Rowley: Higher Education in the Midst of a Pandemic: A Dean's Perspective
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Higher Education in the Midst of a Pandemic: A Dean's Perspective

Abstract: *This paper suggests changes that are likely to occur in higher education resulting from the coronavirus pandemic from a retired dean's perspective. Global events like the Great Depression and World War II led to significant societal and cultural changes. This global pandemic will have the same impact. Higher education will not be the same in the future. What makes it difficult to predict its future is the fact that colleges and universities have no predetermined guidelines for how to offer an entire academic program during a worldwide health crisis. Administrators are having to figure out how to respond on the fly. This isn't to say there is no future for higher education. However, no colleges or universities will be able to conduct business as usual. For those who survive this changed environment, a significant re-assessment of every aspect of its enterprise will be required. This will include financial viability, mission, academic programs, program delivery, technology, library and student services.*

Keywords: *higher education, financial viability, program delivery, technology, in-person instruction, virtual instruction, student services, library services*

摘要 *(威廉·J·罗利： 大流行中的高等教育：一位院长的观点）：本文从一位退休院长的角度提出了由新冠状病毒大流行引起的高等教育中可能发生的变化。大萧条和第二次世界大战等全球性事件导致了重大的社会和文化变革。这种全球大流行将产生同样的影响。未来的高等教育将不再同日而语。很难预测其未来的事实是高等院校没有针对如何在全球性健康危机期间提供一个完整的学术计划的预定指南。管理人员必须弄清楚如何即时做出响应。这并不是说高等教育没有未来。但是，任何学院或是大学都无法照常开展业务。对于那些在这种变化的环境中幸存的人，将需要对其企业的各个方面进行重大的重新评估。这包括财务可行性，使命，学术计划，计划交付，技术，图书馆和学生服务。*

关键字： *高等教育，财务可行性，计划交付，技术，亲自指导，虚拟指导，学生服务，图书馆服务*

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摘要 *(威廉·J·羅利： 大流行中的高等教育：一位院長的觀點）：本文從一位退休院長的角度提出了由新冠狀病毒大流行引起的高等教育中可能發生的變化。大蕭條和第二次世界大戰等全球性事件導致了重大的社會和文化變革。這種全球大流行將產生同樣的影響。未來的高等教育將不再同日而語。很難預測其未來的事實是高等院校沒有針對如何在全球性健康危機期間提供一個完整的學術計劃的預定指南。管理人員必須弄清楚如何即時做出響應。這並不是說高等教育沒有未來。但是，任何學院或是大學都無法照常開展業務。對於那些在這種變化的環境中倖存的人，將需要對其企業的各個方面進行重大的重新評估。這包括財務可行性，使命，學術計劃，計劃交付，技術，圖書館和學生服務。*

關鍵字： *高等教育，財務可行性，計劃交付，技術，親自指導，虛擬指導，學生服務，圖書館服務*

Zusammenfassung *(William J. Rowley: Hochschulbildung inmitten einer Pandemie: Die Perspektive eines Dekans): In diesem Papier werden aus der Perspektive eines pensionierten Dekans Veränderungen vorgeschlagen, die im Hochschulwesen infolge der Coronavirus-Pandemie wahrscheinlich auftreten werden. Globale Ereignisse wie die Weltwirtschaftskrise und der Zweite Weltkrieg führten zu bedeutenden gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Veränderungen. Diese globale Pandemie wird die gleichen Auswirkungen haben. Die Hochschulbildung wird in Zukunft nicht mehr dieselbe sein. Was es schwierig macht, ihre Zukunft vorherzusagen, ist die Tatsache, dass es an den Hochschulen und Universitäten keine vorgegebenen Richtlinien gibt, wie ein ganzes akademisches Programm während einer weltweiten Gesundheitskrise angeboten werden kann. Die Administratoren müssen herausfinden, wie sie auf die Krise reagieren müssen. Das heißt nicht, dass es keine Zukunft für die Hochschulbildung gibt. Allerdings werden keine Colleges oder Universitäten in der Lage sein, Business as usual zu betreiben. Für diejenigen, die dieses veränderte Umfeld überleben, wird eine bedeutende Neubewertung jedes Aspekts ihres Unternehmens erforderlich sein. Dazu gehören die finanzielle Tragfähigkeit, der Auftrag, die akademischen Programme, die Bereitstellung von Programmen, die Technologie, die Bibliothek und die Dienstleistungen für Studenten.*

