



Trends in Higher Education

January 2008

Demographics

Observation

Income disparities are increasingly being recognized as the most significant barrier to access and graduation for all students, although they clearly hit minority students hardest (*Economically and Educationally Challenged Students in Higher Education: Access to Outcomes*, [2007] ASHE Higher Education Report, v 33, n 3).

- Half of American youth from low-income backgrounds go to college, compared to two-thirds with middle-class incomes and 80 percent of those with the highest incomes (*Inside Higher Ed*, October 31, 2007, www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/10/31/system).
- Socioeconomic impacts face not just those traditionally considered as underrepresented minorities, with nearly 31 percent of Asian Americans coming from households with incomes below \$40,000 annually, higher than the 22.7 percent average for all groups (*Diverse Online*, October 11, 2007, www.diverseeducation.com/artman/publish/printer_9717.shtml).
- More than half of U.S. public school children in the South come from low-income families. During the 2006-2007 school year, 54 percent of students in 15 Southern states qualified for free or reduced lunches. Three states outside the South—California, New Mexico, and Oregon—also have a majority of public school students living in poverty (*Education Week*, October 27, 2007, www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/10/30/10poor_web.h27.html?print=1).

Our Thoughts

The focus on minority recruitment has begun to shift to acknowledge the broader issues involved in access for low-income students of all ethnicities.

- As elite universities are being called to account for their massive endowments, they in turn are increasingly offering ‘no-loan’ educations to students. The meritocracy funding wars for attracting the best students, regardless of need, are beginning to recede. If we are to create the level of education that will keep the U.S. workforce competitive, then bridging the socioeconomic achievement gap must be a top priority (*The New York Times*, December 30, 2007, nytimes.com/2007/12/30/weekinreview/30konigsberg.html?_r=2&ref=education&oref=slogin; *Inside Higher Ed*, December 12, 2007, www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/12/12/tuition).



- Increasing immigrant populations, up from 11.2 percent of the population in 2000 to 12.4 percent in 2006, exacerbate the problem of bringing low-income students into and successfully through college. For the first time in close to 100 years, levels of literacy and numeracy are predicted to decline in the next two decades (*The Christian Science Monitor*, February 6, 2007, www.csmonitor.com/2007/0206/p02s01-legn.htm).
- What must colleges do to help students believe that they can afford to continue their education past high school, particularly when most low-income students overestimate the cost of college? Colleges will have to do more than ‘no loans’ to retain financially stressed students. Recent findings from Indiana indicate that beyond remedial help and environmental support, these students need to identify a purpose in persistence that carries them past inevitable difficulties (*Inside Higher Ed*, October 31, 2007, www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/10/31/system).

Observation

The mix of graduate students in the United States continues to change.

- Findings of a survey by the Council of Graduate Schools provide mixed news. While total international enrollment is up for the second year, it has still not rebounded from the effects of increased visa requirements and scrutiny since 2001 (*Council of Graduate Schools*, November 5, 2007, <http://www.cgsnet.org/Default.aspx?tabid=172>).
- For every four men enrolled in graduate school in 2006, there were nearly six women (*USA Today*, September 9, 2007, usatoday.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=Wo...education%2F2007-09-12-census-college-enrollment_N.htm&partnerID=1660).
- In 2006, for the fifth consecutive year, the majority of US citizens who earned a doctorate were women (51 percent). Overall, women earned 45 percent of the doctorates granted by U.S. institutions (National Opinion Research Center, “*Survey of Earned Doctorates*,” www.norc.org/projects/Survey+of+Earned+Doctorates.htm; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 26, 2007, chronicle.com/daily/2007/11/796n.htm).
- Minorities (African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and American Indians) earned 20 percent of the doctorates awarded to U.S. citizens, the highest percentage ever (National Opinion Research Center, “*Survey of Earned Doctorates*,” www.norc.org/projects/Survey+of+Earned+Doctorates.htm; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 26, 2007, chronicle.com/daily/2007/11/796n.htm).

Our Thoughts

A complex set of changes is underway in who attends and succeeds at graduate school. The Patriot Act immediately, and it appears irrevocably, changed the ease with which international students choose the United States as the place to go. Increasing numbers of women and minority students have also changed the playing field.

