Presidents and Student Success:
Repositioning to a Student-Centered Institution

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ABSTRACT

Now reopened following the pandemic, each institution is in the process of assessing its impact and adjusting its institutional model to assure sustainability in the future. Returning totally to the 'status quo ante' is not a viable option as some repositioning is required. This study highlights three critical elements that inform this process from the perspective of the presidency. First, significant environmental trends and their impact are presented. Upon analysis, improved student success emerges as a critical driving force in repositioning. Second, an overview of successful institutional programs and initiatives that foster a student-centered institution are examined concluding with a construct for a repositing design. Finally, adjustment to presidential leadership strategies to facilitate an institutional repositioning plan are suggested.

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As the pandemic subsided and institutions were able to reopen, it became clear that their interim and long-term viability would require repositioning and change. The post pandemic environment presents college/university presidents with the dual responsibility of managing the current campus while guiding the evolution of a future sustainable organization structure. This study will examine significant trends facing higher education and conclude that a focus on *improved student success* is critical. Consequently, an overview of successful institutional programs and initiatives that are characteristic of a *student-centered university/college* will be outlined. When summarized a construct for a repositioning design is presented. Finally, anticipated changes to presidential leadership style and strategies are suggested.

Impactful Environmental Trends

Higher education exists in an environment of complexity and volatility. The list of trends is extensive, encompassing perspectives across the higher education landscape. See for example governing boards (AGB, 2023), accreditors, Higher Learning Commission (Gellman-Danley, 2023), Hanover Research (2023), state higher education executives, (Harnish & Laderman ,2023), national survey (Gallup-Lumina, 2023), planners, (Motley, 2023, March 15), business officers, (NACUBO, 2022), and technology (RNL and Modern Campus, 2023).

As Ekman notes, "No trend washes over all colleges and universities in the same way, nor does a trend dictate an institution's destiny" (2023, p. 1).

For the purposes of this study, trends are organized in three clusters; (1) those identified by presidents as of most importance to their institution, (2) student enrollment, characteristics and recruitment trends, and (3) trends and views of colleges and universities of the future.

President's View of Critical Trends

The most comprehensive view of presidential concerns is found in the annual Survey of College and University Presidents conducted by Inside Higher Ed and Hanover Research (Jaschik & Lederman, 2021; 2022; 2023). Respondents focused their attention on the financial stability of their institution. In the 2021 survey, most presidents reported confidence in their fiscal stability over the next five (82%) or 10 years (79%). The 2023 survey reported similar presidential views with 82% expressing confidence in their institution's fiscal stability over the next five years, 78% over the next ten years. Those respondents viewing the future fiscal stability in a positive light reported projected increased enrollments and enhanced revenue streams as contributing factors. Presidents who viewed the next few years in a more challenged position cited tuition pressures, state support, and inflation as fiscal stressors. The influx of federal recovery funds had a significant positive impact on institutional financial position (O'Leary & Williams, 2023). This revenue stream ends in 2023 and will impact future institutional budgets.

Other receiving presidential attention include (a) expanded expenditures and resource in response to student mental health, (b) altered employment policies to give employees more latitude in remote work, (c) digital transformation to both in the administrative infrastructure and the instructional delivery modes (example, hybrid courses, all online programs, etc.), and (d) issues related to campus race relations.

The Supreme Court decision on affirmative action is 'on their radar screen.' Impact and responses are yet to be implemented consistent with federal guidelines (US Department of Justice and US Department of Education, (2023).

Student Enrollment, Characteristics and Recruitment Trends

The following highlights current and anticipated enrollment trends, important characteristics of college populations, and changes in student recruitment and enrollment management strategies.

Enrollment Trends

Foss (2022) identified three mega trends that significantly impact college enrollment patterns. First, the traditional undergraduate market is shrinking. Second, the market is becoming more diverse. Third, the market is becoming more segmented. In short, enrolling new students, especially from traditional cohorts, will become more competitive. Even with targeting enrollment from other cohorts (for example adults, international students, transfer students, etc.), enrollment growth will be a challenge. Institutions that do not understand the impact of these trends do so at their peril.