Schlüsselwörter: *Hochschulbildung, finanzielle Tragfähigkeit, Programmdurchführung, Technologie, persönlicher Unterricht, virtueller Unterricht, Dienste für Studierende, Bibliotheksdienste*

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Резюме *(Вилльям Й. Роули: Высшее образование на фоне пандемии. Взгляд декана): В данной статье автор, занимавший до выхода на пенсию пост декана, размышляет об изменениях, которые по всей вероятности произойдут в системе высшего образования в связи с пандемией коронавируса. Глобальные события, среди которых – мировой экономический кризис и Вторая мировая война – привели к значительным общественным и культурным изменениям. Последствия глобальной пандемии будут такими же. Высшее образование уже не будет прежним. Что препятствует пониманию того, каким оно будет в будущем? Прежде всего тот факт, что ни у вузов, ни у университетов нет четких ориентиров относительно того, как должны работать академические программы в период глобального кризиса, вызванного пандемией коронавируса. Руководители должны разработать стратегии, с помощью которых они будут реагировать на кризисные ситуации. Но это не означает, что у высшего образования нет будущего. Понятно, что ни колледжи, ни университеты не смогут вести дела, как раньше, до кризиса. Тех, кто сможет выжить и пройти через эти трансформации, ждет переоценка и переосмысление практически каждого аспекта их деятельности. К этим аспектам относятся способность нести финансовую нагрузку, госзаказ, академические программы, разработка новых программ, технологии, библиотека, услуги, предоставляемые студентам.*
Ключевые слова: *высшее образование, финансовая нагрузка, исполнение программ, технологии, занятия в режиме оффлайн, онлайн-занятия, услуги, предоставляемые студентам, услуги библиотеки*

College Closures

There will be fewer small, private, liberal arts colleges left standing. Many colleges and universities were facing a merger or closure before Covid-19. Those with traditionally low enrollment and inadequate endowments have not survived simply by raising tuition dollars (Van Rooijen, 2015). This will not only reduce the opportunity for students looking for a small, intimate college setting, but these closures negatively impact the financial and social life of entire communities of which they are a part.

In a survey covering 17 years of financial data, Edmit, a Boston-based college advising company, reported more than one-third of private, four-year colleges in the United States are on shaky financial ground (Thys, 2020). Although elite colleges and universities with a great deal of resources will survive this pandemic, the future of small, private liberal arts colleges and universities with traditionally small enrollments and limited endowment is tenuous.

Financial Viability

The top priority for college administrators will be to keep an institution's doors open. This coronavirus pandemic has caused a financial earthquake in the higher education world. An institution's financial soundness will be key to its survival. Using historical enrollment trends to carefully do financial planning have been upended. With the onset of this pandemic, institutions across the country have closed their campuses to protect the health of students, faculty and staff. Although colleges and universities are an educational enterprise, they are also a business. For this reason, in spite of uncertainty, a majority of colleges and universities last spring were planning to open their campuses to faculty and students this fall.

There are factors that will make a return of students to campus untenable (Hayes, 2020). It could be anything from a serious outbreak of coronavirus to a governor forbidding an opening to faculty members refusing to teach. Budgets have been already been decimated due to the closing of college and university campuses, and an extended closure would only make matters worse. According to Edmit, institutions are already on track of losing 10% of tuition revenue in the upcoming year and 20% the following year if fewer students return.