- A result of these changes may be the slow evolution of the face of the professorate. The increased number of women and minorities with doctorates may mean that they will be the ones to fill the positions of retiring professors, since there simply won’t be enough white males to do it.
- Of all the research doctorates granted in 2006, U.S. citizens earned only 63 percent. They only earned 56 percent of the science and engineering doctorates. Sadly, it’s beginning to look as if no amount of special STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) funding and programming will close the gap anytime soon. (National Opinion Research Center, “*Survey of Earned Doctorates*,” www.norc.org/projects/Survey+of+Earned+Doctorates.htm).



- Equally concerning may be the increasing return of non-U.S. citizens to their countries of origin, particularly given their critical importance in research and development for businesses and in training other professionals in universities. (*The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation for Entrepreneurship*, “Intellectual Property, the Immigration Backlog, and a Reverse Brain-Drain: America’s New Immigrant Entrepreneurs,” *Part III*, August, 2007, research.kauffman.org/cwp/appmanager/research/researchDesktop?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=research_resourceDetail&id=1008366)

Economics

Observation

The world’s economy has become considerably less predictable, although a slowdown now seems far more likely than continued growth.

- The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank cut interest rates twice within one week as stock markets throughout the world lost and regained value (*The New York Times*, January 30, 2008, nytimes.com/2008/01/30/business/30cnd-fed.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin)
- In August of 2007, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted strong world economic growth in 2007 and 2008 of 5 percent or more (*Reed Construction eWire*, August 22, 2007). By January of 2008, the IMF was predicting a slowdown, but still not a recession in the United States (*The New York Times*, January 29, 2008, nytimes.com/aponline/business/apec-imf.html?scp=2&sq=International+Monetary+Fund&st=nyt)
- The cost of oil, the value of the dollar, and inflationary pressures in benefits and supplies are all likely to contribute to many more months of uncertainty about the economy (*Commonfund Institute News*, August 2007, commonfund.org/Common/PrintArticle.aspx?{5A0FC67A-D2CC-4898-BE4B-4DBF0B3A4A07}; “Good, Bad or Ugly—Is It Impossible to Predict What’s Ahead for the US Economy?,” knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=1842)

Our Thoughts

A confluence of forces is likely to make for a bumpy road over the next few years. Economic swings have varied and delayed effects on campuses. That a downturn is arriving along with the highest number of applicants ever only compounds the problems (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 31, 2008, chronicle.com/daily/2008/01/1459n.htm).

- The Associated General Contractors of America predicts that 2008 will see higher increases in materials and labor costs than in the past 12 months (*Building Design and Construction*, November 1, 2007, Reed Business Information)
- Costs will increase, but 2008 state budgets are predicted to grow almost 2 percent less than their historical average rate of 6.4 percent (*The Fiscal Survey of the States*, December 2007, National Governors Association and National Association of State Budget Officers)
- Construction on campuses will be particularly hard hit as estimated budgets completed even one year ago are already underfunded—and it’s unclear where the revenue exists to help with this issue. This is happening in the midst of a reported building boom (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 6, 2007, “Medical Schools Continue Building Spree Despite Limited Federal Support”, chronicle.com/daily/2007/09/2007090602n.htm; *The Economist*, December 6, 2007, “Just add cash”)



- Eight years ago, oil was trading at \$16 per barrel; on January 31, 2008, it traded at over \$92 per barrel (*The New York Times*, November 7, 2007, and January 31, 2008; nytimes.com/2007/11/07/business/07oilwealth.html?scp=1&sq=November+7+2007&st=nyt, www.nytimes.com/aponline/business/AP-Gas-Price-Outlook.html?scp=2&sq=price+of+oil&st=nyt)

Observation

Increasingly, higher education is suffering from the same inequities in funding that have plagued K-12 education for decades—the rich become richer and the others scramble for what’s left. Postsecondary education, however, has options that K-12 does not.

