



Major Trends to Impact College in the Next Two Decades March 2009

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Students: Trends related to students and their expectations:

- **A demographic shift in who we serve:** Students of color (including greater diversity in high school students), immigrants and young working adults (25-44 yrs) will continue to be the fastest growing segments in an otherwise aging population and workforce.
- **Millennial studentsⁱⁱ will expect college tailored to their interests:** Millennials will expect customization, active & collaborative learning. They will expect learning to occur at high speed with instant feedback and payoffs. This population, with values formed by the internet, will be a growing proportion of the total enrollment.
- **Colleges will be challenged to serve the different needs of low-income working adults and the continuing large subset of millennials directly from high school:** Millennials and low-income working adults with their different values and expectations will be in the same classes, thus presenting challenges to serve each group well.

Teaching: Trends in the learning environment and future skills needed:

- **Learning will occur in media-rich environments:** New media will enable technology- savvy students to immerse themselves in context-rich settings, to express themselves individually and also to connect to social groups for affinity and support. The students who developed their digital literacy building worlds and role playing in games will expect learning to parallel those environments. Students will want technology to support collaboration with each other.
- **Learning will take place anytime/anywhere:** The internet will expand the learning environment to include home, work, & college - anywhere. Students will expect to learn on their own calendar **not** be governed by quarters, semesters based upon agrarian calendars (24 x 7 x 365).
- **Less about prescribed sequence, more about customization:** Students will expect to be in charge of creating their own educational pathways. Those pathways may not result in traditional credentials nor have clear end points but rather options for continuous upgrading of desired skills.
- **Emphasis in teaching will be on processes and less on facts:** Given the quick availability of factual information, the learning emphasis will be about understanding analytic processes and less about specific facts.
- **Learners will need to develop soft skills along with technical skills and general education:** The future economy will need workers with key soft skills including: information literacy, critical thinking and problem solving, cultural competency, global perspective, workplace ethics, systems thinking related to green sustainability, business and technology literacy.

Faculty: Trends impacting faculty role in teaching and learning:

- **Faculty role will change from command of content to facilitator of learning:** Roles in the learning process will continue to evolve with faculty serving less as those with facts and previous analysis under their command and serving more to set high expectations and helping students to be critical thinkers and adaptive learners. Some aspects of the current faculty role, such as curriculum development, may become separated from the teaching faculty function and developed regional, statewide, nationally or internationally rather than by faculty within each college.
- **Faculty role will increasing involves assessment of student abilities/skills/knowledge, regardless of where the learning occurred.** Faculty will need to play a key role in validating documented skills gains including prior learning assessment. If academic credentials (traditional degrees and certificates) are still needed and expected by future students, faculty will need to base award of those credentials on evidence of skills acquired in many different learning settings.

Faculty: Trends impacting faculty working conditions:

- **Worker mobility may increase:** Portable benefits, if available, will allow a faculty member to be more of a free agent who can build upon her skills and take them anywhere. .
- **Mostly not hired yet:** 60 percent of colleges' full-time faculty will retire and be replaced in the next 15-20 years.

Colleges: Trends impacting colleges as organizations:

- **Traditional college environments do not fit non-traditional student needs:** Institutions that predominately mirror traditional colleges in terms of expecting students to direct their learning within the current course schedule and advising systems will continue to have much lower retention among low-income students with weak previous education backgrounds than for more traditional students. The evidence is growing that other models better fit students who are less than college ready, or who view themselves as workers first and students second.
- **College's separate missions will become increasingly integrated:** As the role of colleges in society changes to focus on providing higher level of skills needed in the workforce for almost all adults, the colleges' (silo) missions will coalesce and unify around that economic demand focus.
- **Higher education will be a network – not separate stand-alone colleges:** Colleges in isolation (with their own admissions, transfer acceptance rules, etc) will be less desirable for students who will expect to gather learning from anywhere and to customize their educations.
- **College boundaries will continue to blur:** Changing technology and related student expectations, will lead to more less distinctions between high school and college, between CTCs and universities.

Colleges: Trends impacting funding and accountability

- **The funding architecture will need to change to match to the permeability of 21st century higher education:** Current revenue models with state contribution, student tuition and fees dedicated to each separate district will not match well to the blurred boundaries of the 21st century institutions. The funding architecture will need an environment that students' customize to their own interest and where institutions are significantly more collaborative than at present.
- **Current financial aid systems do not meet changing student needs.** Most experts agree traditional financial aid is broken and rising student costs need to be brought under control. "Fixes" may include shifting the focus from merit back to need (coupled with performance), loan forgiveness coupled with service, 13th year and other re-designs.
- **External expectations for accountability will increase.** Decision makers at colleges and external policy makers will expect dashboard type business intelligence system to support their role. External groups will want evidence that the investment in colleges meet industry needs and that all types of students are increasing their skills, knowledge and ability at expected rates and to expected levels.
- **Expectations for "real-time" accountability will grow.** External accountability for colleges currently tends to be met by annually reporting what happened to student or former students. Future accountability will need to be more timely and frequent than these annual snapshots of the past. Faculty will need to "see" students making their customized educational journey not just at their college but at all the places where students gain skills, knowledge and abilities.

ⁱ The following sources were used for this summary of trends:

- Student Technology Needs Assessment Results, November 2008, SBCTC - <http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/g-strategictechplan.aspx>
- Student Listening Web Survey – 2008, SBCTC
- Final Environmental Scanning Summary Trend Document, 2006-07, prepared by the Workforce Education Council.
- James E. Rosenbaum, Julie Redline, Jennifer Stephan, Summer 2007. Community college: The unfinished revolution. *Issues in Science and Technology*.
- Meeting the Needs of Millennial Students found at: http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/students2/intouch/archives/2007-08/vol16_no1/01.htm
- Map of Future Forces Affecting Public Education found at: <http://www.kwfdn.org/map/map/23/Media-Rich-Pervasive-Learning.aspx>
- Futurist Thomas Frey on Future Trends in Education, Jobs, Transportation found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWVvLwR5bVA>
- Nine Shift: Work, Life and Education in the 21st Century, Julie Coates & William A Draves, 2004, LERN Books - <http://www.nineshift.com/>

ⁱⁱ This is a reference to students who do not know a world without the web and digital technology. They are sometimes referred to as digital natives or goggle generations or "homo zappiens." Demographers divide these students into three groups:

- **Millennials:** Born between 1981 and 1994 (children of the Baby Boom) who are currently 14 to 27 years of age and currently 50 percent of the student population.
- **Post-millennials:** Born between 1993 and 2005 and currently in pre-school, elementary school and middle school (age 4 to 13)
- **Children of Millennials and Generation X:** Born in 2006 up to now and the next 20 years and currently 3 years of age or younger. A quarter of all students in 2028 will be from this generation – the grand children of the Baby Boom generation.