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Does your student experience foster enrollment growth?

BY DR. MARK LOMBARDI

Colleges and universities across the U.S. continue to see stagnation or decline, but Maryville University in Missouri is thriving. In fact, Maryville has seen more than 80-percent growth within the last five years. How have we bucked the trend in a challenging environment?

As Maryville's president since 2007, I attribute our success first to great, outcome-focused academic programs and second to a tremendous emphasis on the student experience. We never lose sight of the fact that students aren't just learning while they're with us, they're living. Our approach considers the full spectrum of their needs, extending from recruitment to employment—and beyond.



Opening the door with access and opportunity

Providing accessible, attainable opportunities to earn a degree should be table stakes in higher education. At Maryville, we've taken tangible

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How to support the Learner Revolution on campus

BY LAURA ASCIONE
Managing Editor, Content Services

Work-relevant skills and competencies should be at the center of institutional leaders' plans as they strive to remain relevant and meet students' expectations in what is being called the Learner Revolution, according to a new report.

Education Design Lab's (EDL) The Learner Revolution: How Colleges Can Thrive in a New Skills and Competencies Marketplace reflects the experiences of more

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Want to be a leader in accessibility?

BY KATHERINE MILLER

[Editor's note: This post originally appeared on the AACC 21st Century Center.]

Visiting a new college campus can be bewildering. Even with appropriate signage it isn't necessarily easy to navigate to parking, the enrollment office, classrooms, restrooms and other vital services. For people with disabilities or mobility issues, things can be a lot tougher.

Adding to the challenge is that since voters approved the 2008 bond measure, Portland Community College (PCC) has seen extensive construction or renovations at all four campuses and most of its centers, bringing with it temporary detours, closures and office moves.

But a collective of staff from Disability

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steps to not only open the door for students, but to help them stay and succeed.

To help keep costs in check for our students, we froze tuition for undergraduate and most graduate programs in the 2018-2019 academic year and for four of the last five years. We also have greatly expanded our online programs, creating more flexible options for students with varying schedules, responsibilities, and interests.

In the fall of 2019, we will offer 12 additional programs, two master's degrees, and 10 bachelor's degrees. These degrees range from long-standing areas of study, such as a Bachelor of Arts in English, Sociology, or History, to newer disciplines in high demand, such as a Bachelor of Science in Data Science, Sport Business Management, or Senior Living Management.

Maryville also provides each student with a life coach who acts as a resource, knowledgeable academic adviser, and mentor. These life coaches help ease each student's personal transition into our community and guide students through academic and career-planning decisions. Each student brings a different set of knowledge and experiences to their time at Maryville, and our coaches help level the playing field and navigate their educational journey. We attribute this extra layer of support as a key factor in our 94-percent retention rate.

Creating a customer service-oriented culture

There's an unacceptable attitude in higher ed that tends to dismiss the quality of the student experience outside of the classroom, particularly regarding administrative tasks and needs. Students enter college with one perception of what customer service should be, based on interactions with brands that have mastered customer service, like Apple and Amazon. Then, at many institutions, they find themselves waiting for hours to get their student ID or making four different calls to four different offices just for an

answer to a basic question. This is not acceptable. Our job as educators is to make sure everything inside the classroom is challenging, pushing students to do their best. But—and this is the key—everything else should be as easy and seamless as possible.

At Maryville, we make a point to address the priorities that fuel students'

Educators must move from being oracles of knowledge to facilitators of a student's individualized learning journey.

lives. That's why you'll find excellent wi-fi connectivity throughout campus. We also strive to meet students where they are, delivering a level of customer service that aligns more with customer expectations and prioritizes ease and convenience.

One of our more recent innovations is the mobile "Solution Squad." This team of customer-first staffers assist students on the spot with a variety of tasks and questions, primarily in the areas of financial aid, student accounts, and registrar services. Squad members are available in the dining hall, at the campus Starbucks, in academic building lobbies, and the library, as well as other popular, high-traffic locations. It saves students time and hassle, and it makes it easier to serve those who do need or want to meet in the office.

Delivering education and job placement for the emerging digital transformation

Higher ed may be centuries old, but our methods cannot be. The ways we approach teaching, learning, and career preparation must prime students to enter the workforce and contribute immediately—and far into the future. Among other things, we need to acknowledge that students today have access to a previously unfathomable amount of knowl-


edge, long before they enter our doors.

It's not sufficient to provide a one-way delivery of content via lectures.

Educators must move from being oracles of knowledge to facilitators of a student's individualized learning journey. Through our Digital World program, all traditional, full-time undergraduate students receive a free iPad loaded with over 150 learning apps, equipping them to engage in the learning process based on their individual learning style. Dedicated faculty members serve as their guides.

In this digital transformation age, we have a wide breadth of technology and tools to support these journeys, but we're aiming beyond just digital literacy. Instead, we're helping students work toward digital fluency, or a deep understanding of the growing digitization of our personal and professional lives and how one can use these tools to shape their lives and their communities for the better.

We also partner with corporations and professional organizations to co-develop curricula laser-focused on industry needs and student outcomes. In addition, corporate partnerships allow us to facilitate hands-on working experiences while students are pursuing their degrees. As a result, employers tell us that our graduates enter the workforce ready to make meaningful contributions. The numbers bear this out, as we maintain a 97-percent job placement rate, delivering on the promise we make students at the outset of their journey.

Maryville continues to grow in this era of change because we have created an environment that welcomes students into our community, delivers the forward-looking education they seek, and provides the multifaceted support they need to live and thrive as they learn. I hope to see an industry-wide embrace of the opportunity in front of us to improve and modernize the student experience. 

Mark Lombardi, PhD, has served as president of Maryville University since 2007. In that time, Maryville has achieved unprecedented growth and earned national distinction for leading an exciting revolution in higher education.

Learner Revolution

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than 100 institutions as they reimagine their roles and grapple with changes in traditional students, the need for continuous learning as in-demand job skills evolve, and increased expectations from students who want to make sure their considerable financial investments are beneficial.

“Working parents and other adults looking for additional training; students who are from low-income families or are the first generation to attend college; and underrepresented minority students want the promise and value of higher education,” author Kathleen deLaski, who founded EDL, writes in the report. “New majority students and the employers who would like to ultimately employ them demand new mainstream models.”