- The first to be asked for more money has always been the student. While tuition figures at public schools, particularly western ones, used to be a good approximation of what college would cost, no more. Student fees can add up to 40 percent more than tuition at some institutions (*The New York Times*, September 4, 2007, “As Support Lags, College Tack on Student Fees”, nytimes.com/2007/09/04/education/04fees.html)
- International students also add to colleges’ and universities’ overall budgets, beyond their tuition and fees. The Institute of International Education issued a report indicating that in the 2006–2007 school year, these students contributed nearly \$14.5 billion to the U.S. economy, opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=113743)
- Master’s degrees may be becoming the ‘new’ credential for access to higher paying jobs. Universities don’t mind because tuition is high and enrollments have nearly doubled in the last 25 years (*The New York Times*, September 12, 2007, “Master’s Degrees Abound as Universities and Students See a Windfall”, nytimes.com/2007/09/12/education/12masters.html)

Our Thoughts

We’ve noticed before that the trend in declining funding pushes all institutions to look like private ones when it comes to diversifying funding sources. Unfortunately, it seems that every time campuses think they are catching up with new revenue streams, a reliable one is put at risk.

- Endowments have certainly been in the news of late, with suggestions that every institution should be required to spend a fixed percent of its endowment income every year (*The Chronicle for Higher Education*, February 4, 2008, “Colleges’ Endowment-Spending Prerogatives Get Unexpected Defense”, chronicle.com/daily/2008/02/1491n.htm?utm_source=at&utm_medium=en)
- Federal funding for academic research and development saw a decline in 2006 when adjusted for inflation (*Inside Higher Ed*, “Real-Dollar Decline for Academic R&D”, September 28, 2007, insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/09/28/nsf)
- It appears that even if an institution can get significant research funding, indirect cost recovery from the biggest federal agency, the Pentagon, is likely to be capped at 35 percent. This is considerably below the 50-70 percent some top universities have received in the past. Another cost of research that puts pressure on other revenue sources. (*The Chronicle for Higher Education*, “Final Pentagon Spending Bill Would Reduce Rate of Indirect-Cost Reimbursements on Grants”, chronicle.com/daily/2007/11/620n.htm)
- Likewise, while there is hope for increases in Pell grants, federal student aid is actually getting scarcer (*The Chronicle for Higher Education*, “Fewer Students Than Expected Get New Federal Grants Tied to Achievement”, chronicle.com/daily/2007/10/529n.htm)



Environment

Observation

Green energy sources will become increasingly important to institutions that have signed the President's Climate Commitment, and likely for everyone else, too.

- The American Wind Energy Association reported that the U.S. gained 4,000 megawatts worth of wind power in 2007, double what was predicted at the start of 2007 (*E/The Environmental Magazine*, "Wind Power Beats Predictions", November 12, 2007, www.emagazine.com/view/?3969&printview)
- Google plans to spend tens of millions of dollars on renewable energy research and development, as well as related investments in 2008. The goal is making renewable energy less expensive than coal power (*Energy Ace Newsletter*, "Google Aims to Make Renewable Energy Cheaper than Coal Power", December 2007)
- Green technology offers many opportunities for business growth and creation, and some business schools are preparing the managers for them (*The Star*, "Learning to make money from going green", December 18, 2007, www.thestar.com/printArticle/286157; *Knowledge@Wharton*, "Green Technology Offers Opportunities for Discerning Investors and Entrepreneurs", January 21, 2008, knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=1881)

Our Thoughts

Can we bring green energy sources online in time? Will the combination of conservation and renewable energy be enough to stabilize, if not reduce, greenhouse gases? Human behavior, including politics, may prove to be a bigger stumbling block than a lack of technological advances.

- The U.S. geography should make it a major producer of wind energy, but NIMBY (Not in my backyard) forces are dampening investment (*Newsweek*, November 12, 2007, page 21)
- While China portrays a growing awareness of environmental and energy issues, it still builds over 31,000 megawatts of coal-fired capacity every four months (*The New York Times*, October 24, 2007, "Green Energy Lags in China, So Coal Steps Up", nytimes.com/2007/10/24/business/worldbusiness/24power.html?_r=1&sq=October%2024%202007&st=nyt&adxnnl=1&coref=slogin&scp=3&adxnnlx=1202930750-TNK5UmC5MddAFkfFpEgCNg&pagewanted=print)
- Reducing carbon dioxide may be more difficult than predicted as the ability of the oceans and land to absorb it has apparently begun a clear decline (*The Globe and Mail*, October 23, 2007, theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20071023.wclimate23/BNStory/Science?cid=al_gam_nletter_newsUp)

Observation

Colleges, with a substantial push from their students, continue to report an increased focus on sustainability, and reduction of green house gases, in particular.