For the past decade, higher education has faced a gradual decline in student enrollment. This trend accelerated during the pandemic. Projections based on high school graduation data suggest that the decline will continue for the foreseeable future. *The Knocking at the Door* analysis concludes.

> In previous decades, institutions relied on an ever-increasing number of high school graduates to fuel growth. But that long period is coming to an end. . .. Institutions will have to focus on supporting current students and improving retention and completion rates, while also focusing on adult students. This is not new, but these projections should underscore the importance of those critical functions (Bransberger, et al., 2020, p. 1).

In February 2023, WICHE conducted an additional analysis of graduation date following the two-year pandemic. About 2% fewer students were enrolled in public schools, fall 2021, than projected. Enrollment variations suggest the pandemic had a greater impact on historically underserved populations, making future projections more difficult. (Bransberger, 2023). Sharp differences in enrollment trends continue among students of differing groups. *First-generation students* now represent a third of all college students (Whitley, et al.,2018) while nineteen percent of all undergraduates reported has having a *disability* (PNPI, 2022). Changing patterns of enrollment for students *of racial and ethnic* backgrounds are well documented (Foss, 2022). Each group presents different needs and challenges requiring each institution to develop specific programs and strategies. The extent to which an institution's planning is based on enrollment patterns of the pre pandemic environment recruiting, enrolling, and completing student cohorts will be of limited success (Espinosa, 2019).

Grave (2021) merged WICHE data with census, immigration, fertility rates, interstate migration, and other available databases to build a more inclusive analysis of enrollment projections. The impact of these projections is unique to each college/university. Location, marketplace position, institutional mission, history, fiscal position, and organizational characteristics all play a role in planning for the institution's future.

The last two years have shown a slight slow done in the rate of decline as well as a slight increase in retention rates returning enrollment to close to pre pandemic levels (Downs, 2023; Schwartz, 2023; Spitalnick, 2023).

Trends across three student populations offer possibilities for enrollment growth, but only with targeted institutional repositioning. In fall 2022*, transfer* enrollments continued to decline, but at a slower rate. Analysis highlights nuisance transfer trends which need be factored into regional and institutional projections (Transfer and Progress, 2023). An increase in *international students* enrolled in American higher education continued following a significant decline during the pandemic. This source of enrollment is not uniformly available across all regions and colleges and universities. Most international students are interested in on-site or hybrid courses, with limited interest in on-line programs (Martel & Baer, 2022). Finally, the *adult* learner sector proves the largest opportunity for enrollment growth. Direct ties to business and industry with programs response to needs, combination of stackable credentials with degrees, flexibility in programming are a few expectations that call for institutional repositing (Fong & Etter, 2023).

The growth in *dual enrollment* programs is another trend affecting overall higher education enrollment. The number of participants is growing annually, supported by state and national efforts. The design of these programs varies, guided by state regulations. Public colleges and universities are more inclined to participate than private colleges. By comparison, students from under-represented populations are less inclined to participate. In sum, dual enrollment programs have enhanced access when other student cohorts are in decline with growing number of high school graduates starting college with experience in post-secondary courses. (Cassidy, et al., 2020; Kilgore & Wagner, 2023; Mehl, et al., 2020; SREB, 2020; Taylor, et al., 2022).

Dual enrollment programs present several challenges that require thoughtful institutional review and response to achieve their full potential. First, the assurance of academic quality requires consistent attention. Sessions with high school and college discipline faculty to discuss content and pedology are necessary. It might be advisable to include faculty from all institutions (high school and collegiate) in a area to assure consistency in expectations and performance. Such sessions also provide an opportunity for appropriate faculty development and/or collaborative research. Second, planned opportunities for academic support for participants need to be provided. Collaboration between high school counselors and collegiate advisors needs to be designed. Finally, appropriate data on student success needs to be collected and shared to constantly evaluate and improve dual enrollment programs.

Presidents should monitor dual enrollment program success through appropriate channels. Annual review with K-12 leadership will inform and strengthen the arrangement.