A concerning factor is the uncertainty about how many students will return to campus in the fall. Enrollment is the life blood of most schools. Due to financial constraints, many young adults may delay college for a year or more or decide to stay closer to home. For those students who do return to school, how many will choose to live in dormitories that are not designed for social distancing or take their meals in

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the Commons? According to a College Board report titled Trends in College Pricing 2019 (Ma, Baum, Pender, & Libassi, 2019), tuition and fees account for 39% of the budget for resident students living on campus. Campuses with fewer students on campus may not be able to maintain their financial viability.

To make matters more challenging, according to the Institute of International Education's (IIE, 2019) Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange, over a million international students accounted for 44.7 billion dollars to the U.S. economy in 2018. For some colleges and universities, this is a significant revenue source. According to a New York Times survey of all public, 4-year colleges, private colleges competing in Division 1 athletic programs, and elite colleges with research programs (Weiyi, Ivory, Smith, Lemonides, & Higgins, 2020), some 6300 coronavirus cases from 270 colleges were reported. It is impossible to determine how many international students will return to campuses across the country due to health concerns.

In this new environment, much beyond a college's control, administrators must be aggressive in maintaining the institution bottom line. For example, it may be necessary to place a freeze on hiring additional faculty and leaving staff positions open due to resignations and retirements. Some institutions will be forced to lower salaries and reduce benefit packages. Hiring adjunct professors may be temporarily on hold.

All academic programs will be evaluated to determine the degree to which they contribute to the institution's fiscal viability. Proposed programs will not be approved unless they can be shown as self-sustaining. The same standard will hold for current programs. Those not self-sustaining or sustainable over the long haul will be considered for termination as long as they don't diminish the university's educational mission. This process will be a painful, but college administrators will not hesitate to terminate a program in order for the college or university to survive another day.

Enrollment Decline

Enrollment in American colleges and universities will continue to decline. Institutions have been struggling to reach enrollment goals for quite some time. According to the National Students Clearinghouse Research Center (Fain, 2019), enrollment in the U.S. has declined for eight consecutive years. This is the result of competition, the high cost of a college education, and fewer high school graduates in the upcoming generations of students. Given this pandemic, a decline in enrollment will continue as potential students decide to complete their college education closer to home, take a gap year, or forego college altogether.

At the very least, in order to stabilize enrollment, institutions will need to effectively answer the question, "Why should I attend your school?" The Chronicle of Higher Education (Wyllie, 2018) reported data from a survey administered to 100,000 high school students throughout the nation by Eduventures, a consulting company, to learn what students considered when choosing a college. Students wanted to know what it would cost, if a program they were interested in was offered, the schools reputation, and what career and job opportunities would be available. Further, they wanted to know the degree to which the value of a college education is worth its cost, the degree to which a school was a good fit for them, and how close the institution is to their home. Savvy recruitment officers will need to have adequate responses to these areas of concern.

Institutions must be able to distinguish themselves from other similar institutions. A small, Christian, liberal arts university in the northwest is a case in point. The vast majority of similar colleges and universities are located in small communities or rural areas. This university distinguishes itself from these other institutions by marketing its location in a vibrant, urban setting, where dozens of corporate headquarters offer internships prior to graduation.

What notable programs do they have that others do not? Are there keystone programs for which they are known? Are there professors who are known nationally for contributions to their field of study? How long after graduation does it take for students to be accepted into graduate school or gain employment?

An aggressive recruitment plan must be in place to capture those high school graduates who are thinking about staying closer to home for their college career. According to Inside Higher Ed (Jaschik, (2020), if

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high school seniors can't visit a campus because of the pandemic, an attractive virtual tour of the campus can be a good substitute. At the same time, some institutions are extending the deadline to reply to offers of admission.

Program Delivery

Virtual instruction is here to stay. This pandemic has demonstrated that technology can be used far more effectively and extensively than most schools imagined. According to a report by the Chronicle of Higher Education less than a month prior to the opening of the fall term (Here's our new list of college opening plans, 2020), there are multiple plans for delivering instruction, including in-person, online, and hybrid instruction. Notably, 27 percent of colleges and universities as of July 30, 2020 were waiting before making a decision on how they will offer instruction to students. In-person instruction on campus will be desired by both students and faculty, but virtual instruction will be in the mix.