- In a survey of 200 campuses, the Sustainable Endowments Institute found that the percentage of institutions with green building policies rose from 48 to 69 percent; likewise bio-diesel is now made or used on nearly 30 percent of those surveyed; buying food locally and recycling were the most common activities (*Inside Higher Ed*, October 24, 2007, "Progress Seen in College Sustainability", insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/10/24/sustainability)



- Yale University has reduced its green house gas emissions by 17 percent since 2005; its goal is to fall 10 percent below its emission levels of 1990 by the year 2020 (Yale University Bureau of Public Affairs, yale.edu/opa/newsr/08-01-21-02.all.html)
- While not yet a groundswell, business schools have increased the content in their MBA programs, and in some cases their research and majors, to include social and environmental issues (*The Aspen Institute Center for Business Education*, “Beyond Grey Pinstripes 2007-2008”, October 2007)
- Nine regional universities, Open University, and the Natural History Museum in the United Kingdom are collaborating on a program to connect faculty and other resources to increase awareness of local environments, including the economic and social health of communities (*EducationGuardian*, September 12, 2007, education.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,330709388-108229,00.html)

Our Thoughts

Higher education has focused on reducing energy and carbon footprints in its sustainability efforts. These are the easiest changes to sell as the dollars and cents benefits are most obvious. Getting to changes in human behavior and other indicators of healthy environments is only going to get harder.

- The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts fundamental shifts in travel patterns over the next 20 years as global warming threatens biodiversity, sea level, food supplies, and disease patterns. How will the ability and cost of travel affect enrollment patterns across the globe? (*TravelMole*, November 27, 2007, “UN Climate Scientists Predict Fundamental Change in Tourism Industry”, travelmole.com/printable.php?news_id1124381)
- A survey released by the World Business Council on Sustainable Development indicates that key stakeholders in real estate and construction continue to overstate the extra costs of building green by some 300 percent, “creating a major barrier to more energy efficiency in the building sector”; four of the eight factors contributing to this view are based in human behavior (*LexisNexis*, September 5, 2007, www.housingzone.com/index.asp?layout=articlePrint&xmlld=663539935)
- Controversy continues to bubble about the green building standards included in various programs, such as LEED or Green Globes, and how well they address life cycle costs and benefits (*Professional Builder*, February 1, 2008, Reed Business Information, “Green Building Programs More About Bias than Science, Expert Argues”, www.housingzone.com)



Global Education

Observation

Without a doubt, China's influence on global postsecondary education is increasing. More and more countries see it as a touchstone for determining economic health and social well-being.

- The British higher education think tank, Agora, predicts that China is likely to become the world's hub for tertiary education, but no one's sure that establishing Western branches of campuses there will accelerate or stall this trend ("British Universities in China: The Reality Beyond the Rhetoric An Agora Discussion Paper", edited by Anna Fazackerley, December 2007)
- China is now the largest higher education system in the world; it awards more university degrees than the United States and India combined. Only the United States awards more doctoral degrees and this may change in as few as five years (*BBC News*, November 17, 2007, "China's bid for world domination", newsvote.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/education/7098561.stm)
- For-profit education is as interested in China as nonprofits are. Kaplan, Inc., which serves more than one million worldwide students annually, will be expanding its presence in China, including teaching financial education with a regional university (*Business Wire*, November 26, 2007, "Acquisition and University Partnership to Broaden Kaplan Presence in China", www.businesswire.com)

Our Thoughts

The lure of China appears to have downside risks for most Western higher education institutions. It's hard to tell if the Chinese market will stabilize anytime soon.

