Bundle on Student Issues

THE CHRONICLE
of Higher Education

STUDENTS

Shock, Fear, and Fatalism: As Coronavirus Prompts Colleges to Close, Students Grapple With Uncertainty

By Alexander C. Kafka | MARCH 12, 2020

Jason Andrew for The Chronicle

Alana Hendy, a junior at Georgetown U., is now at her family's home, in Bowie, Md. Speaking of her classmates, she says, "a lot of people are anxious because not everyone can afford a flight home or a flight to campus to pick up their stuff."

Effectively booted off campus in an effort to contain coronavirus contagion, hundreds of thousands of college students are reacting with shock, uncertainty, sadness, and, in some cases, devil-may-care fatalism. Even as they hurriedly arrange logistical details, the stress of an uncertain future is taking a toll.

"A lot of people are anxious because not everyone can afford a flight home or a flight to campus to pick up their stuff," says Alana Hendy, a Georgetown University junior studying international relations. She is among the rapidly growing number of students nationwide who were urged not to return to campus after spring break as courses shift online.

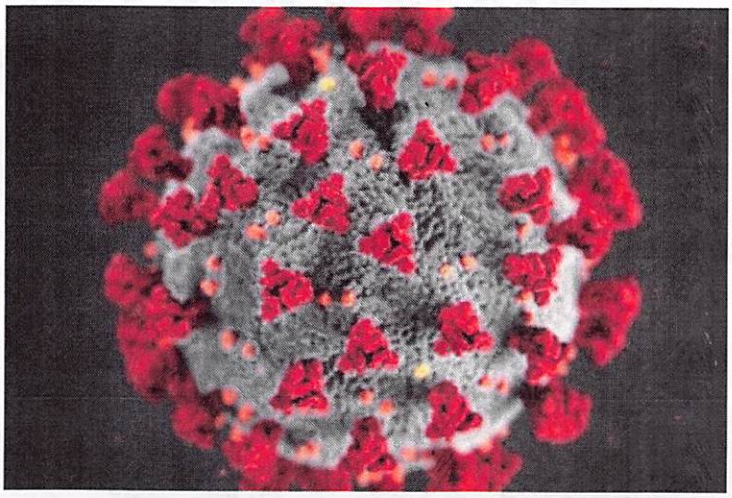
Hendy too is anxious, she says, but she is more confused as she sorts through uncertainties concerning her living and academic arrangements. A low-income student from Bowie, Md., she says it would be better if she stayed on campus because her father

suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes, and is particularly vulnerable to Covid-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus. She filed a form asking to be allowed to remain in her dorm but may not get an answer until next week.

Coronavirus Hits Campus

As colleges and universities have struggled to devise policies to respond to the quickly evolving situation, here are links to *The Chronicle*'s key coverage of how this worldwide health crisis is affecting campuses.

- The Coronavirus Is Upending Higher Ed. Here Are the Latest Developments.
- When Emergency Strikes: Lessons From Campus Closures
- Colleges Emptied Dorms Amid Coronavirus Fears. What Can They Do About Off-Campus Housing?



Among the questions on her mind: What will happen to her work-study job, in the dean's office at the School of Foreign Service? How will her responsibilities as a teaching assistant in a geography class change with the new online format?

But counterbalancing the uncertainties, she says, is support offered by the university. It is helping defray low-income students' costs for shipping medication, books, and other necessities, for example. And the campus's food pantry is open and stocked twice a week, which, she says, "we're grateful for."

So she'll cope with the situation, week by week. And after law school or a doctorate in history, when she's a professor, she imagines she'll look back at the Covid-19 pandemic as a case study.

For Rachel P. Angle, a Georgetown senior from Middletown, Conn., studying government and living off campus, the academic disruption should not be too drastic. But, she says, "It's my senior spring. There were so many things I was planning on doing, and now

that's sort of thrown into flux." Her grandparents had planned to go to D.C. for her graduation.

Angle knows, however, that "there are a whole lot of people suffering a lot more from this. I have a safe home to go to, parents who are happy to take me in. It's mostly just the stress of uncertainty."

'Utter Pandemonium'

Not everyone is adjusting so philosophically. Students are "definitely freaking out," says a junior at Harvard, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisal by the university. The week before spring break is academically hectic, so students were turning in problem sets and papers, then heading home, when they learned their classes would move online and they were to leave campus. In some cases they zipped right back to Cambridge, Mass., to try to pack up, store, or ship their belongings.

"It's utter pandemonium on campus right now," the student says. "Everybody is partying all day or incredibly stressed out about homework, or both. People really seem upset and confused."

And they're not exactly following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's protocol, the student says, with parties outdoors and in, "scorpion" punch bowls, and games of beer pong, "one of the least sterile things to be doing right now."

Similar seize-the-day mayhem broke out at the University of Dayton on Tuesday, when it said its classes would be moved online. What was initially reported to be a protest against the university's anti-virus measures was in fact, the administration says, "one last large gathering before spring break, and the size and behavior of the crowd required police to take action." More than 1,000 students gathered in the streets, according to local news coverage, and when some students stood on cars and the situation grew rowdier, the police launched "pepper balls," which contain irritants, into the crowd.

"Students are often accused of living in a 'campus bubble,' immune to wider social concerns, so it doesn't seem surprising that on some campuses there would be outbreaks of partying," says Mikita Brottman, an author and psychoanalyst who teaches literature

at the Maryland Institute College of Arts.

"It's hard for some students to take the virus seriously. They're often cynical about 'media panics,' and even if they do follow the mainstream media," she says, they feel that "this is a virus that targets 'old people.'"

"Beyond that," Brottman says, "I think the celebrating reflects both a feeling of disaster-inspired togetherness — and togetherness is part of the spring-break tradition anyway — along with a sense of social constraint collapsing." The partyers "are like the inhabitants of Prospero's palace" in Edgar Allan Poe's story "The Masque of the Red Death," she says, "getting drunk while plague ravages the nation."

'Stay in the Routine'

The stress of uncertainty can be very unnerving, says Alise G. Bartley, a clinical assistant professor in the department of counseling and director of the community-counseling center at Florida Gulf Coast University. The most constructive way to approach it is "to focus on what we do know" staves off illness: wash hands, avoid high-density groups, get sufficient sleep, eat well, and exercise.

As students are yanked from their campus settings, it will be crucial for them to retain structure in their academic and personal lives, she says. They need to "stay in the routine and feel like there's a purpose so that they don't fall into depression." If they're used to Friday pizza night with friends, then they should have pizza night together online.

Counselors, in person or in teletherapy sessions, need to push beyond vague recommendations to help students "operationalize" good habits and a positive outlook. Don't just advise them to get exercise, says Bartley. Talk through with them exactly what walking, jogging, or bike route they're going to take, for how long and how often. It's a disconcerting time, she says, but "there's a difference between healthy concern and fear. ... Let's make smart choices, but let's not be afraid."