Student Characteristics

College students are not a homogenous population. For example, cohorts can be created by enrollment status (full time/part time, undergraduate/graduate, first year, senior year, etc.) or using demographic descriptors (ethnicity, sex, geographic location, etc.). ETS and College Promise have developed 10 populations of college students and the ecosystems to support their collegiate experience (ETS & College Promise, 2023). In an analysis for four-year liberal arts colleges, EAB used public/private, institutional selectivity level, and income level of students to describe current and future enrollment challenges across this sector (Rhyneer, 2022). Traditional aged students entering college Fall 2023 spent most of their secondary education during the pandemic. Several surveys of this cohort illustrate important characteristics. More are interested in attending a school close to home. A larger percentage express mental health concern (NASPA/Uwill, 2023). These students' express interest in a combination of instructional modes including face to face, hybrid, and total remote courses. They express a growing preference for flexibility, choice, and equity in their college experience (McCormack, 2023). Regardless of institutional choice, students in this cohort expressed expectations for on campus activities and events. Finally, they view education as a route to a career and are interested in active learning. (Bobek & Schnieders, 2023; Danaher, 2023; ECMC Group, 2023; Hanover Research, 2023a, 2023b; RNL Modern Campus, 2023).

The popularity of online and hybrid learning across all students' cohorts is documented in a recent study. Prior research reported the preference for online learning among adult and part

time students. Current research has found a similar preference among undergraduate students regardless of institutional type. (Coffey, 2023; Garrett, et al., 2023; Hall; 2023; McComack, 2023).

Student Recruitment and Enrollment Management

Evidence of changing student college selection patterns and institutional recruitment strategies are emerging. While some pre pandemic trends continue, new actions are identified. During the fall 2023 enrollment season EAB combined survey data from 20,000+ high school students with data across 1,100 partners and interviews with college enrollment teams. Mental health, academic preparation, and the value of a college education were student expressed concerns. Responding students expressed high expectations for digital experiences, a eagerness for in-person events and experiences, and a changed time frame for the college selection process. (Donaher, 2013).

The ECMC group analyzed data from seven national surveys. Cost continued to be the top concern of the Gen Z teen cohort. While expressing belief in the value of post-secondary education, 63% of those responding expressed an interest in pursuing less than a four-year degree. Education leading to job and career was favored by most of the survey respondents (ECMC, 2023). During the same period, ETS conducted a study to better understand the impact of the pandemic on the student's entering college, fall 2023. When compared to previous studies, respondents noted that financial challenges prompting cost and location to be viewed as important selection factors. Experience with on-line and virtual learning became new considerations. Finally, such college characteristics as safety and sanitation entered the selection process (Bobek & Schnieders, 2023).

The importance of the college/university website as the first point of contact was documented in the survey by RNL-Modern Campus. Ninety-three percent of high school students responding reported using this tool to obtain initial information. Over half of students responded, liked or expected websites to show personalized content and provide a virtual tour. Three fourths of the respondents who took a virtual tour reported 'likely 'to apply and enroll (RNL & Modern Campus, 2023).

Hanover Research conducted a survey of over l000 students admitted for college or university for fall 2023 semester regarding their selection experience. An increase of l9% of the respondents reported 'proximity to family/home' was a key factor in deciding where to apply, contrasted to 2022 findings. Close to half (45%) of admitted students made their enrollment decision on affordability. Email was the preferred communication preference by 69% of the respondents (Hanover Research, 2023).

Institutional strategies to accommodate the changing student recruitment and enrollment environment were underway prior to the pandemic, but with uneven success. Pelletier (2016) chronicled the findings of an AASCU symposium on needed institutional changes to manage enrollment, revenue, and retention issues. Anthology reported that "81% of institutional leaders consider improving enrollment and learner retention toa top priority for 2023" (Anthology, 2023,

p. 1).   The Association of Governing Boards (AGB) suggests that governing boards need to better understand the institutions enrollment strategy (RNL, 2020).

New models for enrollment management call for a more comprehensive, coordinated set of services with the focus on student success. College Board outlines a more robust role for enrollment leadership across the student experience (Montoya & Pitts, 2019). Case studies and models for a more responsive enrollment management are found in Anthology (2023), Carley-Butler (n.d.), Huron Consulting Group (n.d.), and Rettig, (2021).