- China will limit the growth of graduate enrollments to 5 percent in the near-term, as unemployment rates among master's level graduates continues to rise; it did the same thing last year for undergraduate education (The Chronicle of Higher Education, August 29, 2007, "China Caps Graduate Enrollments in Response to Rising Unemployment", chronicle.com/news/index.php?id=2936?atnb)
- A survey done by Peking University indicated that China's major public universities all face increasing levels of debt, with bank loans accounting for almost half of their average income (The Chronicle of Higher Education, August 16, 2007, "Despite Booming Growth, Chinese Universities Find Themselves Buried in Debt", chronicle.com/daily/2007/08/2007081605n.htm)
- The Shanghai Academy of Social Science conducted research that found China's labor market faces five to ten more years of constraint due to a lack of skilled, technical, and managerial talent. What's out of alignment when graduates can't find jobs and the labor market is suffering from needs it seems they could meet? (Herman Trend Alert, December 19, 2007, "China's Future Labor Market", hermangroup.com/alert/archive_12_19_2007.html)



Observation

Canada is likely to continue to attract highly qualified students from the United States and across the globe, as it is increasing its investments in higher education.

- Canadian universities and colleges are benefiting from a robust economy. Ontario institutions, for example, recently received \$200 million to upgrade their facilities (*The Globe and Mail*, January 29, 2008, “Ontario campuses get \$200-million facelift”, theglobeandmail.com)
- Canadian university endowments have also reached a record level, increasing 55 percent from their 2002 levels to \$20.4 billion in 2006. Nearly \$2 billion has been targeted at students and faculty research (*CanWest News Service*, “Canadian university endowment funds skyrocket”, Canada.com/components/print.aspx?id=fcabcfec-0d12-49b5-938b-7a4e565bb74f&k=27206)
- Statistics Canada reports that 80 percent of Canadians have participated in some form of postsecondary education by their mid-20s; with 45 percent of those between 25 and 64 having a bachelor’s degree, compared with 39 percent of US citizens (*Inside Higher Ed*, August 20, 2007, “Matching Up to the Group of 8”, insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/08/15/nces)

Our Thoughts

In the fluid global education market, Canada could play a vital role in balancing European and U.S. influence on models of higher education delivery. Europe’s move to a uniform system of accounting for student learning will push the rest of the world to comply.

- Educators from the United States, Canada, Europe, China, and Australia met last year to create principles for international collaboration in graduate education in an effort to assure quality control and recognition for degrees across countries (*Inside Higher Ed*, September 10, 2007, “Principles for International Collaboration in Graduate Education”, insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/09/10/banff)
- The European Universities Association (EUA) Council is taking steps that will make that more likely as it reviews and updates the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System to focus on student learning outcomes. As Europe moves to make the Bologna process a reality, it may well be creating the standard in global portability (*EUA Newsletter 17*, November 5, 2007, “Enhancing the implementation of ECTS”)
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is pushing for a new form of ranking that would truly look at student outcomes. They propose doing a random sampling of students to test them on what they’ve learned and then ranking universities, worldwide, accordingly (*The Economist*, November 15, 2007, “Measuring mortarboards”, economist.com/world/international/)



Learning

Observation

Community colleges have long had to wrestle with what constitutes ‘student success’, since their students come with many goals.

- Contrary to common conceptions, nontraditional (26-65) students who enter community colleges and receive mathematics refreshers are more, not less, likely to graduate than students who enter right out of high school (*Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, J. Calcagno, P. Crosta, T. Bailey, and D. Jenkins, “Does Age of Entrance Affect Community College Completion Probabilities? Evidence From a Discrete-Time Hazard Model”, September 2007, v 29, n 3, pp 218-235)
- The effects of remedial or development education may be to keep traditional aged students from having an accurate picture of what it takes to be college ready and of what completing college entails as a personal investment (*Research in Higher Education*, J. Calcagno, P. Crosta, T. Bailey, and D. Jenkins, November 2007, v 48, n 7, pp775-801)
- The most successful community college students avoided excessive course dropping and late registration, went full-time the majority of terms, and had the opportunity to take an orientation course to college (*Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy*, C. Moore, N. Shulock, M. Ceja, and D. Lang, “Beyond the Open Door: Increasing Student Success in California Community Colleges”, August 2007)

Our Thoughts

Determining how to measure ‘student success’, much less how to encourage it, is likely to occupy all types of institutions for the foreseeable future. The 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) have moved into the mainstream as methods of learning what makes success happen.