Gregory Roper, a freshman at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, is more afraid for his grandparents than he is for himself. He was already visiting them, in Fairfield, Conn., during spring break, and "it looks like I might be doing that for a while longer," he says,

now that the New York college has announced that classes are going online and students must move off campus. His parents are in Santa Clara County, Calif., which has a high concentration of coronavirus cases. They're considering going somewhere safer, so he won't be joining them at home for now.

A computer-science student, Roper says a lot of his coursework was already online, but the lab sessions in his biology class "are still completely up in the air."

Reactions to the crisis among his friends, Roper says, "are very much a mix." Some think fears are "sort of overinflated." Others, particularly "friends with weak immune systems, are very scared."

In addition to fear, students are aggrieved over losing life experiences like spring of senior year, says Nicole Danforth, director of outpatient programs for child and adolescent psychiatry at Newton-Wellesley Hospital, in Massachusetts. Acknowledge that grief, Danforth recommends, but challenge yourself "to limit how much you let your anxious brain take over."

The bachelor-of-fine-arts students of Jillian Harris, an associate professor of dance at Temple University, felt "a strong sense of disappointment" that showcase performances of their senior choreography projects couldn't proceed when Temple announced courses would move online starting next week.

But "everyone is trying to be creative," producing instead online rehearsal-progress portfolios with written analyses, Harris says. On stage and in life, she says, "fortunately dancers are very good improvisers."

Technology will be a defining aspect of the mental-health challenge, Danforth says. A life behind blue screens can already be isolating, she says, and we're in danger of succumbing further to that. But teletherapy options are more sophisticated and plentiful than ever, and if Covid-19 leads to greater use and acceptance of them, she says, that is "a win for everybody."

Laura Horne experienced the trauma of displacement herself as an undergraduate at Loyola University New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina struck, in 2005. Her family lived in the city's suburbs, and she couldn't go home. She transferred to Louisiana Tech University for a quarter, and though she tried her best to keep up with friends through Facebook, email, and phone calls, "a lot of students relocated to other schools and never came back," she says.

"I had to somewhat mourn and be OK with letting that go for a time," she says, "and engage with the new environment." Many students this spring might also "go through a period of mourning, and that's normal," says Horne, now the chief program officer for Active Minds, which supports mental-health awareness and education for students.

She offers coping tips for students on the Active Minds website, but "if what you are feeling seems like more than just a bad day," she writes, "seek help from a professional. ... If you need it, contact the Crisis Text Line by texting 'BRAVE' to 741-741."

'Uncharted Territory'

Active Minds chapter leaders across the country, like Stephanie Cahill, a senior studying psychology at Arizona State University, have a front-row view of their peers' anxieties. Even before the university announced, late Wednesday, that it was moving classes online, Cahill says, a lot of students were "nervous and scared" and just not showing up.

Active Minds meetings on campus saw a surge in attendance — to groups of roughly 25 — and visits by administrators like ASU's associate vice president for counseling and health services helped ease students' worries, Cahill says.

Information is key, but colleges "have to acknowledge that we're in uncharted territory here," says Kevin Krueger, president of Naspa, an association of student-affairs administrators. "We don't have a playbook."

But they're writing one quickly as they go along. Seventeen hundred participants signed up for a Naspa webinar on Wednesday, and they're sorting through best practices on housing and food for low-income students, provision of mental-health services, and, in

the longer term, engaging students in the online environment — not just academically, but in critical services like academic advising, orientation, career services and job fairs, and campus culture and Greek life.

As a new normal slowly forms for students, Krueger says, it's also important to recognize that fatigue is setting in among administrators, staff, and faculty: "There's a toll that comes from being in a crisis mode in these situations."

Alexander C. Kafka is a Chronicle senior editor. Follow him on Twitter @AlexanderKafka, or email him at alexander.kafka@chronicle.com.

As the coronavirus crisis deepens,* The Chronicle *is providing free access to our breaking-news updates on its impact on higher education. It's your support that makes our work possible. Please consider subscribing today.

This article is part of:
Coronavirus Hits Campus

1255 23rd Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037

Published on *Inside Higher Ed* (https://www.insidehighered.com)

Most teaching is going remote. Will that help or hurt online learning?

Submitted by Doug Lederman on March 18, 2020 - 3:00am

Welcome to "Transforming Teaching and Learning," a column that explores how colleges and professors are reimagining how they teach and how students learn. If you'd like to receive the free "Transforming Teaching and Learning" newsletter, please sign up here [1].

***

What a difference a week makes.

Seven days ago in this space [2], I went out of my way to say that I hoped to make this column a "coronavirus-free space" to the extent possible, given *Inside Higher Ed*'s excellent coverage of the pandemic elsewhere and the "recognition that the rest of what we all do professionally each day isn't stopping."

That all may still be true, but the new reality is that COVID-19 is increasingly dominating not just our collective head spaces (in ways helpful and not) but also what our jobs are day to day. That's especially the case in certain realms, including for those of you responsible for helping to deliver instruction and learning at your institutions.

So today, at least -- next week seems very far away at this point -- this column will focus on a question that is generating a good bit of discussion among thoughtful observers of teaching and learning issues: What impact will this sudden, forced immersion and experimentation with technology-enabled forms of learning have on the status of online learning in higher education? Below, 11 experts share their thoughts on how the explosion of remote learning -- much

of which may be primitive and of dubious quality -- could affect attitudes and impressions of a mode of learning that already struggles to gain widespread faculty and student support.

***

The prospect of hundreds of thousands of professors and students venturing into academic cyberspace for the first time has prompted some commentators to take to social media to predict that this period could alter the landscape long term for online education. "Every faculty member is going to be delivering education online. Every student is going to be receiving education online. And the resistance to online education is going to go away as a practical matter," James N. Bradley, chief information officer at Texas's Trinity University, wrote in a LinkedIn post [3].

Goldie Blumenstyk, my friend and former colleague at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, went so far [4] as to suggest that the coronavirus could be a "black swan" moment -- "more of a catalyst for online education and other ed-tech tools than decades of punditry and self-serving corporate exhortations." She continued, "It seems safe to say that this will be not only enormously disruptive but also paradigm changing. The 'black swan [5],' that unforeseen event that changes everything, is upon us."

That's surely possible -- but a very different outcome seems at least as likely. Surely some of the professors who will be venturing into virtual education for the first time because of COVID-19 will be going online with the sort of high-quality immersive courses that the best online learning providers offer. But much of the remote instruction that many professors experimenting outside the physical classroom for the first time will be offering to their students will be nothing more than videoconferenced lectures supplemented by emailed assessments.

That raises tons of issues, from how instructors and colleges treat student grades to how institutions treat student evaluations of professors. But in today's column a collection of sharp and thoughtful analysts answer a more fundamental question: Will forced exposure to and experimentation with

various forms of technology-enabled learning lead professors and students to view online education more favorably -- or less so?