Given the unknown trend and course of this and future viruses, schools will need to be nimble and flexible. Decisions will need to be made quickly if their academic program is to be delivered by in-person learning on campus, online instruction, or a combination of both. Programs may be offered on one platform but quickly change to another depending on the latest health directive. This will be a challenge. There will be times when in-person learning is desired on campus, but instruction will be delivered virtually because it is safer to do so.

Some colleges will schedule longer days while shortening academic terms in order to create a less dense environment on campus (Burke, 2020). At the same time and for the same reason, other colleges are planning to expand terms over a twelve-month year.

It should be noted that the increased use of virtual instruction will result in fewer students on campus. This will negatively impact the budget of colleges and universities who depend heavily on the fees generated by students living in dormitories and eating in the Commons.

Nevertheless, more colleges and universities will be forced to deliver academic programs online in order to attract busy graduate students and "catch" students who want to stay home. For Some graduate-level programs will be wholly and permanently offered online.

Although this new world is not what students, faculty, or institutions chose, it will be to everyone's benefit to learn the degree to which virtual instruction advances the learning of students. Unfortunately, most of the studies on the effectiveness of online learning were done prior to the coronavirus pandemic. Although there were positive results if only that online learning is as effective as traditional teaching, the results across all of these studies were not conclusive (Nguyen, 2015).

This question must be answered if faculty, other educators, and the general public are going to give credibility to online learning. At this point, significant stakeholders hold it as inferior to in-person instruction (Fain, 2020). Critical to this question is whether or not this teaching/learning strategy can be an effective for disadvantaged students.

Technology

The use of technology will have an increased role in the teaching/learning process. Although online programs offered by colleges and universities are not new and have increased in number in recent years, nothing could have prepared higher education for the complete closure of campuses and the need to instruct students in a way other than in-person instruction. Institutions have learned they can use technology far more effectively and extensively than they had previously envisioned.

Although students are usually well-versed in the use of technology aids to learning, many faculty members were unfamiliar with putting their courses and teaching online. Given the unpreparedness of IT departments to this sudden and unexpected crisis, it is remarkable how quickly colleges and universities were able to move teaching, research, and services online (O'Brien, 2020). Problems occurred as was to

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be expected, but most faculty members acknowledged the help technology staffs have rendered. Without their expertise, high education would have come to a complete stop.

Given the coronavirus continues out-of-control, the use of technology begun last spring will continue unabated. IT experts will now be at the forefront of assisting institutions to offer their academic programs with the use of technology. However, placing courses online is only the beginning. The use of virtual reality (VR) to instruct students will increase (Miller, 2019).

This sophisticated technology has been around for some time, but as a result of the pandemic, its use in colleges and universities will increase, with the potential for transforming how professors teach and students learn. Beyond listening to a faculty member's lecture and responding to it, virtual reality will enable students to explore things typically viewed in a science lab and view art in world-famous art museums around the world without ever leaving home.

Larger and well-resourced institutions will turn to using the 5g network. Schools will need the expertise of the IT staff to implement it. This advanced network will provide multiple advantages to higher education (Top 7 benefits 5G will bring to higher education, 2020). For example, students and faculty can more quickly connect with each other as the system can support a million devises without any delays. This network is noted for its lower latency, which lessens the time between a request for data and the time it is received. Everything is faster, from providing lessons in virtual reality, providing feedback to students, and downloading videos. The 5G wireless network fosters experimentation and innovation, which will be important as technology is used more and more for teaching and learning.

Library Services

The demands on library services by students and faculty will expand. An educational role for college libraries is nothing new. As a standard principle of the profession, it was reaffirmed in the latest revision of the Standards for Libraries in Higher Education (Association of College and Research Librarians, 2018). According to the Standards, "Libraries partner in the educational mission of the institution to develop and support information-literate learners who can discover, access, and use information effectively for academic success, research, and lifelong learning." Additionally, "Library personnel collaborate with faculty and others regarding ways to incorporate library collections and services into effective curricular and co-curricular experiences for students."