- Students who meet with their adviser are more likely to gain from college (NSSE) and 61 percent believe that academic advising is very important (CCSSE); yet both surveys indicate that advising is not happening for everyone with 10 percent of four-year students never seeing an adviser and 36 percent of community college students (The NSSE 2007 Report and the CCSSE 2007 Report, nsse.iub.edu and ccsse.org)
- Satisfaction with faculty advising shows both gender and ethnic differences, with women generally more satisfied. Satisfaction levels for ethnicities indicated that Asian students are least satisfied with faculty advising at 44.5 percent and white students are most satisfied at 56.9 percent—still a ways to go for all students (*Inside Higher Ed*, November 9, 2007, “Faculty Productivity, Learning to Teach, Student Satisfaction”, insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/11/09/research)
- Students are more likely to finish programs and thus achieve the most commonly held definition of success, when they are actively engaged with faculty both inside and outside the classroom. How will we square this with the continued erosion of full-time, tenured faculty and the increase in adjuncts and professional academic advisers?



Observation

Electronically mediated learning continues to thrive and to increase the ways in which our technological toys and tools are used for this purpose.

- Online education is expanding at nearly three times the rate of overall higher education enrollments—9.7 percent growth in online enrollments in 2006 versus 1.5 percent for overall higher education (*Babson Survey Research Group*, I. E. Allen and J. Seaman, “Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning, October 2007)
- A record number of students took at least one course online in 2006, almost 3.5 million, with community colleges and doctoral/research institutions showing the highest compound annual growth rate (*Babson Survey Research Group*, I. E. Allen and J. Seaman, “Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning, October 2007)
- The use of Course Management Systems (CMS) is close to ubiquitous for accessing course work and receiving feedback (close to 98 percent), with 82 percent of students reporting they have taken at least one class using a CMS (*EDUCAUSE*, J. Caruso and G. Salaway, “The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2007”, September 2007)
- Students report averaging 18 hours per week doing online activities for school, work, and recreation (*EDUCAUSE*, J. Caruso and G. Salaway, “The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2007”, September 2007)

Our Thoughts

As the use of technology for learning spreads, its ability to advance access in some unanticipated places is likely to continue to push the creativity of faculty and staff.

- The University of Maryland University College, a primarily online institution for the state, has an enrollment that is 32 percent black, higher than any other institution—and 30 percent of its degree recipients are black. Their added niche is with black students who have had some previous, traditional, college education (*Inside Higher Ed*, “Virtual Path to Diversity”, February 12, 2008, insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2008/02/12/online)
- Websites (e.g., www.italki.com or www.freelanguage.com) now offer learning language exchanges that enable anyone to train with a native speaker (*The Herman Trend Alert*, “Sharing Language Resources in a Flat World”, September 19, 2007, hermangroup.com)
- Rural and small-town students in Canada are more likely to use the Internet for distance learning than other Canadians (*The Edmonton Journal*, L. Johnsrude, “Canadians going online for education, StatsCan study confirms trend in Internet-based learning”, October 31, 2007, canwest.com, and *Statistics Canada*, statcan.ca/english/freepub/81-582-XIE/81-582-XIE2007001.htm)
- Marrying learning opportunities with technology and competency based assessment will continue to push the boundaries of postsecondary education providers—cell phones are already being used as immediate learning and feedback devices.



Politics

Observation

The Spellings Commission's report raised some hackles and some awareness of issues related to funding, accountability, and access. While accreditation remained a political hot potato, student financial aid legislation actually passed.

- The College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 created winners and losers and further confused financial aid counseling. Pell Grant awards increased, but funding for student loans is in jeopardy in many states due to the housing market and reduced support for guaranteed student loan lenders. Uncertainty about loans hits the biggest source of money for many students (*Inside Higher Ed*, September 28, 2007, insidehighered.com/news/2007/09/28/qt and "Warning on Tuition, Shift on Accreditation" November 15, 2007, insidehighered.com/2007/11/15/hea)
- Accrediting agencies, judges, institutions, and Congress are all jostling for the best position on accountability. A preliminary ruling suggests that states can't restrict what regional or institutional accreditation results they'll accept—it's been a while since states did their own accrediting and now everyone wants in (*Inside Higher Ed*, "New Legal Challenge for Accreditation," October 5, 2007, insidehighered.com/2007/10/05/california and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "Colleges and Their Accreditors Seek Compromise, Fearing Education Department Ruling", December 10, 2007, chronicle.com/daily/2007/12/924n.htm)

Our Thoughts

For four years we've been writing about the stalled Higher Education Reauthorization Act, which expired in 2003. Now with at least seven extensions, it's difficult to believe that postsecondary education is actually valued in the face of continued political game playing (*National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators*, "House Approves Six-Month Extension of Higher Education Act", October 26, 2007, nasfaa.org/publications/2007/gheaext102407.html).