Three needed changes to institutional enrollment management were articulated across these studies. First, an expanded use of data to guide planning and performance is warranted. Second, closer coordination with financial aid (Anderson, n.d.; Green, n.d.; Taylor, et al., 2023). Third, an expanded role and close coordination for the Registrar (Kilgore, 2022).

Characteristics of Future Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities are in the process of assessing the impact of the pandemic and the future environment on institutional viability. Repositing plans and strategies are unique to each institution. Factors including, but not limited to, location, mission, institutional type, size, student demographics, and fiscal support texture each institutions plans. Studies and analysis have produced an array of alternative future models (Deloitte Center for Higher Education Excellence, 2020; MIT, 2022; Selingo, 2020; Selingo, 2022; Selingo et al., 2021; TIAA-EY Patheon, 2020). Studies focusing on an institutional type include research intensive universities (Radecki & Schonfeld, 2020; Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities (UERU), 2022). Volk and Bendix (2020) and Marcy (2017) considered the future of liberal arts colleges, while Lester (2020) and National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD, 2020) outlined models for the community college of the future.

Common to all future models is *student success* as the primary factor in institutional repositioning.

In summary: The Challenges to Presidents. The current and future landscape presents a challenging set of expectations for colleges and universities. Presidents are cognizant of the environment recognizing that financial and enrollment trends are of prime concern.   Cost and career relevance will drive future enrollment from an increasing diverse student population. Increased flexibility in mode of instructional delivery, scheduling, and services, supported by increased use of technology and informed by data-driven decision making, will characterize successful institutional repositioning. Evidence would suggest that a *focus on student success* built around *a student-centered institution* offers a powerful focus for insuring institutional viability.

Programs and Initiatives that Contribute to Student Success

A review of the literature identifies several programs and initiatives with documented evidence of positive contribution to student success. Initiatives are found in all quarters of the institution. Evidence also documents that the impact of these activities is limited without clear and

comprehensive integration. As institutions consider their future, they may want to adopt or adapt any or all of these elements. Key to future success will involve building on institutional history, mission, and characteristics while responding to the realities of the current and future environment with redesigned programming. The work of Achieving the Dream (2018), Bass (2022), Crow and Dabbers (2015), Deloitte (n.d.), and Grawe (2021) provide examples across differing institutional types.

Academics and Learning

Evidence exists that quality teaching impacts student success. Efforts to assist both full time and adjunct faculty constantly improve their instructional design and skills can be found in most institutions (Gyurko, 2016). Resources are needed to continue supporting faculty development consistent with the needs of current students.

The following are three clusters of programs and initiatives that have documented success in assisting with student success.

Instructional Delivery Modes and Models

Faculty experience with remote learning characterized instruction during the pandemic. It has had a lasting effect. The 2023 Faculty and Technology Report/EDUCASE found 53% of faculty preferred on-site teaching, down from 73% in the 2019 survey (Morrison, 2023).   The survey reported that faculty felt that "no single modality is clearly the 'best,' and faculty are certainly willing to teach in non-preferred modes (Coffey, 2023). In person, hybrid and remote modes of delivery provide opportunities for flexibility in meeting the needs of the differing sectors of the college population. In a study comparing student and faculty satisfaction with differing modes of delivery, Young and Bruce (2020) found in-class mode preferred, but satisfaction with both hybrid and distance modes growing in acceptance.

Guided Pathways Model

The Guided Pathways Model, introduced in 2015, is a comprehensive reform strategy focused on the community college mission. Individual colleges redesign programs and support systems to assist students explore, choose, plan, and complete programs that support their career and educational goals (Bailey, et al, 2015). This strategy has been introduced state-wide in several locations, individual institutions have embraced Guided Pathways, national associations have joined with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) in promoting the model, and incentive funding has been provided through federal, state, and foundation sources (EAB, n.d.). Jenkins, et.al, (2021) reviewed six years of research on the Guided Pathways. This review provided the Community College Research Center (CCRC) to issue a Federal Policy Brief outlining lessons learned and future strategies (CCRC, 2021).

