generation.

Our Thoughts:

- Flexible education will continue to increase in importance.
- Choosing a campus increasingly relies on how technologically connected it is and how easily students can stay connected.
- Money means less to students than control of their own destinies—how can colleges give students the skills necessary to achieve success?



Fact: **Time to degree continues to increase with only 43 percent of students who entered in 1995–96 completing at their initial institution within six years.**

- Juggling family, jobs, and changes in majors will continue.
- Switching institutions is much more common (25 percent of 95–96 entrants transferred and finished in six years).

Our Thoughts:

- Accommodating students with families needs to move up on the facilities priority list.
- Pressures on financial aid will increase if access is to be maintained and the six-year graduation rate kept from dropping further.
- Using the university to generate jobs for its undergraduates may become a new necessity.

Fact: **‘Massification’, the European word for increasing access to an undergraduate degree, is kicking into high gear.**

- Access has been more restricted in European universities in the past, but this is no longer the case.
- Faculty are worried about reduced qualifications for entrance and the capacity of these new students to benefit from instruction.

Our Thoughts:

- Anticipated increases in enrollment mean more facilities and likely more reliance on technology to help reach graduation goals.
- Europeans are aggressively pursuing the international student, as well as their home country’s and other EU members—the US could continue to lose enrollment as credentials become globally transportable.

Fact: **Low income and first-time college-going students, regardless of ethnicity, are more likely to attend community colleges or for-profit than four-year institutions.**

- Only eight percent of students in the lowest income group attend private four-year colleges.
- Understanding about and the lack of access to financial aid information, as well as the need to be career ready can keep low income students from exploring four-year options.

Our Thoughts:

- Community colleges will continue to serve more and more students and not just from the lowest income group. They will need to begin adopting many of the same planning strategies as four-years to meet the demand.
- Will employers begin to shift their focus from four-year to two-year degree attainment as the need for skilled personnel increases and the labor force decreases?



Trend: Economy

Fact: It is not just jobs that are being outsourced, it is also education.

- India is increasing its educational marketing and gaining students all the time.
- China will continue to bring its graduates home and over-support higher education at the expense of K-12.

Our Thoughts:

- Online learning and an increase in the quality of higher education is creating a fertile market for expanding options—are the traditional educational suppliers going to be able to hold their own?
- Funding for higher education is beginning to look the same all over the globe as student tuition and fees climb as a percent of college budgets, how will students react beyond the protests they've already mounted?

Fact: The cost of war and the federal deficit both continue to climb.

Our Thoughts:

- Will the US economy suffer another recession or continue to come out of this one too slowly to affect higher education funding?
- How does the overall perception of a country affect the desirability of attending college in that country?

Fact: The cost of a college degree continues to climb.

- Textbook costs hit record highs, averaging close to \$800 a semester in the US.
- Tuition increases show no sign of slowing, up 10 percent on average in public colleges and universities.
- Where tuition cannot be raised, fees are going up.

Our Thoughts:

- Private benefit or public good, even as we claim to need more educated workers, getting a degree is becoming too costly both for individuals and the government programs that support them.
- Fund raising may need to leave facilities and start focusing on scholarships to a much greater degree.

Fact: All European and Asian universities are beginning to look at endowments as necessary for filling in governmental funding gaps.

- Global corporations may have to spread the wealth when it comes to higher education donations.

Our Thoughts:

- Options for raising endowment dollars could begin to shrink as the global economy means funding higher education across the globe and not just in the US.
- SCUP corporate members work globally—must they start recruiting their employees more globally, too?



Trend: Environment

- Fact:** **Sustainability and green design are still missing from the curriculum.**
- 67 percent of design academics strongly agreed that sustainability is relevant to their design curricula.
 - Only 14 percent said their institutions were preparing their instructors to teach it.
 - In 2002, 70 percent of surveyed practicing design professionals did not feel equipped to do a sustainable-design job.

- Our Thoughts:**
- Green design may be widely known, but the profession is not widely able to practice it.
 - Higher education programs, for every level of design, need to find ways to include sustainable design—LEED® training is not adequate to cover the range of options for increasing sustainable design.

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- Fact:** **Brownfield redevelopment needs to take its place with nature preserves if suburban sprawl is ever to be countered.**

- Our Thoughts:**
- Campuses are as likely to contribute to sprawl as any other institution—how can we make brownfield development options economically feasible and attractive to donors?

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- Fact:** **China has experienced over eight percent growth during the last decade. Its energy requirements and pollution from increased manufacturing are being felt throughout the world.**

- Our Thoughts:**
- How do we help higher education in China act as an example and an educator of sustainable practices?
 - How much will energy use in China and India contribute to decreased supplies and increased costs elsewhere?
 - If costs do not stabilize, what options are left for campuses to manage utility consumption?