The full prompt, and the answers from our experts, follow.

In short order, hundreds of colleges have announced in the last week that because of health concerns related to COVID-19, they are ending in-person classes and moving all instruction to virtual settings. They're using different language around this -- some are specifically talking about shifting to online education, while others talk about remote classes and the like. Many of them are taking advantage of (and in some cases extending) spring breaks and other cessations of coursework to prepare for the shift, and it will be some time before we can really tell what forms of learning the institutions will adopt during this period.

Several commentators have hypothesized that this time of emergency adoption and experimentation will speed up the adoption and embrace of online and other forms of technology-enabled learning. That is one scenario. Another is that the way colleges and universities transform all of their instruction in this compressed time frame will be a pale imitation of what the best in today's online learning looks like, and that exposing entire faculties and student bodies to this flawed product will set back, rather than advance, faculty and student attitudes about the quality of technology-enabled learning.

The question/questions I'd ask you to address: What impact do you think this emergency immersion into online/distance learning by many/most institutions might have on faculty and student confidence in technology-enabled learning? Do you believe the end result (recognizing that it may be some time before we can judge) will be more professors believing in the quality of online learning and wanting to incorporate the best of what it can do into their teaching, a blurring of the distinction between online and in-person and a closing of the perceived quality gap? Do you think it could produce greater skepticism about the efficacy of technology-enabled learning, either because the experience for instructors and students alike will be substandard, or because institutions will not sufficiently prepare their instructors to teach in these new ways? Or do you envision some other outcome?

And lastly: What can institutions and individual instructors can do to ensure a better rather than worse outcome?

***

Deb Adair, executive director, Quality Matters

Our community is at the epicenter of the current emergency remote-teaching disruption. Charged with developing the plan to move teaching immediately online and/or directly making it happen, they are exhausted because their resources fall far short of need. They are also exhilarated because it's their expertise that makes this pivot possible. Administrators must acknowledge the expertise of their own online units (if they exist) and support them such that a personally overwhelming time doesn't also become a professional crisis. Leadership will make all the difference.

The campus units supporting online education are often underresourced in the best of times, lacking the institutional investment needed to achieve quality online education at scale. The COVID-19 response makes this worse, not better. Instructional designers and online faculty are professionals stepping up in a moment that highlights the expertise they bring, knowing that it is their time, energy and talent that can make all the difference for their students. *If* we allow these professionals to leverage their expertise, we can pull off something that is quite incredible -- enabling students to continue their education such that this pandemic does not derail their future plans in the same way it's limiting their present.

Nobody thinks this is the way online education should be done. Victory during the pandemic will not include the development of high-quality online education. Victory looks like this:

- The creation and execution of suggestions (typically) or plans (aspirational) for both remote teaching/learning and working remotely. It's tough to be planful when your house is on fire.
- Guidance for faculty to help them translate their teaching expertise into a different learning modality. Institutions that have invested in faculty

training for online teaching/design, development of course templates and/or web-enhanced courses will be in a much better position.
- Curated tools [6], just-in-time training, job aids, course templates, real-time advice are all things an online unit can provide.
- Helping faculty support their students through a difficult time -- focusing on engagement, compassion and flexibility.

Instructional designers and online faculty are professionals stepping up in a moment that highlights the expertise they bring, knowing that it is their time, energy and talent that can make all the difference for their students. *If* we allow these professionals to leverage their expertise, we can pull off something that is quite incredible -- enabling students to continue their education such that this pandemic does not derail their future plans in the same way it's limiting their present.

Leadership is critical:

- Recognize the professional burden placed on faculty and staff during a personally stressful time. Encourage them and ask what they need.
- Set realistic expectations.
- Provide guidance about working remotely, including communication tools/protocols, and guard against cyberattacks [7].
- Ask your online team to vet solutions from external contractors.
- After the emergency, reform policy and procedure to support education online including its importance in instructional continuity.

Any suggestion that this is the time to evaluate the efficacy of online education is more than absurd. It's ignorant at best and disingenuous at worst. Shelve the debates about the role of faculty and of online education. Focus on problem solving now, not the future of higher education. We'll get back to that soon enough.

***

Kelvin Bentley, vice president of learning strategy, Six Red Marbles

It has been interesting reading about the many colleges and universities that have decided to shift on-campus instruction to a remote teaching model. There are on-campus faculty who are not the best teachers,

and this fact will be more salient as such faculty are required to use technology quickly to meet their respective institutions' decisions to use technology-enhanced teaching as a form of social distancing.

There is always a chance that some faculty who have been resistant to using technology to facilitate their teaching will be more likely to embrace their newer teaching practices over time. This will be a more likely outcome if colleges and universities are vigilant in helping faculty learn about and actively use the instructional technology tools available to help students be successful in their courses. It will be important for institutions to encourage students to share their feedback weekly about the learning experiences their instructors are shaping for them using technology. When faculty can put their teaching egos aside and use negative student feedback to improve their remote teaching practices, students will benefit and hopefully faculty will, too, because they will learn how best to meet the learning needs of their students.

> There is always a chance that some faculty who have been resistant to using technology to facilitate their teaching will be more likely to embrace their newer teaching practices over time. This will be a more likely outcome if colleges and universities are vigilant in helping faculty learn about and actively use the instructional technology tools available to help.

Besides faculty adapting their style of teaching, institutions will need to have clear plans about how they will provide certain services to students. Such services include advising, proctoring, tutoring. Fully online versions of such services might exist to support current online students, but institutions will have to ensure that all students have access. This can be challenging to achieve, given some online services such as proctoring and tutoring are based upon actual student use, which can overwhelm some school budgets that are not already inclusive of such services across all students.

It will be important for institutions to carefully evaluate their remote teaching strategies across all courses after the COVID-19 crisis subsides. Institutions will need to use postmortem feedback from both their students and faculty to improve their contingency plans and how they prepare students and faculty to engage in remote learning and teaching, respectively, when institutions have

to close due to a crisis. It will also be important for institutions to update their existing plans yearly and discuss how such plans can be improved upon based upon available research on how best to use technology to positively impact student learning.

***

Jody Greene, associate vice provost for teaching and learning, dean, Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning, and professor of literature, University of California, Santa Cruz

Instructors in higher education settings have been practicing social distancing and self-isolation since universities were founded in the Middle Ages. One of the most remarkable dimensions of this moment is that even as we move en masse to teach remotely, we are also for the first time beginning to move en masse to thinking about teaching collectively.

Anyone even minimally involved in teaching or supporting teaching at a college or university has over the past week witnessed a quiet revolution (though one with many keystrokes), in which instructors have turned to teaching centers and instructional design units, as well as to colleagues, professional organizations, social media and internet search engines, to learn *together* about a range of digital tools they will need to use to teach remotely and about the design consequences of those choices. Teaching center staff who have been shouting into the wind about the benefits of learning communities can't help but smile as the entire collegiate instructional workforce scrambles to find the nearest Hangout or Zoom teaching happy hour.