The report predicts that “within the decade, all but the most exclusive learning providers, old and new, will compete for students at the competency and experience level rather than at the degree level. That is the principal paradigm shift of the Learner Revolution.”

An estimated three-quarters of higher-ed students possess at least one non-traditional characteristic, and for these students, the report argues, higher ed is long overdue for a redesign. These are the students behind the Learner Revolution.

This Learner Revolution consists of “a future where power [will] shift away from institutions that define degrees to consumers and employers who are beginning to measure learning by other yardsticks.” It won’t happen overnight, but deLaski notes that it is happening quicker than anticipated.

Research cited in the report demonstrates how some employers are beginning to look past degrees—they are moving away from pieces of paper and are looking more for skills in their hiring process. In fact, when EDL surveyed its employer partners, all 20 said they need new hiring tools that recognize credentials other than, or in addition to, a degree.



The report predicts that “within the decade, all but the most exclusive learning providers, old and new, will compete for students at the competency and experience level rather than at the degree level. That is the principal paradigm shift of the Learner Revolution.”

Over a five-year period, EDL worked with a number of institutions, including George Mason University, Arizona State University, Miami Dade College, and Harper College, to help institutions navigate the Learner Revolution and reframe thinking and design.

5 ways institutions can navigate the Learner Revolution

EDL’s research reveals five major ways traditional colleges and universities can revamp their existing models, or create entirely new ones, to meet the changing demands of the Learner Revolution.

1. The Platform Facilitator: A few institutions will be able to fashion themselves into Netflix-style distribution curators, while others will be content providers for those platforms, licensing courses, experiences, certificates, and other services.

2. The Experiential Curator: These institutions will double down on their

role as the curators of expansive learning experiences, using advances in assessment, the maturation of online and hybrid education, and the increasingly connected globe to provide, measure, and certify transformative experiences outside the classroom.

3. The Learning Certifier: These institutions are recognizing learning across a wide range of contexts, in particular helping students codify, even gamify, their out-of-classroom learning experiences and translate them into a coherent whole that makes sense to employers and themselves.

4. The Workforce Integrator: These institutions are building deep connections with employers, ensuring tight connections between the competencies learners acquire through their programs and the competencies needed for employment in specific fields or jobs.

5. The Specializer: These institutions are taking a niche specialization or characteristic, such as religious affiliation, and reimagining it. eSN

5 ways augmented reality apps are changing the game on college campuses

Here's how higher ed is using augmented reality apps to take academics and engagement to the next level

BY LAURA ASCIONE
Managing Editor, Content Services


Augmented reality (AR) has been one of higher ed's big buzzwords for a number of years, but it's not until just fairly recently that institutions have used the technology in practical ways.

But now, higher-ed AR apps are having a moment that extends past the novelty of Pokemon Go.

The Obelisk was constructed in 1896 from regional rocks and minerals, and its 281 stones are arranged in order by geologic time period. "There's a database connected to each stone, so whenever you touch any stone in the app, you can see where it came from, how old it is, and other information," says Arif Masrur, doctoral student in geography. "Eventually our goal is to also include

phones at logos, signs, posters, and landmarks on and around campus to view or retrieve school news, updates, retailer coupons, messages, videos and more. The app presents students with a new world of interactive entertainment options while at SUNY Orange campuses in Middletown and Newburgh, New York. "We plan on using AR in conjunction with our students' return to campus in August in order to enhance their SUNY Orange experience," says Vinnie Cazzetta, SUNY Orange's vice president for institutional advancement. "We host a series of events that welcome new and returning students alike back to our campuses. In conjunction with those events, and throughout the semester, we'll use augmented reality to help direct students to those support services that are so critical to their academic success."

4. Students of the Creative Media and Digital Culture program at Washington State University Vancouver created an AR app to engage visitors with the history and story of a local boarding school and orphanage. The app offers insight into the nuns who worked there and the students who attended Providence Academy in downtown Vancouver, WA. Students also developed an interactive website with a digital timeline that further showcases the accolades of Mother Joseph and accompanies the content of the application.

5. The cARdiac ECG AR app is an engaging and practical way to start learning about the ECG and heart fundamentals through augmented reality. Developed by Deakin University's School of Medicine and Eon Reality, the app leads users on an interactive journey to explore the fundamental concepts of cardiac anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology relevant to the ECG. 



Most higher-ed AR apps address a variety of things, such as bringing science concepts to life, improving student retention, and offering campus tours or glimpses of historical moments on campus.

Here's how five institutions have harnessed augmented reality apps to address campus needs and take learning to the next level.

1. Researchers in Penn State University's Department of Geography created an augmented reality app to give users more background about one of the oldest and best-known monuments on the school's University Park campus.

360-degree photos of the actual environment from where each rock was excavated."

2. Cal Poly Pomona uses augmented reality in its Pokemon Go AR library orientation and scavenger hunt. The "orientation" lets students, through use of the Aurasma app on their own devices or with a device borrowed from the library, walk through the library and find videos about varying services and the basics of finding information.

3. SUNY Orange is using AR to implement a student recruitment campaign. Imagination Park will enable SUNY Orange students to point their

The tide is turning for transformation in higher education

BY AUSTIN LAIRD

Higher education institutions have talked about the prospect of digital transformation for at least 10 years. Modernizing student information and administration systems has been promoted as the critical step to achieving this. But despite all the talk, few have even started to replace their outdated systems and upgrade their student experience to meet today's student demands.

For a long time, this inertia owed much to the lack of applicable systems with full functionality, which would allow a clean and pain-free break with legacy software. Risk-aversion was another telling factor. Early adopters are a rare breed in higher education.

Only now are we starting to see a mood swing in higher ed. Instead of hanging on for total transformation, they're changing on their own terms, one step at a time. New, agile systems are making it easier for universities to pick and choose the top priority areas for incremental transformation.

Institutions are asking different questions. The focus has shifted from "What's wrong with our systems?" to "How can we better conduct our own business?" From "How can we gather as much data as possible?" to "How do we analyze all this data and do something good with it?"

Cost is the main driver here. Few institutions can afford a huge outlay for total digital transformation. Equally, they can no longer afford to do nothing. The old systems don't provide the agility they need to offer an attractive student experience or respond to new market opportunities.