- Access to college funding for students has become a strange public relations and lobbying business. Student loan providers were exposed as buying favor at colleges; so financial aid directors aren't sure what's in the rules for meeting students' needs through loans anymore (*Inside Higher Ed*, "What's a Financial Aid Director to Do?", October 4, 2007, insidehighered.com/news/2007/10/03/loans)
- New student grant programs, the Academic Competitiveness Grant and the National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grant, managed to spend only \$430 million of the \$790 million appropriated for them (*Inside Higher Ed*, "Where New Federal Student Grant Funds Are Going", October 26, 2007, insidehighered.com/news/2007/10/26/grants)
- The variety of other provisions that are potentially in a reauthorization bill means more wrangling among Democrats and Republicans and a likelihood of increased federal regulation for higher education (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "Pending Bill Would Double Colleges' Reporting Burden, Critics Say", January 25, 2008, chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i20/20a01601.htm) Can students and the public possibly be served by increased attempts at micromanaging institutions?



Observation

As with other areas of political interest, states are picking up the slack on higher education policy and funding where the federal government sees needs, but doesn't act.

- State tax support for higher education climbed 7.5 percent in the 2007-08 budget year, the highest annual increase since 1985 (*Grapevine Project*, grapevine.ilstu.edu); unfortunately, state budgets are already weakening so it may be unlikely that funds legislated will be appropriated in their entirety (*American Association of State Colleges and Universities*, "Top 10 State Policy Issues for Higher Education in 2008", January 2008, AASCU Policy Matters)
- Previous funding is the best predictor of support for higher education in a state, with public research universities having the least stable support, community colleges having the most stable support, and comprehensive universities falling in between the two. (*Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education*, D. Weerts and J. Ronca, "Determinants of State Appropriations for Higher Education from 1985-2005: An Organizational Theory Analysis", February 2008, wiscap.wisc.edu/publications/wp013/)
- State funding of research, most prominently embryonic stem cell studies, represents another example, for better or worse, of states enacting policies that the federal government isn't.

Our Thoughts

States are tackling a diverse array of opportunities and problems in their higher education institutions. Creative and workable solutions can move more quickly there, as well as to other states.

- Community colleges in Washington can receive additional funding for each student who passes a remedial mathematics examination, earns a degree, or completes the first 15 units of college level courses (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, C. Frey, "Community colleges to be rewarded for degrees: State campuses get extra money for academic success", September 12, 2007, seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/331373_achieve13.html)
- The three public colleges in Rhode Island are collaborating across all academic departments on creating common learning outcomes and assessments (*The Providence Journal*, J. Jordan, "R.I. colleges aim to better assess students", projo.com/news/content/bog_assessment_10_23_07_0T7J1SO.31de9e7.html)
- While states have supported college attendance for illegal immigrants through a variety of mechanisms in the past, the ambiguity in federal laws combined with the presidential election is having a chilling effect on continuing these efforts (*American Association of State Colleges and Universities*, "Top 10 State Policy Issues for Higher Education in 2008", January 2008, AASCU Policy Matters)
- The rest of the world, particularly Europe, is seeking to unite efforts to provide quality postsecondary education. The United States appears to be headed for increasing fragmentation. What will it mean for students, research, economic development, and the many other ways that higher education contributes to the broader good?



Technology

Observation

Technology doesn't dominate the headlines or the concerns of presidents as it once did in higher education. Nevertheless, shifting needs are changing where dollars and people are placed.