The model has been expanded to assist 4-year institutions in implementing this reform strategy (York, et al., 2019). The Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities' (UERU) *Boyer 2030 Commission Report* recommends a guided pathway approach across the undergraduate curriculum (UERU, 2022).

High Impact Practices

The ten teaching and learning practices widely utilized and found to be beneficial to a wide range of undergraduate students are known as High Impact Practices, They include first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences (Core courses), learning communities, writing intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, community-based learning, internships and capstone courses and projects (Kuh, 2008). Few institutions offer all ten. Evidence suggests that a student needs to participate in at least two HIPs before there is an anticipated positive impact on student success. The Boyer 2030 Commission report recommends at least two HIPs be integrated into each undergraduate program.   Kilgo, et al. (2015) findings support the practices as pathways to student success while Johnson and Stage (2018) did not find a high relationship between high-impact practices and higher graduation rates.

Student Affairs

Like academic affairs, student affairs are facing the impact of the new environment. On most campuses, the wide range of programs and services are organized as separate offices, often viewed as silos, each with its own priority and agenda. This arrangement does not meet the demands of the current and anticipated students. The future of student affairs is the topic of several studies and suggested redesign (Bass, 2023; Chamberlain, et al., 2022; Chesley, 2021; New, n.d.; Watermark, 2022). A review of the critical services and redesign options are necessary to strengthen student success.

Student Services

Advising, counseling and mental health support, and financial aid are student services with the recognized potent for influencing student success. Career services and first year programming are additional levers for redesign. In many cases, redesign is necessary to meet the demands of current and future student populations.

    Advising. A comprehensive review of the evidence of the impact of holistic advising practices was conducted by Feygin, et. al. (2022). They concluded:

> Holistic and comprehensive interventions that combine multiple components to meet student needs to improve student outcomes. Proactive communication with sustained follow up that spans a student's trajectory through college improves student outcomes. Student success can be bolstered when colleges provide a robust set of nonacademic support through comprehensive case management (p. 1).

This analysis complements the work of Karp, et al. (2021) resulted in an evidence-based practitioners guide. Chamberlain and Burnside (2021) suggest a change theory model for college to use in building a more robust advising system. The Career Leadership Collective, an initiative of AASCU, highlights the needs and strategies necessary to integrate career advising with ongoing advising assignments (Career Leadership Collective/AASCU, 2021).

Organization. Effective holistic advising requires a different organizational structure than the more traditional model. Three alternatives have emerged as best practices. Particularly among community colleges, advisors use a *wraparound model*. They can assist students in connecting to needed services, both on campus and in the community (Hunt Institute, 2022; McCann & Pechota, 2022). Second, is the *One Stop Shop model.* Enrollment services (recruitment/admission, registrar and financial aid are organized in a common location (Perry, 2023). Similarly, student success centers may include advising, tutoring, writing/math assistance, peer support, career planning, and other student support units in a common location (EAB, 2013; Hanover Research, 2023; Power, et. al., 2019; Whitley, et al., 2020). Finally, *campus wide* initiatives to improve institutional culture and support reform efforts are increasing. The Caring Campus project had over two hundred participating community and four-year colleges (Burnett, et al., 2023). Ithaka+Sr9 is coordinating a project, CCASSE, studying the organization of academic and student include centralized services and greater interdepartmental collaboration (Blankstein & Wolf-Eisenberg, 2019).

Counseling and mental health support. The mental health of students became a priority during the pandemic. The impact of student mental health on student achievement is well documented (Leonhardt, 2020; The Health Minds Network, 2020; Trela, 2008). Institutional services to respond include counseling centers, use of technology, peer and faculty support services. The crisis continues as documented by the NASPA/Uwill survey of student affairs leadership across131 institutions. Recent student survey shows a slightly improved picture reflecting several years of increased attention on most campuses (Blake, 2023). The shortage of available mental health professionals continues, making services to all students with mental health issues problematic (NASPA/Uwill, 2022; Ruch & Coll, 2022; Coll, et al., in press). Coll et al. (in press, 2023) have analyzed the role of faculty in supporting student mental health.