Universities must become people-centered systems

To meet modern expectations on service and connectivity, institutions must be people-centred. They need to meet people where they are on their journey. Whether you're a digital native or a post-retirement professor, the system needs to work for you. Increasingly, in the competitive

higher ed market, that experience will directly impact the bottom line.

The "term versus termless" roadblock is a good example of why institutions can't afford to wait. On a lot of old software, everything was based on the traditional Fall-Spring-Summer term sequence. That made total sense back then. Now, it doesn't. Non-traditional cohorts, such as mature or work-based students, may want instant access to courses, rather than waiting for the start of the next term. Institutions can't just turn away valuable income sources because the computer won't recognize them.

Instead, they need a system that will allow them to adapt their experience and be innovative in the way that they bring programs online, as the critical business need arises. Too often, they are trapped within a homogenizing structure that restricts any uniqueness that is important for the identity of schools, colleges, and universities.

At last year's Educause, there was plenty of interest in a microservices approach that allows institutes to iteratively deliver new functionality where it's going to add most value. Instead of a big bang overhaul, they can adopt new modules over time and enhance what they already have on campus.

Break free from the herd

This change of mood feels like it's catching. Think of it like people standing at the bus depot, waiting for a shiny new bus to take them all to the same destination. Except, it never arrives. Eventually, the most restless passenger gets fed up waiting. He or she chooses their own itinerary, hires a Bird scooter, and sets off with the wind in their hair. Then another follows suit. And another. Eventually, the depot is empty.

Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in the UK was one of the first on the scooter. They have launched their Student Journey Transformation


Programme (SJTP), which will provide a next-generation and personalized digital experience to more than 38,000 students and 4,500 staff, across any device, so they can better manage campus affairs.

MMU's needs are no different from other institutions. They face the same roadblocks in terms of bringing new programs online. The difference is their mindset. They are proactively pursuing the benefits of an improved student experience, rather than waiting for other universities to get there first.

Delivered in the Microsoft Azure Cloud, SJTP aims to improve both the service offered to students and the way staff works. With a more agile approach, they can reduce the time and cost required to adapt to sector changes and university innovation and enable data-driven decision making.

The result will be improved efficiency and streamlined approaches to service using responsive systems that will support changes to the student journey: from an applicant's initial inquiry to graduates becoming part of the alumni community.

The higher ed sector has never been one for sharp changes in direction, but we're finally seeing signs that the tanker is turning. The business incentive to work more effectively with data and embrace more agile systems is encouraging institutions to innovate, rather than keep on keeping on.

For the sake of students, tutors, professors, and administrators across the world—that's got to be a good thing. 

Austin Laird is product director, higher education, at Unit4. Laird has been a part of the higher education industry for over 20 years, in a wide range of roles from a university registrar assistant to product manager and industry technology strategist. Prior to Unit4, he held multiple pre-sales, product, and leadership roles at Oracle, including global director, education & research technology.

4 things my college did to more than double our graduation rate

From removing remediation to lowering student costs, this community college did all it could to improve graduation rates

BY DR. WILL AUSTIN

I've spent most of my career in the community college setting and much of that time has been as president of Warren County Community College (WCCC), a smaller New Jersey institution less than two hours from New York City.

A benefit to leading at a smaller school like WCCC is the opportunity to try new things, even radical things—without some of the challenges that might come when initiating change at a large institution.

One of my main goals at WCCC—and a goal of all types of institutions—is increasing the graduation rate. Community colleges nationwide have set a goal to reach a 50-percent graduation rate. We've undertaken a few initiatives at WCCC that have helped us more than double graduation rates, and many of these initiatives can be replicated on other campuses.

4 steps to improving graduation rates

Step 1: Remove remediation

At WCCC, we took a bold first step in our quest to improve graduation rates. By abolishing remedial courses, we immediately saw our graduation rates double. Remedial courses often become a trap for community college students—few actually complete the courses and those that don't are gated from the credit-bearing courses they need for their degree. Of course, this not a decision that is made lightly, and there are critics on both sides of the equation, but the immediate positive impact on graduation rates is undeniable.

Step 2: Credit adjustment

Second, we lowered our credit-to-degree ratio. At WCCC, an associate



degree is now 60 credits and a certificate is now 30 credits. While we can't take credit for the statewide change (no pun intended), soon after we lowered requirements in 2016, it became law in 2018 across New Jersey that associate degrees require no more than 60 credits. The legislation is designed to lower the cost of education and decrease time to graduation. We were ahead of the curve, and many of our students benefited as a result.

Step 3: Diversify teaching

Everyone is a teacher at WCCC: faculty and administrators. Even I teach. This is similar to how the first colleges in the United States were founded, and we wanted to get back to that successful model. Maintaining a presence in the classroom ensures I stay eye-to-eye with the most important component of the mission: the students. I can't make the best decisions on behalf of the institution without the first-hand knowledge and interaction I have with our students.

Step 4: Eliminate cost barriers

In examining remaining factors hindering the graduation rate, we couldn't ignore cost. We found that students were able to make their tuition payments, but then they couldn't afford to eat, pay their rent, or cover costs for transportation to and from campus. We know for a fact that at WCCC we had students who weren't academically successful because of the cost of course materials. That is unacceptable, but it is one area where we could affect change and wield our institutional purchasing power to benefit students.

We chose Cengage Unlimited to help dramatically lower the cost of course materials and to also give students access to a better learning experience. Cengage Unlimited is a digital subscription that gives students access to an entire digital catalog of more than 22,000 resources for one price.

To get the best deal for our students,

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College sustainability efforts grow

Community colleges' focus on the environment is making news

BY AACC 21ST CENTURY CENTER STAFF

[**Editor's note:** This post originally appeared on the AACC 21st Century Center.]

Last year, New Jersey's Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) announced that it's the first two-year institution of higher education in the country to reach a significant environmental milestone: carbon neutrality.



That means the college has minimized its carbon footprint to the point that it has no net emissions.

"For over a decade, the college has been working to reduce its carbon footprint and increase its energy efficiency. We are excited to reach this milestone in

protecting our campus environment and will continue to pursue programs and policies that enable us to maintain a leadership role in sustainability," RVCC President Michael J. McDonough said in a release.

But RVCC is not alone in its practices. More colleges are making headlines—and getting investments—for their eco-friendly efforts.