Once these tools have been identified and selected, each is going to require some wildly creative pedagogy to be genuinely useful for instruction. Since we are not designing courses from scratch to be taken fully online with self-paced learning, we are unlikely to learn much of use from this exercise about the pros or the cons of online education. However, we will learn a great deal about hybrid modes of instruction and about ways to make selective practices, such

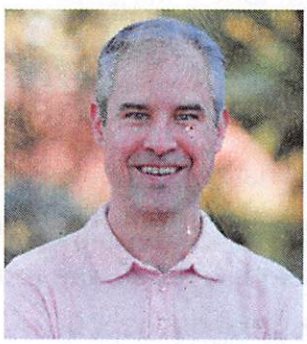
as prerecorded lectures or message board-style discussions, effective tools for learning. At the end of the day, those of us who have hesitated to use any technological tools in our teaching because the learning curve feels too steep will have been forced to consider and actively engage with a range of digital options (from lecture capture to peer editing in Google Docs) and practices (from flexible attendance policies to contract grading) that have been touted by proponents of universal design and considered off the table by many instructors until now.

> If I had to put money on the single genuinely revolutionary effect of the Great Remote Learning Hack of 2020, it would be the fact that instructors finally understand that teaching is something they can engage in as a collective activity, an activity that is more pleasurable and much more intellectually interesting when we participate in it in the company of others.

I suspect that being forced to get "over the bar" of minimally technologically enhanced and maximally flexible course design and policies will mean that many of us are more inclined to use these tools and practices in the future.

But if I had to put money on the single genuinely revolutionary effect of the Great Remote Learning Hack of 2020, it would be the fact that instructors finally understand that teaching is something they can engage in as a collective activity, an activity that is more pleasurable and much more intellectually interesting when we participate in it in the company of others. No hand washing required.

***



Michael Horn, head of strategy at Entangled Group and author of *Choosing College* [8] (2019, Jossey Bass)

On the surface, this sounds like the classic opportunity for disruptive innovation to take root. All of a sudden, the competition for online learning isn't live, in-person

classes. Those classes are canceled. Now the alternative is nothing at all.

The theory of disruptive innovation predicts that primitive services take root in areas where all they have to beat is nonconsumption. From there, fueled by a technology enabler, they improve and, over time, become capable of tackling more complicated problems and serving more demanding users. That's the opportunity online learning now has in front of it.

But I'm skeptical online learning will capitalize.

Given that college and university faculty are scrambling to move courses online, it's now painfully clear that schools ought to have had more robust disaster-preparedness plans in place in the event of interruptions in their campus operations. But because many schools did not have such plans in place and do not have great infrastructure or resources to build good online courses rapidly, online learning is about to get a bad reputation at many campuses, I suspect.

But that's OK, right? After all, disruptive innovations start as primitive and then improve.

I'm not so sure we're in the typical circumstance where the logic and usual patterns of disruption hold.

When disruptive innovations plant themselves among nonconsumers, they are typically people who lack the expertise or money to use the dominant products or services in a market.

What's happening now on college campuses doesn't, at the moment, seem to be the same thing. If the interruption of traditional classes is temporary and business as usual resumes in the fall, I doubt that students (and their parents) who have experienced poorly constructed, hastily built online courses by faculty, many of whom know little about the science of teaching and learning to begin with, will look back fondly on those online experiences and then wonder why it is that they had ever dragged themselves to class to begin with.

Even in cases where teaching and learning centers on campuses intervene and help build the courses, they are likely overstretched at the moment, and

so many courses will be poor substitutes for the originals (even if the originals weren't terribly inspiring).

That could result in blowback against online learning at traditional colleges and universities from faculty who were new to teaching online and didn't receive the requisite support to offer a solid experience, and from students who found it an unsatisfactory downgrade from what they had been used to.

> Even in cases where teaching and learning centers on campuses intervene and help build the courses, they are likely overstretched at the moment, and so many courses will be poor substitutes for the originals (even if the originals weren't terribly inspiring).

So if that's the worst outcome, what should institutions do to prevent that? Outside of marshaling all their resources to provide faculty -- and students without internet connectivity -- the support they need to teach and learn online, I think there are a few principles to follow.

First, wherever possible, create active learning experiences -- ones in which there is synchronous communication, required class sessions, frequent opportunities for students to answer questions and defend answers, debate their peers, tackle problems, and the like. Zoom or Shindig might be suitable technologies for that, but schools should also investigate using Minerva's active learning platform, for example.

Second, remember that online learning isn't about putting the faculty member front and center like the MOOCs did. That means that teaching certain concepts might not be best accomplished through lecture-capture technologies, but instead by showing a multimedia clip, something from Khan Academy, a brief simulation, or -- heaven forbid -- by letting students teach each other. As faculty cobble together resources, also remember this: don't overload students' working memory with lots of auditory and visual effects. Keep the medium simple and engaging.

Third, start classes and lessons with a thought-provoking question or paradox, and then weave a story together to help illustrate the lesson. Students learn

best when they have a puzzle that they want to resolve, and we retain ideas through compelling stories.

And fourth -- remember that there are lots of good tools to create lab and other live experiences online -- through things like Labster, or emerging VR/AR technologies.

I'd say the best-case scenario out of this crisis for online learning is that more students realize there are universities -- like WGU and SNHU -- that do online learning well, and that faculty on more traditional campuses don't hate the experience and then, as universities put in place more robust disaster-preparedness plans for the future, they are able to improve on their primitive start.

***

Jeff Maggioncalda, CEO, Coursera

With more than 400 million students disrupted due to the spread of COVID-19, we are experiencing a watershed moment for education systems around the world. It tragically illustrates the need for higher ed institutions to build a technological backbone and digital competency to weather this crisis and to enter a new era of teaching and learning in a digital world.

While most educational institutions have not traditionally invested in online education as a core aspect of their learner experience, the tide began to change a few years ago with top universities committing to build fully digital academic experiences. The current crisis will accelerate this trend. Though challenging, it is going to be a period of forced experimentation for universities around the world -- akin to what we witnessed during the Y2K crisis that compelled institutions to upgrade their technical infrastructure.

The current state of technology and platform choices will make it easier for universities to deliver a high-quality online learning experience. Had the crisis occurred a decade ago, it would have crippled the system. But we now have extensive broadband access, reliable communications tools, user-friendly

videoconferencing and widespread smartphone adoption. And over the past eight years, leading professors from top universities have authored thousands of highly rated online courses that are now available to both individuals and institutions, including other higher ed institutions. Any college or university can use these online courses as a new type of digital, interactive textbook.

> As universities develop their own digital competencies, what has started as a short-term response to a crisis will likely become an enduring digital transformation of higher education.