The importance of institutional response to student mental health issues has extended beyond the historical focus on psychological issues. Colleges have expanded student services to include, for example: food pantries, transportation assistance, day-care, legal assistance, temporary housing, and emergency financial support. An all-campus focus on student health has been adopted across institutions from all sectors. Three major programs have coordinated institutional planning, provided models and materials, as well as grant support. Documentation of importance of these initiatives to the student-centered institution and student success are growing (Ruch & Coll, 2022; Schiemann, 2021).

Financial Aid. The cost of college, ways of affording and potential student debt are one of the major issues affecting matriculation, continuance, and completion. This places the Financial Aid Office at the center of a student-oriented college/university. The National Association of Student Financial Affairs Administrators (NASFAA) outlines this centrality and information flow across the institution (NASFAA, n.d).

A study conducted jointly by the National Association of College Admission Counselors (NACAC) and NASFAA identified elements of the college selection, admission, and matriculation that need attention with emphasis on their impact on students of color. The results generated a set of recommendations for review at the institutional level (NACAC & NASFAA, 2022).

Bryant and Taylor (2023) examined how college students seek help with financial aid process and procedures. With little research to date, their findings suggest the need for targeted data collection from students regarding their experiences with financial aid. Institutional modes of communication need to be sharper if financial aid opportunities are not viewed as a barrier to college access.

Career Centers and Services. Support for students making choices that influence their career planning has centered around two strategies, advising and career planning center. Current student priorities and environmental trends suggest both strategies need repositioning (Dey & Cruzvergara,2014; Winter, Dey, & Real, 2010; Vinson, et al., 2011). Expanding career planning in academic advising is one strategy. Holistic advising embraces this approach (Parrent, 2022). Repositing the institution's career center is an additional strategy. Moving from a placement service model to an access point for connections and experiences for all students. Assisting in placement for internships and apprenticeships, part time jobs, post-graduation jobs, and continues support for alumni are viewed as needed functions. Serving as a resource to faculty in blending career planning into programs/courses provides an opportunity to support student needs (Alonso, 2023; Helbig & Matkin, 2021).

First Year Programming. Most colleges and universities conduct a series of activities to assist students as they enter; for example, summer readings, workshops, orientation programs, advising, and a first-year seminar. Research and best practices concludes (a) FYE programming i integrated into a single dedicated unit, (b) FYE is most effective when it addresses the student holistically focusing on social, academic and mental well-being, (c) a coordinated approach to FYE programming is most effective, (d) increased use of all aspects of technology giving students increased access to services, and (e) programs are most effective when they are built around student type and needs avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach. (Hanover, 2023). Culver, et al., (2017) outlined a framework building a student success program for first-year students. Ascendium (n.d.) presents a plan to redesign the first-year programing considering current and anticipated student needs.

Administrative Infrastructure

Three campuswide infrastructures are critical to any emphasis on student success. Paralleling need for a more comprehensive and coordinated strategy for service delivery, similar redesigns to assist in the use of data in decision-making, an increase in the use of technology, and understanding of the fiscal impact of the redesign initiatives are needed.

Data based decision making. Most campuses are awash with data frequently housed in separate offices making integration and organization to inform decision difficulty at best. Moving to a more integrated accessible database is an integral part of building a student-oriented institution. Guiding this redesign is the creation of student success analytics. An analysis of institutional leaders across the critical stakeholders, student affairs, institutional research and institutional technology, provides a landscape of institutional initiatives (Parnell, et.al., 2017). Almond-Dannenbring, et al. (2022) presents a framework for developing an integrated system. The work of Green (2022; 2023), Machajewski, et al., (2022), and Selingo (2022) illuminate models and case studies of building and operating data support to enhance student success.