Two colleges leading the sustainability movement


North Carolina's Rowan-Cabarrus Community College embarked on a solar energy project after receiving a \$1 million donation. The donors, Fred and Alice Stanback, have donated another \$2.68 million to expand that project. When construction is finished on a nearly one-megawatt ground-mounted array and rooftop solar systems, nearly 2 million kWh of clean energy will be generated per year. These systems will provide energy equivalent to power 200 homes for a year, and avoid the introduction of roughly 2,000 tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

It'll generate a nice income for the

college, too—an estimated \$100,000 that can go toward student scholarships and other sustainability investments.

"This is more than a sustainable solar voltaic system. Once connected, the income from the energy produced will create an income stream for the college's foundation that will provide professional development and student scholarship funding for years to come," says President Carol Spalding. "This is truly the gift that will keep on giving."

Leech Lake Tribal College (LLTC) in Minnesota is working to help students prepare for environmental careers and to inspire the community to get involved in environmental issues. LLTC will integrate traditional ecological knowledge in STEM curricula and will support students and faculty engaged in place-based environmental research.

The work is supported by a \$100,000 grant from the American Indian College Fund (AICF) Scholarly Emergence for Environmental Design and Stewardship (SEEDS) program. 

AACC 21st Century Center Staff is a contributor to the 21st-Century Center.

Grad rate


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we went all-in with Cengage for all content across our campus. As such, we were able to structure a fee model that guarantees all Warren County students will pay one price—\$140 per year—for all of their course materials, no matter how many courses they take. With this change, we eliminated one cost barrier for our students and opened up an entire digital library for them. Of course, any large-scale change has its critics and its champions but, at the end of the day, this was the best decision for our campus to eliminate one significant cost barrier.

The cost of course materials is a challenge that affects graduation rates, but one that can be addressed with great corporate partners like Cengage. My advice to other institutions looking to address the cost of materials is to start small with one department and then try to scale it across campus. For example, since course materials in the STEM disciplines can be particularly expensive, try something new with your science department and use successes to grow support across campus.

Continuing the quest for 50

Like almost all community colleges, we continue to strive for that 50-percent graduation rate at WCCC. We currently

stand at 45 percent for all, 55 percent for African American students, and 75 percent for our Latino students, and I'm encouraged by the improvements we've seen from recent initiatives. By focusing on students' needs and initiating a few bold changes, other institutions can see similar improvements as we all work to get more students across the finish line to graduation. 

Dr. Will Austin is president of Warren County Community College in New Jersey and a member of the Board of Directors of the American Association of Community Colleges.

3 strategies to start reimagining the learning management system

Online learning, by and large, has become a vast, sterile wasteland of outdated content and pedagogy; here's how to start fixing it

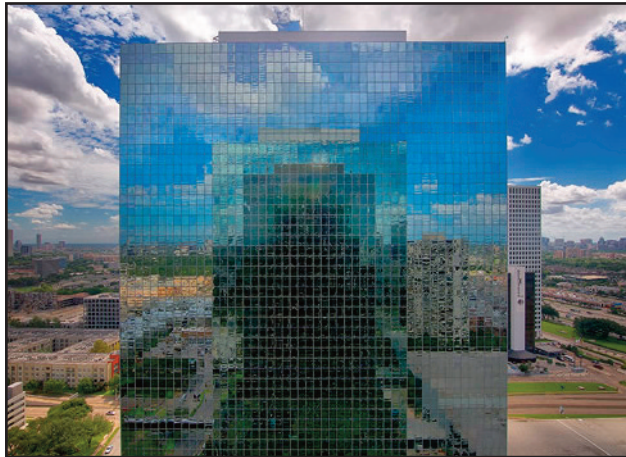
BY TOM HAYMES

I wrote several weeks ago that we need to deconstruct the learning management system (LMS) and then reimagine it from the ground up as a “learning” system, not a “management” system.

While there are exceptions, online learning, by and large, has become a vast, sterile wasteland of outdated content and pedagogy. Like many of our industrial legacy educational structures, the focus of the LMS on management over learning creates students that are merely widgets, not learners. It is time to fundamentally reimagine this space.

A number of years ago, I developed a framework called Ideaspaces to help me design an innovation center. It was and came out of a host of disconnected reading I was doing about what facilitated innovation and learning. I recognized that innovation and learning are basically the same thing. “Learning” is self-innovation; “innovation” is the scaling of learning to an organization and beyond. The underlying principles are the same and can be applied to all systems designed to facilitate and augment human intellect.

Ideaspaces is made up of three parts. First, the physical or virtual Space, which is the environment that facilitates creative thought and interactions. Second, once spaces are established, people need the Time to reflect and interact. Finally, the Structure of the organization, from a class to a company, needs to be designed to scale ideas across the larger community. This framework is directly applicable to our LMSs. Without oversimplifying a complex discussion, Ideaspaces allows us to



break down some of the basic needs any system will need to effectively facilitate learning.

Text is not the answer

A careful examination of the digital spaces that exist in our online environments reveals that they are still fundamentally based on textual expression. There are a lot of reasons for this, not least among which is the fact that most faculty, including myself, were trained in a world where text dominated due to technological constraints. Expertise in education is still measured through the lens of reading and writing. Technical restrictions in early learning management systems only served reinforce these biases because they struggled with rich media.

However, even as these limitations fell away, rich media continued to be seen as a supplement to the vast libraries of text that were rapidly developed online. I wrote out the class notes for my American Government classes to the tune of 40,000 words for my online courses. Course packs were created to ease this burden on faculty but were never really an effective solution due to a range of issues with them.

The evolution of online learning largely missed the fact that the world has made a profound visual transition. We like to think about the impact of blogs, online newsletters, etc., but what has really shifted has been the explosion of visual content from YouTube videos to Twitch live streaming to simple memes. This is the world the younger generation lives in and will be the cornerstone of work and thought in the digital world.

Our online spaces must be fundamentally redesigned with this reality front and center if we hope to facilitate modern pedagogy.

Time is a particular challenge in the online environment. On the face of it, online instruction offered a “new” modality: asynchronous learning. Of course, the part most of us completely missed was the fact that this is nothing new. Homework has always been asynchronous. By disconnecting entirely from the classroom, we have simply created classes that are entirely homework. No one would attempt this in the real world because we recognize the importance of our human interactions. Yet we seem to accept this online.