The pandemic requires universities to rapidly offer online learning. But many are encountering the difficulty of developing high-quality online learning from scratch. Fortunately, they don't need to. Administrators and faculty from any college or university can immediately integrate ready-made, high-quality online courseware from other trusted institutions into their curricula even as they build their internal online capabilities over time. This "buy-build" strategy enables timely response as well as the development of long-term online capability. Once the response has stabilized, universities can start authoring digital content using widely available, cost-effective tools. They can combine that with live lectures or custom assessments to keep students on track.

The higher education ecosystem has historically been seen as slow to adapt. But educators, faced with unprecedented urgency, now have the ability to deliver high-quality teaching and learning online. Virtually every institution in the world is now exploring how they will offer online learning as a stop-gap measure. Fortunately, technology and content are available to help them do this quickly and with quality. And as universities develop their own digital competencies, what has started as a short-term response to a crisis will likely become an enduring digital transformation of higher education.

***

K. Holly Shiflett, director, North American partnerships, FutureLearn

What impact do you think this emergency immersion into online/distance learning by many/most institutions might have on faculty and student confidence in technology-enabled learning?

This is clearly an unprecedented time, and for universities this may force online learning to become the new normal. Multiple studies suggest that most students are already confident that technology-enabled learning works, but this has probably been a difficult transition for some faculty members. I am hoping that universities and faculty members will embrace the challenge and adapt.

Speaking to FutureLearn's partners, they have employed a variety of techniques to support faculty success, and I think that this is an important factor in ensuring faculty and institutional confidence. I've heard of everything from tip sheets to drop-in hours (in-person and virtually) to assistance moving materials online. Faculty confidence will most certainly be improved if they have a positive experience. We are working closely with our partners to support this emergency move to digital methods.

Do you believe the end result (recognizing that it may be some time before we can judge) will be more professors believing in the quality of online learning and wanting to incorporate the best of what it can do into their teaching, a blurring of the distinction between online and in-person and a closing of the perceived quality gap?

I have been thinking about this a lot and wondering if we have reached the tipping point where technology truly becomes embedded into our educational approaches as the new normal. Online really has untapped potential to support student achievement and help employers address the skills gap. I have this vision where online helps schools to be more flexible in a variety of ways. Consider the following long-term opportunities:

- When higher-than-expected enrollments require additional sections to be offered quickly
- When an individual student is required to miss an on-campus course
- When adverse weather challenges commuters
- When work or personal priorities keep an adult learner from attending class
- When illness of a faculty member requires another to step in remotely
- When there is an immediate need for specialized training
- When a student wants to create their own path

- When an individual student needs a class in order to graduate
- When high-demand courses are overbooked
- When lower-demand courses still need to run to meet student requirements
- When there is a global pandemic that threatens to quarantine users all over the world
- When an employer has an immediate need to fill a skill gap

This is certainly a trial by fire, but I hope faculty will have new enthusiasm and trust in online approaches and be more willing to incorporate blended approaches into on campus teaching as a result. I think students have always expected that technology would be integrated into teaching approaches -- COVID-19 may just be expediting this.

> A negative experience could certainly trigger a "never again" sentiment. It's on us, as online learning practitioners, to step up in this time of emergency and ensure that the experience is as good as it can be for all stakeholders.

Do you think it could produce greater skepticism about the efficacy of technology-enabled learning, either because the experience for instructors and students alike will be substandard, or because institutions will not sufficiently prepare their instructors to teach in these new ways? Or do you envision some other outcome?

I hope that faculty members would see this as a viable alternative and one that can be effective. A negative experience could certainly trigger a "never again" sentiment. It's on us, as online learning practitioners, to step up in this time of emergency and ensure that the experience is as good as it can be for all stakeholders.

At FutureLearn, we launched FutureLearn Campus in response to this crisis. This allows universities to offer their existing online courses to students at no charge and provides an area to develop future courses that are open to all and also available for a university's own students. It also allows faculty members to use a platform they are familiar with rather than learning new technologies, which offers a much better chance of success in terms of the faculty and student experience.

And lastly: What can institutions and individual instructors do to ensure a better rather than worse outcome?

Proactive outreach. Don't just wait for faculty members to get in touch with questions or problems -- reach out to check if they are having a positive experience and what additional support could be provided. This, of course, puts additional stress on already stressed learning design personnel, but this is their opportunity to shine!

This pandemic is exposing whole new groups of faculty members who might not otherwise make the shift to adopt technology. If we can make this a great experience (in spite of the traumatic reason why it is occurring), it will most certainly lead to future adoption.

***

Louis Soares, chief learning and innovation officer, American Council on Education

What impact do you think this emergency immersion into online/distance learning by many/most institutions might have on faculty and student confidence in technology-enabled learning?

We must start by stating that there are material differences in design, delivery and support of online/distance learning and more traditional college campus teaching. However, I do believe one of the underlying factors here will be how much focus there is on effective teaching/pedagogy to begin with at any given campus. Good technology-enabled learning does have its own attributes but should share a focus on durable learning outcomes. If pressed to pick an example, does the campus have something approximating the AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes [9] as a curricular North Star across faculty and academic programs? This way you have an institution-level common understanding of what good teaching/learning looks like. This would provide a frame of reference for interpreting an emergency immersion in online/distance learning. I would add that the experience of moving online will be an important

factor in how students and faculty react. If they are supported and provided tools to succeed, they over all stand a greater chance of success.

That being said, for the emergency immersion to have optimal outcomes, it should be handled as a teaching moment for both faculty and students. Campus leaders and faculty should acknowledge where they are on the journey of effective online pedagogy and invite the students into the journey with them. In this way, the campus community shares the challenges of a new approach to teaching ...

Do you believe the end result (recognizing that it may be some time before we can judge) will be more professors believing in the quality of online learning and wanting to incorporate the best of what it can do into their teaching, a blurring of the distinction between online and in-person and a closing of the perceived quality gap?

We seem to be moving toward blended learning being the norm as traditional campuses move online and as online institutions attempt to deeply integrate students' work-life experiences into their program of study. Unless we all become shut-ins for the long term, the COVID-19 crisis will most likely accelerate this process. For faculty and campus leaders, I believe this will require more enterprise-level attention to both the fundamentals of good teaching and learning as well as more preparation for teaching in online settings. I believe many students are already living this reality. For example, the data show that residential students are taking more online courses and that fully online students, who tend to be older or nontraditional in some way, seek to get credits for their work-life experience.

> For the emergency immersion to have optimal outcomes, it should be handled as a teaching moment for both faculty and students. Campus leaders and faculty should acknowledge where they are on the journey of effective online pedagogy and invite the students into the journey with them.

Professors face a challenge/opportunity in trying to evaluate quality even as the pedagogical activity they are assessing is changing, in real time, into something else. My thought is that with the appropriate respect for their work,

and support to continue to develop their craft, they will help redefine quality for this new time.

Do you think it could produce greater skepticism about the efficacy of technology-enabled learning, either because the experience for instructors and students alike will be substandard, or because institutions will not sufficiently prepare their instructors to teach in these new ways?