Trend: Learning

Fact: Thirty-three percent of graduating college seniors and up to 90 percent of 14-year-olds use instant messaging (IM) daily to stay in touch with family and friends.

Our Thoughts:

- Nearly every student has a cell phone and that means they have access to instant messaging/text messaging wherever they are—it is time for professors to start using this method for teaching and learning.
- How can facilities accommodate the need for increased wireless access for a range of devices in learning settings? What different classroom design features will be required to help faculty exploit the existing electronic infrastructure, which students carry with them, when they arrive at class?

Fact: Along with instant messaging and text messaging, social networking software is increasingly becoming part of the cyber experience.

Our Thoughts:

- Social networking software allows users to connect over the Internet with both friends and friends of a friend (FOAF)—thus making social networks visible. Marketing, teaching and learning, recruitment and more could all use this knowledge to advance their missions—who will really make it happen?

Fact: English has become the *de facto* language of science and business—but whose English?

- Canadian English is becoming the standard in China in elementary schools and with it a Canadian view of history and values. Chinese K-12 schools have purchased Canadian texts for their third grade and mandatory English language learning programs.

Our Thoughts:

- Decreased numbers of international students in the US and increased use of non-US educational sources could further isolate higher education in the US. We could lose our position as "first" in higher education as we did 20 years ago in K-12.

Fact: Neuroscience research continues to demonstrate a strong relationship between emotion and cognition in learning.

Our Thoughts:

- Active learning and the classroom environment increase in importance as their role in evoking emotion is better understood.
- Traditional universities—not just the University of Phoenix—are auditioning and training their instructors to ensure that their ‘performances’ connect with learners’ emotions.



Trend: Politics

Fact: **Rankings of higher education institutions are showing up all over the world.**

- More countries are creating ranking schemes for research, teaching, and prestige. The newest entrants are New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Our Thoughts:

- Do rankings really help make higher education accountable for its “products?”
- Institutions must now use resources for completing surveys and responding to inquiries about their rankings that could be used better elsewhere.

Fact: **Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, loan consolidation, Pell grants, and the Perkins Act are all under the spotlight, but not out of committee.**

Our Thoughts:

- Higher education looks to an uncertain future for federal funding of students’ most basic needs—even after the election it may not get the focused attention it needs to move its agenda forward.
- Carnegie classifications aside, all institutions of higher education need to support the aims of training beyond high school.

Fact: **US is losing its dominance in critical areas of science and innovation.**

- US share of its own industrial patents is now only 52 percent.
- American papers in the top physics journals have fallen from 61 percent of those published in 1983 to 29 percent in 2003.
- Europeans are investing more in bringing home and not losing their scientists.

Our Thoughts:

- Patents that arise from basic research have come to play a larger role in universities’ endowment portfolios—what happens if fewer and fewer reach the market?
- Federal funding does not seem to be making the difference it once did. More is focused on applied research, more institutions are competing for the same or diminishing funding, and graduate students are going home, not staying in the US.

Fact: **The push is on to register students where they live—at college.**

Our Thoughts:

- States are beginning to adopt more uniform approaches to registering students to vote with their campus addresses—what effect will it have on local and state politics after the presidential election?



Trend: Technology

Fact: Technology infrastructure is increasing its flexibility and its integration into every part of higher education.

Our Thoughts

- Model learning spaces like Stanford's Wallenburg Hall and MIT's Stata Center reflect the reality that communication devices will constantly change, but communication infrastructure is likely to be stable, but faster, for a while to come.

Fact: Technology has taken on a whole new face in attracting students to a campus.

- Duke provides iPods to incoming students.
- More campuses require laptops.
- Institutions provide downloading services at no cost to students to avoid legal hassles.

Our Thoughts:

- Every year students arrive with more technology in their 'foot lockers'. They want to be able to connect without static, find outlets close to devices, and to be assured that their electronic assets will be secure. Student residences will continue to need major upgrades to meet these common expectations.
- Will campuses find ways to incorporate all these devices into learning strategies?

Fact: Personal multimedia players (PMP) with full-motion video, MP3 sound, still images, and games are increasingly used in Asia to allow full educational portability.

- To prep for college entrance exams, Korean students no longer have to carry textbooks, listen to cassette players, or go to a classroom to hear a lecture. Instead, PMP allows them to sit on a subway or bus and access everything they need wirelessly.

Our Thoughts:

- M-learning (mobile learning) is likely to be the next wave in education in a generation that expects to always have the world at its fingertips.

Fact: Nanotechnology is beginning to experience the same political fallout that genetically modified plants and animals have experienced for a decade.

Our Thoughts:

- The next step in the 'smaller is better' evolution from vacuum tubes to circuit boards, nanotechnology has created expectations and fears beyond its present reach. How will the anxieties that basic research and innovation can engender in society be managed by universities?