Use of technology. The pandemic highlighted the importance of technology in support of campus functions. The number of AASCU institutions with five or more fully online programs increased from 48% in 2013 to 76% in 2020 (Capranos & Magda, 2022). Similar growth is found across other institutional types. The 2023 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report: Teaching and Learning Edition (2023) profiles six emerging technologies and practices which will affect collegiate teaching and learning. Inside Higher Ed-Hanover Research (2023) found the use of artificial intelligence (AI) software growing across higher education. Best practices and priorities are in the process of developing and their potential yet to be fully explored. Examples of the use of AI across the campus include use with the recruitment/selection process, student support and belonging, teaching, and administrative functions are emerging.

Financial analysis. Many colleges and universities are revisiting their business model considering current and anticipated trends. Realizing that enrollment growth may no longer be a successful fiscal driver, analysis of retention and student success redesign have received focus. Cusco (2010) reviewed the research on the fiscal benefits of retention vs. new student recruitment. He concludes that retention/first-year retention is 3-5 more cost effective than new student recruitment. Current studies and fiscal analysis tools across the range of institutional types are available. See Hill (2023) for community colleges; Creighton, et al., (2021) for New American Colleges and Universities (private); Desrochers & McGuffie, (2022) for AASCU institutions (public, regional universities); Asher (2021) for private colleges, and Venit and Bevevino (2020) for a business case for student success.

Across all institutional types, retaining existing students has a greater positive impact on the institutional financial position than recruiting new students.

In Summary: Institutional Options and Needed Redesign. A student-centered institution employs a myriad of strategies to support student success. Alone, each plays a contributing role, but are limited in affect. When coordinated across the campus, students respond in positive ways. Moving from units as silos to integrated programming requires strong leadership from the president and leadership team. Needed changes are illustrated in the following chart.

Table 1.
Repositioning to a Student-Centered Institution

Current	Student-Center
Campus Culture	
Multiple goals and priorities	Student success top priority
Organization	
Four divisions, each with own culture Little horizontal collaboration across Divisions; or vertical integration among units.	Four divisions, common goal and priority—horizontal and vertical collaboration—all-campus offices to support student success
Student Success Offices and Programs	
Instructional Design & Delivery	Use of on-line, hybrid, and face-to face courses and programs increased accessibility
Guided Pathways	Curriculum organized to include academic and career goals
High Impact Programs	Require at least two integrated with program elements
Advising	Holistic Advising model—one-stop-shop and/or wraparound.
Mental Health Services	Increased support; multiple. options : tele counseling, faculty and peer support
Career Centers	Redesign with multi functions—horizontal interphase with other student success activities
First Year Programming	Centralized office—multi unit participation, different programs by student group
Financial Aid/Registrar	Collaboration with other units
Data support	Interactive, available, user-friendly, and comprehensive
Technology	Interactive infrastructure, Accessible, multimodalities, AI

Presidential Strategies

After two years of pandemic shutdown, each institution faces a myriad of new challenges. Presidents experienced a new world of higher education calling for both familiar and new leadership strategies. Consideration of these differences and similarities serves as a backdrop against which to consider a series of leadership strategies and resources which might be utilized in guiding institutional repositioning.

Presidential Leadership in the New Environment

The literature on the collegiate presidency is replete with examples of leadership qualities and strategies. The following four appear particularly relevant to the post pandemic presidency. First, *presidents concurrently operate in both the immediate and the near-term future*. Unlike earlier years these, the two views may not be tied together with a clearly defined linear plan. Yet decisions made in response to immediate concerns set the stage for future activities. New decision-making processes and multi modes of communication with all stakeholders are now required presidential priorities. Lieberman (2023) described this leadership requirement as "wearing bifocals."

Second, in a complex environment many trends are in evidence, not all of which are of equal importance to the institution. Going forward, colleges/universities will be unable to 'be all things to all people.' *Presidents need to identify which trends are critical to the future viability of the institution*. Comprehensive datasets, illuminating identified trends, need to be collected and usable for all stakeholders. Ekman (2023) presents a set of strategies for the identification of those trends that are of importance to the future of the college.

Third, repositioning an institution is a complex process. While adding or adjusting existing functions, or making organizational redesign are relatively easy, changing the culture requires a much longer, taxing agenda. For example, moving to a more student-centered institution necessitates a different set of new organizational and interpersonal relationships. *Presidents need to facilitate a review of all major processes, and adopt new, responsive strategies* (Rosowsky, et al., 2022).