I struggle to get my students to meaningfully connect with the class and with each other. In the absence of a physical meeting, this struggle is amplified. There is no substitute for synchronous conversation and rhetoric in learning. Advanced video conferencing therefore needs to be a central part of any LMS strategy in order to promote live interactions. This is not just a technical question. Online pedagogy must emphasize these kinds of interactions

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How to use 360-degree video to engage students online and off

BY MFON AKPAN

In their personal lives, today's students have traded in reading for watching. Whether getting a makeup tutorial on YouTube or learning ways to crack the code of their favorite video game on Twitch, they use screen time to discover new content and expand their horizons.

In the classroom, educators have the choice to fight this trend, or to embrace it. I understand the apprehension many educators have to increase screen time in the classroom, but ignoring students' own learning preferences and inclinations is doing them a disservice. Video facilitates retention. As studies have shown, that kind of embodied learning can help students better understand the material, and immersive experiences help with retaining information.

I got a real sense for this while attending a virtual reality (VR) conference in Chicago when I put on an HTC Vive headset and was immediately transported onto a NASCAR race track. In the most complex advertisement I've ever seen, I was asked to change the race car's tire and then hand the driver a Big Mac. From those couple of minutes moving around, waving my arms into the blank air, I got a vivid look at the car as I worked my way around it, and that virtual burger is emblazoned in my mind.

If video technology could have me thinking about McDonald's this much, I knew it had potential beyond advertising.

Using 360 video to engage online students

When it comes to advanced video techniques, the potential is as wide reaching as one's imagination: an anatomy professor could use VR to take students inside the human body—The Magic School Bus style. A history teacher could take students to Ancient Rome to sit on a throne themselves.

As an accounting professor, I am limited in my ability to create a world

where I can “transport” my students; I deal with facts and figures, not great literature or historical artwork. But when it comes to the issue of engagement, accounting professors and educators that teach remote students, like I do, sure can use more of it.

Inspired by the potential of VR but faced with the realities of my own editing potential and the price of VR headsets, I started with a fairly basic, but transformative, video technique: 360-degree video.

360-degree video allows the viewer to pan their view left and right, adding a peripheral vision of sorts to static video by enabling them to get a sense of the complete circumference of the room. This means remote students can listen to a lecture while simultaneously taking in the notes I'm writing on the boards to the left and right; they can see the reactions and questions raised by other students in the room, giving them the sense that they are in the class—rather than just watching it.


Once I brought 360-degree video into the classroom, I saw an immediate increase in online course engagement and lesson completion rates. Online courses I built using this technique got three to four times the views of traditional videos, and 360-degree recordings now make up 50 percent of my most-watched videos overall.

Make video easy for yourself... and your students

While true VR is not yet scalable for most classrooms (the cheapest VR headset starts at \$199), there are ways for educators to incorporate the basics of video. If your students have smartphones, you can get cardboard VR sets for as little as \$12. To create my 360 video, all I needed was a Samsung Gear 360 camera and 45 minutes to stitch together a few scenes. Do not worry about being perfect right out of the gate. Start with simple techniques and build on top of them as you get more comfortable.

For educators anxious about getting started, the good news is students prefer content that is simple and short. I have often observed students tuning out as a video approaches the five- to six-minute mark; and in fact, the simple videos I create on the spot in my classroom often receive more positive feedback than the more complex videos I create in my office. In terms of length, three to four minutes seems to be the sweet spot, but your experience may vary. Pay attention to your students and note carefully what works, so you can replicate it.

Once you create a dynamic video, you need to make it easy for students to watch. I post my videos to YouTube so students can access them any time, I also make them available through National Louis University's learning management system, D2L. This way, students can watch my videos in the same platform where they are getting assignments, turning in papers, and taking tests. Students are used to hitting a couple buttons and watching a video play, and that shouldn't have to be different in your classroom.

Student preferences continue to change, and for educators to be effective we must continuously adapt. Using old pedagogical practices with digital natives will lead to frustration for both groups. By embracing the newest technologies, educators are able to grab the attention of students and hopefully pique their curiosity. Finding new ways to present information ensures students stay engaged and participate within the classroom. 

Mfon Akpan is an assistant professor of business at National Louis University in Chicago. He was originally inspired by the game Second Life, and began thinking about how VR could be applied in a game-like setting to teach auditing and accounting practices in an applied environment. Akpan is on the Education Committee of the VRAR Association, and gave a TedX presentation in 2018.

2 actions university leaders can take to impact student wellbeing

The acute wellbeing needs of young people today are at crisis levels; it's time to prioritize wellbeing outcomes

BY DR. HENRY G. BRZYCKI & ELAINE J. BRZYCKI

The acute wellbeing needs of young people today are at crisis levels, and higher-ed leaders know that college students require additional supports from their schools, parents, and counselors. In fact, The Council for the Advancement of Standards for Higher Education (CAS) has produced the new Cross-Functional Framework for Advancing Health and Well-Being to address the complex issues of health, well-being, flourishing, and thriving of college students in the context of a healthy community. Further, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) measures the degree to which higher-ed institutions are committed to student success and providing support for students' overall wellbeing across a variety of domains, including the cognitive, social, and physical.

Provosts, along with all president's council members, are required to provide leadership to university accreditations. They have to demonstrate the ability to implement CAS wellbeing standards and improve NSSE results. It is to the benefit of university leaders to prioritize student wellbeing outcomes—e.g., to meet national standards, retain students, and succeed in their mission as educators.

So then, why is higher ed not taking bold action to impact the dire wellbeing statistics?

Do we really need more data before acting?

Student wellbeing has been a problem for years

“In 2018, researchers who surveyed almost 14,000 first-year college students (in eight countries) found that 35 percent struggled with a mental illness, particularly depression or anxiety,” according to an article in Greater Good



The acute wellbeing needs of young people today are at crisis levels, and higher-ed leaders know that college students require additional supports from their schools, parents, and counselors.

Magazine. “Here in the U.S., college students seeking mental health services report that anxiety is their number one concern—and it is on the rise.”

A recent New York Times article states, “Most American teenagers—across demographic groups—see depression and anxiety as major problems among their peers, according to a new survey by the Pew Research Center. The survey found that 70 percent of teenagers saw mental health as a big issue.”