- More colleges are outsourcing some or all of their information technology services, with email among the first to go (EDUCAUSE, "Core Data Service Fiscal Year 2006 Summary Report," October 2007, educause.edu/apps/coredata/reports/2006/; *U. S. News and World Report*, A. Go, "Colleges Outsource Email to Big Players", August 23, 2007, usnews.com/usnews/biztech/articles/070822/22email_print.htm)
- Spending on IT increased for most institutions, but institutional type had a bearing on where the money went—doctoral granting institutions spent it on enterprise software and associate degree granting campuses spent the most money on desktop computers (*University Business*, A. McClure, "Technology Spending Survey '08: Inside the minds—and budgets—of chief information officers and IT directors", December 2007, universitybusiness.com/viewarticlepf.aspx?articleid=960)
- Campuses are continuing to build out their wireless networks, with libraries being the first on the list (*Association for Communications Technology Professionals in Higher Education*, "Survey of Member Schools", November 6, 2007, actua.org; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A. Guess, "For IT, More Risk and More Music", insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/10/10/educause)

Our Thoughts

Technology use on campus has become part of the way that institutional mission is accomplished. Campuses have come a long way in the last 20 years, to the universal acceptance of electronically mediated communication, research, and teaching.

- Unfortunately, IT security may make chief information officers anxious—43 percent reported a data loss in 2007—but they don't seem to spend money on it (*CDW-G*, "2007 CDW-G Higher Education IT Security Report Card, "What's Keeping IT Up at Night?", CDWG.com/higheredsecurity; *University Business*, A. McClure, "Technology Spending Survey '08: Inside the minds—and budgets—of chief information officers and IT directors", December 2007, universitybusiness.com/viewarticlepf.aspx?articleid=960)
- Chief information officers seem to think that they can't do much about students' and faculty members' disregard of campus security policies (*CDW-G*, "2007 CDW-G Higher Education IT Security Report Card, "What's Keeping IT Up at Night?", CDWG.com/higheredsecurity). They've left themselves vulnerable to the accusation of ignoring the most fundamental aspect of any security effort.
- The other human question we'll continue wrestling with is how to keep faculty members up-to-date in the range and appropriate use of technology in learning. Perhaps the lessons learned in bringing faculty members to the table for learning can also help with security issues.



Observation

While campuses, and the economy in general, increasingly rely on technology, the interest in computer science as a career is dropping (*The Globe and Mail*, E. Church and M. Hartley, “Industry feels pinch as numbers of IT grads plummet”, January 21, 2008, theglobeandmail.com).

- The bursting of the Internet bubble is having long-term consequences, as student interest has gone elsewhere—leaving not just Microsoft without enough talent, but campuses too.
- Students are interested in ‘green’ studies and careers and the U.S. government and companies are looking at Green IT—perhaps there is a solution here somewhere (*Washington Technology*, M. Hardy, “Hurdles slow green IT adoption”, December 5, 2007, washingtontechnology.com/cgi-bin/udt/im.display.printable)
- Other nations are not all experiencing the downturn in interest in computer science, but they also want to keep their graduates at home. Supplying the U.S. need for technological innovation to fuel the economy is likely to become increasingly more difficult—Canada graduates one IT professional for every five available positions (*The Globe and Mail*, E. Church and M. Hartley, “Industry feels pinch as numbers of IT grads plummet”, January 21, 2008, theglobeandmail.com).

Our Thoughts

Social networking, open-source programs, the convergence in hardware, and the essential globalization of communication are all ways that technology may solve its own problem with regenerating expertise.

- Linux users can rest easier now that a judge has ruled that SCO did not acquire ownership rights to UNIX when it bought licensing and development rights to it in 1995. This means open-source Linux programs don’t need to worry about being sued for copyright infringement (*eSchool News*, “Court ruling dispels cloud over Linux”, August 15, 2007, eschoolnews.com/news/PFshowstory.cfm?ArticleID=7305)
- Linux is growing in popularity throughout the world, with 40 percent of all German students using Linux systems (*CNET Networks, Inc.*, “German universities embrace Linux”, August 29, 2007, news.com.com/German+universities+embrace+Linux/2100-7344_3-6205170.html)
- Small institutions, in particular, are taking advantage of open-source to share software solutions, data management, and expertise—modeling those solutions for others could take everyone a long way to reducing costs and still providing effective service (*Campus Technology*, L. Briggs, “Dare to Share”, May 2007, v 20, n 9, pp 42-48)