Finally, the traditional role of the president is focused to the external environmental. Major leadership for the conduct of internal affairs is delegated to cabinet officers. As documented above, many of the reposition changes are internal. *Developing greater horizontal integration of functions and services requires presidential involvement*. Jortner (2023) developed a set of leadership strategies based on survey data from 442 presidents and intensive conversation with a small focus group. A repositing plan requires Board support, cabinet leadership, and stakeholder participation. Managing these relationships is a presidential imperative.

In sum, like the institutions they serve, presidents need to examine their priorities and strategies considering the new environment. It is suggested that presidents adjust their leadership strategies of reflect four identified changes. Presidents will need to (1) operate concurrently with two temporal views, (2) identify critical trends in a complex environment, (3) review and adjust internal processes and functions to assure transparency, responsibility, and agility, and (4)

understand that needed changes may be internal while managing interactions with the external world continue to dominate the president's role.

Suggested Strategies

Many models and paradigms exist that institutions have followed in support of needed changes. In general, the process involves identifying the needs for change, a view of future operations, a plan to move forward. In the current environment moving to a more student-centered institution should be mission-oriented, data-driven, and market-focused (Krotseng, 2021). To lead such a repositing, it is suggested that the president cause the following:

Review and Restate the Mission Statement

The mission statement should be the loadstar that defines and guides the institution. A review of the statement considering the current and anticipated future is an appropriate beginning point. The president and the Board, with input from appropriate stakeholders should conduct this exercise. It need not be a long process, but the statement should be clear, explicit, and useful in guiding both current and anticipated conduct. Appropriate dissemination should be facilitated.

Identification of Critical Tends and a Supporting Database

In consultation with major stakeholders and the Board, the president should identify and announce critical trends that will influence the future viability of the institution. Concurrently, the president should task a small team to develop a unified database reflecting past, current, and anticipated responses. Included should be data sets from internal, local, regional and national sources. The primary focus of the database should be student enrollment and characteristics across the collegiate experience. This analysis should be augmented by important employment and labor data sets. Additional data needs should be identified and included. The team might be asked to develop guidelines to ensure both access and update.

Creation of a Future Vision

A small team comprised of all stakeholder groups, and lead by the president should develop several scenarios for the future of the institution. Options might be evaluated using available tools such as SWAT, risk/reward, or Delpha. Circulation across all stakeholder groups with a response plan supports developing needed support. A previously announced decision process assures clarity of institutional direction.

Action Plan

Under the leadership of the president's cabinet, each unit is tasked with the creation of an action plan to move to the announced future configuration. The cabinet can merge the individual divisions' plans into a comprehensive plan. Included should be anticipated repositioning, responsible administrator, anticipated timeline, impact on other units, fiscal impact, and metrics for assessment. Opportunities to brief stakeholders should be arranged. Feedback should be considered prior to final adoption.

Announcement and Roll-out

The implementation of the repositioning should be formally announced. A communication plan for both internal and external stakeholders should be presented and discussed. Points for evaluation of the plan, opportunities for 'mid-course correction' should be announced. Plans for communicating success consistent with the vision should be utilized.

Summary and Conclusions

Moving into the world of higher education following the pandemic, both Presidents and their colleges or universities find a changed landscape. Upon analysis, returning to previous campus life is not a viable option. Both presidents and institutions will need to reposition. Each will need to find a viable path forward.

Changing student demographics is significant. Over the course of the next ten years high school graduation rates will continue to decline, student populations will become more diverse, technology will drive more adults to additional education, and public confidence in the value proposition for higher education will continue to be challenged. The 'tried and true' strategy for decline in enrollment-recruit more students-will not work. It would be necessary to get a larger market share of a declining population, to just keep pace-not a strategy for long term viability.

A workable strategy to confront this trend is to place greater emphasis on student success-retention and completion. A product of the pandemic is a call for more student-centered institutions. Depending on both institutional and environmental considerations, all colleges and universities will need to examine this issue. This is a new challenge for the president, one that can neither be delegated or avoided.

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