Clearly, we can agree that there are well-being problems in our society and that we are all struggling with how to impact them. Is the slowness to act not understanding how, or is it a matter of leadership courage? We challenge university leaders to take two actions today!

2 actions to take to address wellbeing in higher ed

Action number 1: Assess the wellbeing of all students

Provosts and other university leaders need a clear picture of their students' psychological wellbeing. First-year pro-

grams, academic advising orientations, and counseling and psychological services outreach initiatives are natural places to conduct universal assessments. People pay attention to what they measure—so choose your scale carefully, preferably one that focuses on aspirational goals and attributes of human flourishing.

Emotionally and psychologically healthy young adults possess the following qualities or attributes, which can be measured by the Ryff Psychological Wellbeing Scale:

- *Autonomy* – self-determining and independent, able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways, regulates behavior from within, and evaluates one's self by personal standards
- *Environmental mastery* – a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment, controls a complex array of external activities, makes effective use of surrounding opportunities, and is able to choose

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or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values

- *Personal growth* – a feeling of continued development, sees the self as growing and expanding, is open to new experiences, has a sense of realizing his or her potential, sees improvement in self and behavior over time, and is changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness
- *Positive relations with others* – is able to have warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; is capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; and understands the give and take of human relationships
- *Purpose in life* – has goals and dreams in life and a sense of directedness, feels there is meaning to present and past life experiences, holds beliefs that give life purpose, and has aims and objectives for living
- *Self-acceptance* – possesses a positive attitude toward the self,

acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities, and feels positive about previous life experiences


Action number 2: Train faculty in self across the curriculum

To experience self-knowledge is the height of social-emotional capacity and the most direct path to wellbeing. Therefore, educators require a tool bag of approaches to impact the self of their students. The Self Across the Curriculum is one research-based best practice available to university faculty that effectively combines well-being into classroom curricula.

Just as the popular university Writing Across the Curriculum program has two simultaneous goals—to teach writing skills through academic content and to use writing to teach subject content—the Self Across the Curriculum also has two goals: to teach self-knowledge through academic content and to use self-knowledge to connect with the content more thoroughly and deeply. This type of teaching and learning requires a different focus, an internal focus versus

an external one. It drives the learner to look inward first, to know one’s self and attain a sense of purpose, dreams, moral center, and personal strengths, so as to literally create or construct one’s self.

When the self becomes the lens through which students learn, students can balance cognitive with non-cognitive factors to become happy and whole people who are equipped to create a positive life and make contributions toward a better society.

Provosts and all higher education leaders have the moral obligation to take action today, just in time to meet the needs of today’s college students. 

Dr. Henry G. Brzycki and Elaine J. Brzycki are founders of a leading education research and professional development organization. Their groundbreaking integrated model described in their best-selling book, Student Success in Higher Education: Developing the Whole Person through High-Impact Practices, has been described as “a revolution.” They can be reached at Henry@Brzyckigroup.com.

System

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above all else because they are the most likely to be neglected by the modalities of what we now consider distance education.


Structure is often the most obvious factor but is at the same time the hardest to implement because it usually requires a systemic rethink of what you are doing. There are many layers of this in online (as well as more traditional) learning and I have discussed them in previous blogs.

In the context of the individual online course, we need to develop structural elements to facilitate the synchronous learning community building that digital learning has disrupted. Assignments, assessments, interface design, tools, etc., all need to be repur-

I struggle to get my students to meaningfully connect with the class and with each other. In the absence of a physical meeting, this struggle is amplified.

posed toward overcoming this deficit.

Most of our students struggle to find connection with each other and the larger community of learning that education should represent. We have to recognize that the isolation of online learning only exacerbates this isolation. We therefore need to create technological systems that create space, time, and structures

that leverage the rich media environment of the digital era and bend those to the central pedagogical challenge of creating communities of learning first and foremost. If we start from these bases, we can start the process of augmenting deep learning experiences with digital technologies instead of degrading those experiences in pursuit of making them more convenient. Our world will be richer for it. 

Tom Haymes is a technologist, photographer, teacher, social scientist, project manager, and educational technology leader. He was design lead for Houston Community College’s West Houston Institute and is author of the forthcoming book Discovering Digital Humanity (ATBOSH Media). His website is ideaspaces.net and he tweets at @ideaspacesnet.

A shift toward wellbeing to address student mental health

A new program at Northwest Missouri State University keeps students on track

BY DAN BUREAU

Like every college and university in the nation, the University of Memphis has struggled with a rapid and ongoing rise of student demand for mental health services. We're also grappling with the realities of the mental-health crisis in America: According to a recent study published in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, U.S. teens and young adults today are more distressed and more likely to suffer from major depression than their counterparts of the same age in previous generations.

The conclusion is that when it comes to issues of mental health in young adults, things are getting worse, not better. The study's findings indicate we need to reconsider how we approach student mental-health challenges. Ultimately, this means making an imperative shift toward identifying what students need to succeed and learning how we can help them address the issues that contribute to depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem before the development of clinical symptoms.

At the University of Memphis, we recognized that we could never provide one-on-one outreach to every student who is feeling challenged by college. But we also knew we needed to do more, especially for those students who do not or will not use the existing services available. This is what drove our decision to examine how we could reach students in new ways.

How we use technology to better address student mental health

Our initial interest was really in the student mental-health area, but we realized that very often seemingly routine issues such as academic challenges, financial pressures, or homesickness can precipitate more acute problems



down the road. These are the areas where guidance and assistance early on and “in the moment” can really help improve student lives—and prevent issues from snowballing into larger mental-health concerns.

What's more, we realized we needed to connect with students where they spend a large percentage of their time, which today is on the internet. All of these considerations guided us toward an online solution that could provide self-directed help, available confidentially by students on their own time in their own way.

We discovered there are a variety of ways to approach wellbeing online. But it's critical that any solution provides immediate “on demand” (and private) access to resources and services so students can feel comfortable exploring any problem they're experiencing. Issues like test anxiety, how to make new friends, or feelings of depression may not be topics every student is comfortable discussing with educators, classmates, or even friends and family. Some of these are topics students may not even recognize as problems. A well-

researched and comprehensive online platform must anticipate needs and identify assistance that students may not even know they need.