I must confess I have never fully understood the either-or nature of our public dialogue with regard to technology-enabled learning versus face-to-face. Technology is a tool that can work in service of good teaching with the appropriate preparation, design, delivery and support. Faculty and students know this as well as, or better than, anyone else. I honestly believe the larger challenge is how to continue to embrace individual faculty teaching excellence while guiding the overall quality of teaching as an intentional, enterprisewide priority. This is the case with both face-to-face and technology-enabled learning. The latter does present challenges with regard to scale, but we have evolved enough to have guidelines for good practice from organizations such as UPCEA, OLC and Quality Matters.

Or do you envision some other outcome?

The deep integration of learning (as opposed to teaching only) and technology is emergent. We are about to undertake a huge experiment in how adaptable colleges, their faculty and students can be in accelerating from different points into this integration. If most institutions do this as a community, we will get where we need to go with faculty and students leading the way.

***

Cameron Sublett, senior research associate, WestEd

Higher education is moving online. This was the case before the COVID-19 crisis, of course. But the scale of adoption in response to the pandemic has truly been unprecedented. It is difficult -- if not foolish -- to predict

how higher education may change permanently as a result. It certainly could be a "black swan" moment [4], when an unlikely and unforeseen event ushers in consequential, paradigmatic change. But we have our doubts.

First, though it's a novel threat, it is an increasingly familiar pattern: institutional strain followed by online solutionism. We saw it with the "bottleneck" crises [10] during the Great Recession. We see it now as colleges compete for a dwindling pool of potential matriculants [11].

Second, the black swan argument is premised on the notion that "once colleges develop the capacity to serve their students via technology, there's little reason for them to abandon it." But past crises have taught us that colleges are unlikely to build any such capacity. We would be better prepared for the present moment if they had. The reality on the ground is that students and faculty are grasping for support [12] while publishers, technology vendors and solutionist entrepreneurs are clamoring to provide it. "Black swan" may be a fitting description, but so might "disaster capitalism."

> Substantial resources and training are required to build interactive online courses, however. Given the rapid escalation of the COVID-19 crisis, the lack of existing institutional resources and support available to most faculty -- especially faculty in underresourced and rural schools -- and the frenzied nature of the moment, it is likely most faculty will populate their LMS shells with asynchronous online discussion forums and have time and resources for little else.

Our policies, practices and investments suggest that we view online learning more as a tool for managing crises than boosting achievement and equity. Our outcomes show it. [13] And, unfortunately, our lack of institutional planning, support and capacity building up to this point means many institutions will survive the current exigency by replicating and amplifying all the things we know not to do. For example, while we have learned in recent weeks that social distance is a good way to flatten an infection curve, *social interaction* is the key to effective online pedagogy. [14].

Substantial resources and training are required to build interactive online courses, however. Given the rapid escalation of the COVID-19 crisis, the lack of existing institutional resources and support available to most faculty -- especially faculty in underresourced and rural schools -- and the frenzied nature of the moment, it is likely most faculty will populate their LMS shells with asynchronous online discussion forums and have time and resources for little else. The consequence will almost certainly be decreased learning and increased inequity.

Higher education will continue to move online. This can be a good thing. Rapid advancements in education technology have dramatically improved the quality of online instruction. The current public health emergency facing our nation has illustrated, arguably like nothing else, we need forms of distance learning. Yet, the current crisis has also illustrated that in treating online learning as a crisis-management tool and not as a vital organ, policy makers and institutions have failed to build the capacity and resources needed to develop effective and equitable online educators and courses. This time may be different; it is difficult to say. One can just hope.

***

George Veletsianos, professor and Canada Research Chair in Innovative Learning and Technology, Royal Roads University

The alternative teaching and learning environments being rapidly developed right now need to be put in context of the times that we are living in. We are not creating alternative teaching and learning environments by choice. Our students are not opting in to them by choice. We are in a global crisis, which demands of students and faculty to not only switch to new learning environments, but also forces them to navigate new or different responsibilities and realities.

For instance, international students may have to search for off-campus housing when campuses shut down, or people who are parents may have to care for young children while teaching/working from home … or, in my case, I

keep calling my parents, who live thousands of miles away, in order to help them navigate the abundance of anxiety-provoking misinformation that they are seeing and facing on a daily basis.

> This may help us all rethink not only in-person delivery, but also online learning, assessment practices, flexibility and ways of teaching and learning in general. I am hoping it will foster more cooperation between institutions of higher education, between education professionals and between faculty and students.

What this environment will lead to is greater recognition of the role that learning and teaching experts bring to the table, especially instructional designers, educational technologists and other professionals who work in places like centers for teaching and learning. This environment will shine a light on the expertise, creativity, resilience and humanity not only of these individuals, but of the higher education ecosystem as a whole.

Toward this, I am hoping that this crisis will shine light on the value, expertise and work that these individuals do. In the process, this may help us all rethink not only in-person delivery, but also online learning, assessment practices, flexibility and ways of teaching and learning in general. I am hoping it will foster more cooperation between institutions of higher education, between education professionals and between faculty and students. I am hoping that it helps us come closer to our students and their daily realities, and in the process help us create more compassionate learning environments.

A quick peek on social media -- our email in-boxes even -- may reveal not only the abundance of resources and creative solutions that are being shared, but also the help, support and community that we are extending to one another. This gives me hope for the future, whatever form it takes.

***

Audrey Watters, writer and blogger, "Hack Education [15]"

The coming weeks and months are going to be incredibly difficult for everyone. They are going to expose and exacerbate the vast inequalities that plague our educational institutions. It's important to recognize right now that technology is

not going to rectify this situation. Indeed, expecting technology to do so might make things worse. Not all students have access to a laptop or to broadband at home. And no, you can't do everything on a mobile phone. You can't just go to the library or to Starbucks for free Wi-Fi. Not now.

Many of us -- students and teachers alike -- find ourselves teetering on the brink of financial disaster. We're gravely concerned about our health, the health of our parents, our friends, our children. It's hard to concentrate on anything other than the rapid pace of news. Even the most mild of anxiety disorders now feels utterly unmanageable. K-12 schools have closed, and many of us have become full-time caregivers (and, suddenly, teachers) for our children or our siblings. Even if we once had a quiet room in which to work, these spaces are now likely to be occupied by other people who are stuck at home, too.

This isn't a time to make sweeping pronouncements about the efficacy of online education. It won't be time to make them come May or June, either. We already know that online education doesn't work well for all students -- particularly disadvantaged students -- under normal circumstances. And these aren't normal circumstances. What we will be able to judge colleges and universities on, however, is how flexible and compassionate they are during this crisis.

> We already know that online education doesn't work well for all students -- particularly disadvantaged students -- under normal circumstances. And these aren't normal circumstances. What we will be able to judge colleges and universities on, however, is how flexible and compassionate they are during this crisis.