In spite of these lofty principles, library services were not prepared to deal with the closure of colleges and universities requiring entire academic programs to be placed online overnight. Even more challenging, libraries may not return to the old normal when the pandemic is under control (Cox, 2020).

With in-person classes uncertain and social distancing required, the demand for a library's print

collection, one-on-one assistance from the staff, and research in the building itself are likely to be severely curtailed. With the overwhelming increase of students and faculty demanding access to a library's resources online, increased efforts to digitize everything will become paramount.

Particularly challenging will be determining how to serve students and faculty when face-to-face interactions are impossible. For example, a pilot study at a university in Canada was conducted

to determine the effectiveness of a librarian providing research and reference help through virtual office hours (Remple, 2019). The availability for virtual help was initially met with excitment, but fewer students used the service the longer the study was in progress.

Placing courses online will necessitate an increased involvement of library staff in the teaching/learning process. It will mean helping professors incorporate library resources into their curriculum and assisting students to access and use this information to reach learning goals.

Graduate students and faculty will need to continue their research with minimal face-to-face help from the library staff. Without access to research laboratories or the means to travel to primary research locations, library staffs must be alert to and instruct researchers in the latest technologies. Instead of hard copies stored in an office, researchers will need to keep their research data online and determine ways to disseminate it since in-person presentations will be restricted.

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Budgetary implications will take center stage. Additional and significant investments will be necessary to keep pace with technological advances related to the teaching and learning process.

Often placed in the center of campus, college libraries have always been the hub of the academic mission of the institution. They will now take center stage.

Health services will have an enlarge role on campus. According to a American College Health Association survey (The covid-19 pandemic's effect on campus health services: A snapshot of operating status and response, 2020), most colleges have included health services staff members to their pandemic response teams, allowing them the opportunity to provide professional expertise in planning an institution's response to the pandemic. They will continue to keep institutions apprised of the latest health directives.

Notably, college health officials responding to this survey indicated they were prepared to develop plans that address future contingencies. Not surprisingly, the association's recommendations include placing fewer students in dormitories and practicing social distancing. Most school responding to the association's survey reported delivering a majority of health services and mental health counseling through telemedicine and tele-counseling, respectively. Fac-to-face opportunities will be limited.

The survey further indicated that some schools do Covid-19 testing in their health centers, while some conduct testing outside their buildings. More urban area school are likely to conduct coronavirus tests on campus than those located in less crowded locations. Fortunately, more than half of the respondents indicated they were notified of testing members of the college community at off-campus locations.

Significant challenges indicated by college health officials include transitioning to meeting with students through virtual means, effectively communicating with students, having access to adequate testing supplies, and isolating sick students on campus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Considerations for institutions of higher education, 2020) have made specific recommendations that impact student services in order to keep students safe upon their return to campus. They include opening residence halls but with a lower capacity, practicing social distancing, and purchasing grab-and-go meals from the Commons.

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The College Experience

The college experience will be unlike any other in the past. College is a unique experience for most students, especially new freshmen. It provides new experiences and significant challenges. For most students, it all adds up to a positive and life-changing experience. It may be the first time away from home for an extended period of time. Students meet new friends, adapt to new roommates, have coffee with one of their professors, eat in the Commons, participate in clubs and organizations, attend athletic events. However, until the coronavirus is under control, none of this will be the same.

Staggering the return of students to campus, placing fewer students in dormitories, practicing social distancing from faculty and other students, scheduling smaller classes, washing hands, and wearing masks as recommended by The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (Considerations for institutions of higher education, 2020) is nothing anyone expected. Neither is the recommendation that participating in large gatherings including athletic events should be organized in such a manner as to guard students and others attending them from the spread of the coronavirus. Athletic conferences and athletic directors are trying to decide if college sports should be curtailed or temporarily put on hold.

Will these changes attract potential students who expect the college experience to be what it has always been? Will continuing students want to return? Will normal ever return to normal? Only time will tell. College administrators will have to be creative in balancing safety measures with providing a positive experience for students.

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