Ultimately, our search led us to consider YOU at College, which we first learned about at the 2018 NASPA National Conference in Philadelphia. We were impressed with the platform's initial results. Surveys of students using the YOU portal show that 98 percent of first-year users learned a new skill or resource to support their wellbeing. In addition, 76 percent of students reported improved stress management and 87 percent reported learning of campus resources they had previously not used.

Reaching students where they are

With YOU at College, students create a personalized profile and complete several assessment tools to get started, then they gain access to tips, content, and resources customized for their exact needs. Everything is 100-percent confidential.

We launched YOU@Memphis in

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5 principles to guide online learning programs

Research shows how online learning programs vary in the extent to which faculty are prepared to teach and manage them

BY LAURA ASCIONE
Managing Editor, Content Services

Faculty preparation for teaching online courses varies widely by institution and is far from consistent, according to a new report gauging how online learning programs are managed.

The report, a joint effort of online program manager Learning House and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), follows up on previous research showing that almost 90 percent of surveyed AASCU schools with online programs experienced barriers around faculty acceptance of online learning, along with the increased effort faculty devoted to developing online courses.

Research shows that finding and equipping faculty members to teach online courses is one of the biggest concerns AASCU members say they grapple with.

This most recent report presents survey responses from 95 AASCU chief academic officers responding to questions about how institutions recruit and train online faculty.

“Today, online and hybrid courses comprise 38 percent of the courses offered at AASCU institutions, and despite an overall decline in higher education enrollment, the number of online students continues to increase,” says Dr. George Mehaffy, AASCU’s vice president for academic leadership and change. “To meet this demand, institutions are rapidly developing and deploying online courses, but the level of faculty support varies widely, ultimately impacting the quality of both the faculty and student experience.”


Survey responses yielded five key findings about online learning programs:

1. Online and blended learning is significant at AASCU institutions, with 67 percent of courses taught by full-time faculty. Ninety-eight percent of those full-time faculty members are expected to teach online courses as part of their regular workload.

2. Training and development of faculty who teach online is not consistently mandated, and 45 percent of this required training is focused primarily on LMS or technology use instead of best practices around instructing online. Additionally, faculty contracts can sometimes prevent the mandating of training and development opportunities.

3. Evaluation of faculty who teach online is not universal, though 90 percent of faculty do receive student feedback at the end of each course. Seventy percent of supervisors evaluate faculty annually, and 18 percent do so once per term, however peer-to-peer evaluations are rare.

4. Faculty engagement with online learners is often not defined by set policy, and many AASCU institutions lack a formal, defined policy for faculty member’s interactions with online students, which could include how often faculty must post on message boards, or how quickly they must respond to a student post.


5. Concerns surround the hiring of adjunct faculty, despite the fact that 55 percent of undergraduate general education courses are taught by adjunct faculty members. Seventy-three percent of AASCU institutions turn to adjunct faculty to deliver online courses due to the flexibility to allows for addressing variations in enrollment. 

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November 2018 and the reaction has been extremely positive. We conducted some early outreach to build enthusiasm, focusing on gaining the acceptance of the Student Government Association and tailoring emails for students, faculty, and staff to tout the site when it was introduced. We’ll be pushing adoption of the portal this semester via posters, table tents, and brochures distributed throughout campus.

Our early feedback has been very exciting. The quality and reach of the YOU content make the portal so engaging for students. With a combination of well-researched existing resources from leading behavioral professionals, custom-created content developed by the YOU at College team of experts, and localized information provided by the University of Memphis, the YOU@Memphis experience looks and feels very customized and relevant for our unique campus. Some of our early student feedback pointed to resources that were missing or could be improved, and the YOU team was very helpful in working with us to make improvements to better meet the needs of our students.

Although early adoption has been slowly building, we think acceptance of the portal will accelerate and it will become a strong component of our campus culture. We’ll be incorporating information about YOU@Memphis into our new student orientations for more than 2,500 incoming students, and we’re confident it will become a “must have” resource for students, particularly as we use student feedback to continue to refine the relevance of content and how it’s delivered. 

Dan Bureau is the associate vice president for student success at the University of Memphis.

How can higher-ed better prepare students to enter the workforce?

Students need to be given every chance to practice analyzing information

BY ELLEN ULLMAN
Editorial Director, Content Services

eCampus News recently spoke with Matthew Glotzbach, chief executive officer of Quizlet—the mega-popular site that offers tools for students to make study sets that can be used for flashcards, learning activities, and games—about how higher-ed leaders can better prepare students to enter the workforce.

however, soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and negotiation are just as important for a successful career. Innovation is based on teamwork, sharing ideas, and building new things together as an organization. And, of course, as young professionals develop expertise in their job, it's likely they'll become managers and mentors to others. We generally find that a combination of hard and soft skills is what sets one can-

Group projects versus solo assignments should be encouraged in school to build teamwork skills and provide opportunities for applied theory. Offering interactive lessons that encourage students to discuss ideas and brainstorm solutions is crucial practice for the real world. These exercises help to answer the age-old question, “Why do I need to know this?” by letting students connect the dots and explore problem-solving in a safe environment. Well-designed edtech tools can be great for promoting such collaboration and critical thinking. Gamified learning is also a technique that higher education can implement to foster teamwork and friendly competition.

Students need to be given every chance to practice analyzing information. There's so much data available today that distilling information has become a vital skill—just like coding and graphic design. It can be challenging to discern fact from fiction in this era of information overload, so it's imperative students understand where to find accurate information and how to draw their own conclusions.



Q: What professional skill sets are the most valuable in today's digital economy?

A: A successful career in today's digital economy involves developing and demonstrating both hard and soft skills. As we know, coding isn't just for creating the next social network or gaming app. Every sector, from finance and fashion, to mining and hospitality, needs employees who can leverage technology, as well as understand, analyze, and manipulate data. Whether it's using JavaScript, Python, or HTML to develop apps that sell mortgages or track exercise on a watch, to using R and SQL to analyze healthcare data, coding and technology skills are everywhere.

In addition to technical know-how,

didate apart from another—and serves to build great leaders of the future.

Q: How can higher-ed institutions and edtech companies better prepare graduates to enter the workforce?