I recognize that people want to see this as a turning point for online education -- its moment to either shine or stumble. Instead of viewing this as an opportunity for institutions to reorganize around more technology, this is their chance to lead with greater humanity.

***

Jonathan Zimmerman, professor of education and history, University of Pennsylvania; author of *The Amateur Hour: A History of College Teaching in America* (forthcoming, Johns Hopkins University Press)

I am an historian; I study dead people. So I'm always a bit reluctant to make any predications about the future. I've got my hands full making sense of the past.

But here's what I can tell you: our current moment has no precedent -- none -- in the history of American higher education. Since the advent of television in the 1950s, new technologies have been advertised as a way to provide "mass education" (as Cold War leaders called it) to the millions of new faces streaming into our colleges and universities. These institutions had been formed to serve a very small number of white, well-to-do men. But they had evolved into behemoths of diversity, enlisting working-class military veterans (who made up half of undergraduate students by 1947) and, eventually, almost anyone who could scrap together enough tuition or financial aid to attend.

Technology would allow the universities to integrate these new populations, or so enthusiasts proclaimed. According to the vice president of the Ford Foundation, which invested millions in educational television, TV would "make the greatest teachers of the age … available to everyone." At Harvard, meanwhile, psychologist B. F. Skinner promised to replace teachers altogether. "The number of people in the world who want an education is increasing at an almost explosive rate," Skinner warned. "It will not be possible to give these people what they want by building more schools and training more teachers." Skinner's answer was the "teaching machine," which he developed at Harvard and briefly used to instruct one of his own courses. It was a box-like contraption exhibiting questions that students would answer, getting rewarded (Skinner's favorite term) for every correct response.

> Online education … was barely noticed by our regular students, who get their education the old-fashioned way: in the classroom. Now, for the first time, they won't. They're going to be thrown into

> the same big pot as everyone else. An intervention designed to serve the masses is now going to be foisted on the (upper) classes.

Skinner's students were lukewarm in their evaluations of his teaching machine, but one of them also predicted that it would "have a revolutionary effect" outside of Harvard Yard. And that was the whole point, of course. The new machines weren't created for elites, who would always have access to the best kinds of education that America could offer. Technology was for everyone else, providing a facsimile of face-to-face instruction at a fraction of the cost.

That's what online education has been, for the most part. Consider my own university, which recently began the Ivy League's first fully online undergraduate degree. It's aimed at -- surprise! -- working and nontraditional students, who often can't get to campus and also can't afford our sticker price. It was barely noticed by our regular students, who get their education the old-fashioned way: in the classroom. Now, for the first time, they won't. They're going to be thrown into the same big pot as everyone else. An intervention designed to serve the masses is now going to be foisted on the (upper) classes.

This isn't just an experiment in education. It's a test of our democracy, too.

Digital Learning [16]
Online and Blended Learning [17]
Transforming Teaching & Learning [18]

Links
[1] https://www.insidehighered.com/subscribe-inside-digital-learning
[2] https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/03/11/professor-defends-his-colleges-impostor-learning-community-plus
[3] https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6643960937340518403/
[4] https://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-Coronavirus-Looks-Like-a/248219
[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_swan_theory
[6] https://www.qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/resource-center/articles-resources/ERI-Checklist
[7] https://thehill.com/policy/cybersecurity/487542-hackers-find-new-target-as-americans-work-from-home-during-outbreak
[8] https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Choosing+College%3A+How+to+Make+Better+Learning+Decisions+Throughout+Your+Life-p-9781119570134https://www.wiley.com/en-

us/Choosing+College%3A+How+to+Make+Better+Learning+Decisions+Throughout+Your+Life-p-9781119570134
[9] https://www.aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes
[10] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/08/01/controversial-california-bill-outsource-student-learning-dead-until-2014-or-later
[11] https://news.elearninginside.com/lsu-joins-growing-trend-universities-looking-significantly-expand-online-enrollment/
[12] https://edsource.org/2020/instructors-adapt-online-learning-coronavirus/625519
[13] https://mason.gmu.edu/~sprotops/OnlineEd.pdf
[14] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0360131516300203
[15] http://audreywatters.com/
[16] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/news-sections/digital-learning
[17] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/news-sections/online-and-blended-learning
[18] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/news-sections/transforming-teaching-learning

The New York Times | https://nyti.ms/3b5Zjy8

What Is a College Education in the Time of Coronavirus?

As students and professors converge online, universities shouldn't just reach for makeshift solutions. They might learn something useful.

By Richard Arum and Mitchell L. Stevens
The authors are experts on innovation in college education.

March 18, 2020

"Watching the entire Ivy League slowly turn into the University of Phoenix," a Barnard student tweeted last Tuesday. We can't think of a more concise summary of the predicament higher education faces with the spread of the coronavirus.

Residential colleges and universities nationwide are now obliging students to finish current-term academic coursework online, just as millions of students enrolled in distance learning programs such as the University of Phoenix's, and no one knows for sure what will happen come fall. Does this make a Harvard seminar or a Stanford lab conveyed through a video feed functionally equivalent to the face-to-face versions?

As sociologists of higher education who live our professional lives in academia, we are both impressed and sobered by the implications of our sector's response to the spread of the virus.

In the context of months of relative inaction and the absence of effective guidance from the federal government, elite U.S. colleges and universities led civil society with aggressive social-distancing mitigation measures to protect their own communities and flatten the curve of nationwide transmission. They called off large gatherings and study-abroad programs, then closed dormitories and classrooms. Countering the assumptions many make about a slow-moving academia, the entire sector turned on a dime. In doing so it served as a model of responsible civic action in our nation's otherwise chaotic public sphere.

Yet by quickly moving classes to the internet and telling students that online delivery would be credited and billed exactly as face-to-face delivery, elite schools surfaced big questions about their core business model. While some have waived a few fees or reduced room-and-board charges to residential students, virtually all of them have so far drawn the line at tuition: no discounts for online classes. This stance on pricing has a complicated history.

Over the past two decades, as educational technology advanced in sophistication and effectiveness, decision makers at selective residential schools merely tinkered with digital learning. A burst of enthusiasm and experimentation around massive open online courses (MOOCs) in 2012 quickly evaporated.

While schools with more or less open admissions such as Arizona State, Western Governors and Southern New Hampshire Universities fundamentally rethought and rebuilt their undergraduate programs, using digital media to provide increased access at lower cost, the selective schools generally went on with their classroom business as usual.

Elite colleges and universities took advantage of commercial tools for delivering readings and assignments and taking attendance, but generally continued with sage-on-the-stage, small seminar discussions or other conventional delivery models for their core operations. Reforms centered on increasing student engagement, but elite colleges and universities continued to expect their students to pay for full-time enrollment, move into dormitories, attend class in person and stay for four or more years.