A: We recognize that technological innovation will continue to evolve the jobs of the future. Educators have the power to equip students with evergreen skills that will always be necessary in a career, like learning how to learn and fostering a sense of curiosity to take throughout life. Students can really benefit from teachers setting a precedent that ongoing learning is normal and healthy so that incoming employees are agile and able to take on whatever comes their way.

Q: What are students' opportunities for continued learning and how are these opportunities contributing to the future of work?

A: Many schools offer continued learning programs to help individuals develop stronger skills in conjunction with a career or to pursue a new interest before adjusting their path. It's exciting to see a growing number of subject-matter-driven tech courses, like Marketing Technology (Martech), which combine technical skills with industry-specific applications. For people who didn't have the opportunity to ramp up their tech skills in college, boot camps and

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online micro-degrees are a great option. In 2018, coding bootcamps were on track to graduate more than 20,000 students with a reported 34 percent average salary increase in their first jobs after course completion.

It's important to recognize that continuing our learning is not a sign of weakness or inability to stay on top; in fact, it's quite the opposite. Making a proactive move to learn where your industry is going, or to explore new and emerging technologies that may affect your job, is a sign of awareness and strategic thinking. We are moving to a new reality in which ongoing and continuous learning is not just a nice-to-have, but a requirement to stay relevant. Education institutions are growing in number because there is a demand and a deep interest in feeling prepared for the future.

Q: What unique skills does Quizlet look for when hiring new graduates?

A: More than having a specific skillset, Quizlet is always looking for candidates who are genuinely passionate about our company's mission to help people practice and master whatever they want to learn. We value a wide array of different skills, from data analysis and coding to communication and problem-solving. We also look for people who share our values, which are softer skills like acting with urgency and being humble, candid, and open. What we've seen is that being successful in today's workplace is less about one specific technology expertise and more about being open to learning and adapting.

We believe that everyone on our team has something unique to offer, and their different skillsets complement each other. In fact, we host hackathons at which every department comes together, from our designers and engineers to marketing and people ops, to brainstorm the next big idea. Some of our most successful features have stemmed from hackathons—including Quizlet Live (a collaborative learning game), Quizlet Flashcard Themes, and the OCR scan feature, which makes it easy to create study sets from printed worksheets.

Q: How have hiring expectations evolved, especially with the availability of edtech and a changing higher-ed landscape?

A: Non-traditional students are a growing demographic—from older professionals seeking a new career to parents looking to re-enter the workforce, to millennials working full-time and fitting in classes at night and on the weekends. Diversity in course options and the advent of edtech tools, especially consumer-learning platforms that help augment studying and learning beyond class time, are democratizing access to education. This evolution to help every person who wants to be a student succeed is opening up a larger pool of qualified applicants to the job market and is changing what companies look for in prospective candidates.


A traditional college diploma used to be the item that got you the job. But in today's increasingly digital world, resumes with certifications, specific online courses, micro-degrees and even social-media experience are catching

the eye of hiring managers. The most competitive candidates will be consummate learners. People who can show that they understand today's landscape but are actively learning new skills and subject matter will be a step ahead. And let's not forget, because hard skills and soft skills create a well-rounded candidate, self-driven learning projects and side hustles can be signs of a great candidate too.

Q: What advice would you give soon-to-be college graduates looking for their first full-time job?

A: Keep learning. Learning doesn't stop when you receive a diploma. Job seekers who embrace this ethos will be miles ahead when looking for their next role.

When you've landed a job interview, be prepared to talk authentically about your capabilities, giving concrete examples of both hard and soft skills. Emphasize how you've learned throughout college, or how you've invested in education through online courses, micro-certifications, and bootcamps. That will show a potential employer that you're adapting to the changing needs of an "always learning" workplace culture.

Also, don't discount your life experience. I have hired employees that are very talented at things like software engineering, finance, and marketing, but also do things like volunteer as an emergency medical technician, teach baseball or yoga, or make furniture as their passion—all real examples. Teaching yourself something new and being a team player will always be an asset for any company. 

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Accessibility

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Services, Facilities Management Services (FMS) and the Web Team is creating innovative changes that have made PCC a national leader in accessibility. And like so many advances these days, the changes are digitally based.

Federal law requires the college to ensure access to its programs. But



according to Kaela Parks, PCC’s director of Disability Services, there are a variety of ways to achieve that. Many schools’ websites offer static maps that show the location of accessible building features such as automatic door openers, elevators, and accessible restrooms and water fountains, she said. However, individuals who rely on assistive technology often experience barriers that require them to request an alternate format, such as tactile graphics or text-based descriptions.

“We’re trying to honor the spirit of the legal imperative to ensure access to programs as a whole by reducing the need to trigger those accommodation-related requests,” Parks said. “We do this by making sure it’s more accessible on the front end.”

Maps disclose accessible features

The solution, which is still a work in progress, lays in creating user-friendly maps of floor plans that show the accessible building features and are easily updated.

To begin, Disability Services inventoried the accessible features for all buildings at all campuses and centers. PCC Web Teamers Gabriel Nagmay and Lydia Rediske then created a plugin–software that can be used with a WordPress website–that allows PCC personnel to add placemarks to maps indicating the accessible features.

Architecture and drafting students, who served as interns on the project, used computer-aided drafting software to generate the floor plans. The Web Team optimized the floor plans to be readable on mobile devices and uploaded the maps, after which the interns added the placemarks.

Sylvania Campus’ maps went live in December 2013, and the remaining cam-

puses and centers were added over the following year. PCC’s Bond Program works with FMS to ensure updated floor plans are supplied to the Web Team, and Disability Services edits and adds placemarks to keep the maps current.

Now, anyone with a computer or mobile device can go to www.pcc.edu/AccessMap, choose a particular building and a floor, and receive a map that clearly indicates the location of all accessible building features, each with its own text-based description. The maps are keyboard navigable and screen-reader friendly, so the visually impaired can listen to synthesized voice directions. Tactile versions that complement the electronic maps are also available upon request.

“The bottom line is that this collaboration allowed these different groups to work together,” said Parks. “None of us could have done this alone, but together we were able to create something that had not existed before.”

There’s more to this story! This story was originally published on Portland Community College’s blog. Read the full post at <https://www.pcc.edu/news/2017/03/wayfinding/>.



Katherine Miller is a communications specialist at Portland Community College.

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