But the hard fact is that this delivery format is an extraordinarily expensive way of purveying college degrees. Americans' obsession with residential education as the sine qua non of academic excellence is a big part of what makes higher education roughly twice as costly per student here than it is in European countries. It also categorically excludes those whose life circumstances make them unable to leave their family homes and forgo paid work to attend college.

An unwavering commitment to this form of delivery prevented elite schools from using digital media to lower costs for all of their students, or investing in the pedagogical expertise that might have rendered online learning options complementary in practice and commensurate in quality to face-to-face instruction. This is why tens of thousands of students and faculty at some of the wealthiest and most esteemed universities in the world are finishing their coursework in video chat rooms this spring, instead of having the opportunity to take advantage of high quality interactive and pedagogically sound online options. We can only speculate how things might have been different if residential schools had invested as much in online learning platforms as they have in recruiting star researchers, renovating dormitories or upgrading athletics facilities over the last 20 years.

We recognize that residential programs provide a great deal more to students than mere coursework. They are relationship machines, generating countless friendships, intimate partnerships and professional network ties. That machinery doesn't translate easily to digital life, which is why residential-campus students, when told to complete their coursework on computers, feel cheated out of much of the value associated with residential college attendance.

We also recognize that online formats bring their own risks. When poorly designed and bereft of genuine human attentiveness, online delivery can be disastrous for students who are not well prepared for college-level coursework. Inequitable outcomes will almost surely result if the makeshift approaches being used to weather the current crisis continue indefinitely.

Going forward, educators will need to study and compare learning outcomes for different kinds of students in a variety of instructional formats. With prudent investment, careful observation and a commitment to ongoing improvement in both physical classrooms and online, quality instruction can be provided irrespective of delivery mode.

Well-resourced institutions should use their capital and scientific endowments to create and model best practices: building best-in-class online learning platforms and then adopting and promoting research-based approaches to iterate and improve on instructional design. Here the nation's esteemed research universities are ideally positioned to serve the entire sector: they have the scale, expertise, and research infrastructure to make signal advances in applied learning science.

Additionally, administrators, faculty and alumni should recognize the costliness of requiring students to leave their homes and physically cohabit with one another for four years. How much of that is really necessary? Might two or three years of being on campus together suffice for four?

This is not a fanciful idea. For example, the University of California system now requires that one junior transfer student be admitted — primarily from the state's community college system — for every two traditional entering freshmen students. Students admitted this way receive most of the benefits of a University of California education while enjoying substantial savings on tuition, room and board charges during their initial college years.

Might young people be encouraged to live at home and take courses online for an initial period after high school, or perhaps to finish their studies digitally while embedded as interns and apprentices with potential employers? There are many good reasons to consider this: cost; the variability of adolescent developmental trajectories; rising concern over student mental health, food insecurity and substance abuse on campus; equity of college opportunity for those with responsibility to care for children and other loved ones; and the often tenuous relationship between academic coursework and the real world.

One positive outcome from the current crisis would be for academic elites to forgo their presumption that online learning is a second- or third-rate substitute for in-person delivery. This is snobbish, counterproductive and insensitive to the nation's critical need for affordable college options. Online delivery should be valued in its own right — a worthy learning format with its own distinctive assets — and given the investment it deserves.

We are optimistic that our colleagues will go there. After all, they already take great advantage of digital platforms to pursue their research programs, connect scholarly communities, and enable collaboration across vast distances. And they value, in principle, ideals of educational access and opportunity.

A global pandemic currently obliges otherwise unconscionable concessions of instructional quality, but it can also be a wake-up call. No one planned it, but the next few months will be an exquisite experiment in the demands and possibilities of online learning. Who knows? For college teaching and learning, there may be no return to normal.

Richard Arum (@ucieducation) is dean of the School of Education at the University of California, Irvine; Mitchell L. Stevens (@mitchellatedf) is an associate professor of education at Stanford.

THE CHRONICLE
of Higher Education

FINANCE

As Coronavirus Drives Students From Campuses, What Happens to the Workers Who Feed Them?

By Dan Bauman | MARCH 13, 2020

U. of Texas at Austin

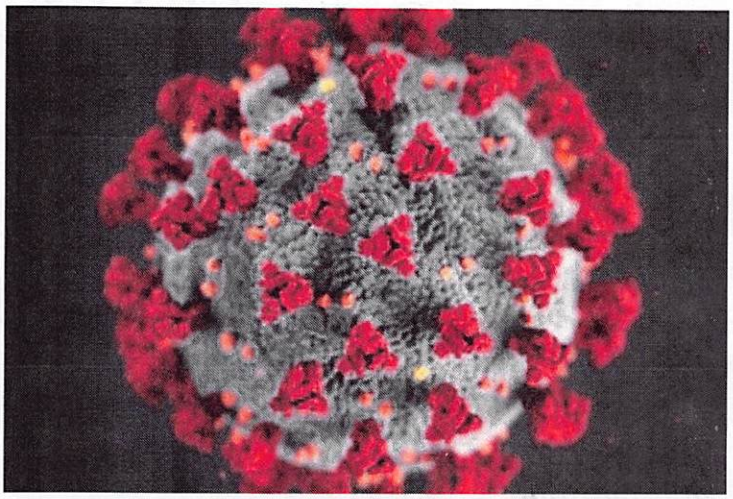
A dining area at the U. of Texas at Austin, which on March 13 announced it was suspending operations.

The University of Texas at Austin announced on Friday that it would suspend operations in response to the coronavirus pandemic and Covid-19, the disease it causes. The university suspended campus visits and in-person admission events, as well as all university-sponsored international and domestic travel through at least April 30.

In doing so, Texas joined the ranks of institutions like Rice University, which has elected to suspend operations on its campus, in Houston, for the rest of the semester. But those suspensions, accompanying shifts from in-person to online classes, have raised concerns about the effects on nonacademic workers and those employed by independent contractors.

Industry watchers, though, say that despite the chaos experienced by faculty members and students as campuses close, there has not been a rush to issue pink slips to those workers.

Coronavirus Hits Campus



As colleges and universities have struggled to devise policies to respond to the quickly evolving situation, here are links to *The Chronicle*'s key coverage of how this worldwide health crisis is affecting campuses.

- The Coronavirus Is Upending Higher Ed. Here Are the Latest Developments.
- When Emergency Strikes: Lessons From Campus Closures
- Colleges Emptied Dorms Amid Coronavirus Fears. What Can They Do About Off-Campus Housing?

"At this time, we are not aware of any planned employee layoffs," said Andy Brantley, president and chief executive of the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, in a written statement. "In fact, we are hearing stories from across the country that emphasize how our higher-education leaders are working to continue services, create teleworking plans, and expand leave options to help employees bridge any gaps that temporary Covid-19 closures will create."

Earlier this week Washington University in St. Louis joined many institutions in announcing that it would shift toward a temporary online-only course model, and asked students not to return to campus after spring break. David Cook, president of the union that represents the campus's food workers, said there also were plans to reduce the number of dining-service workers employed by the Bon Appétit Management Company, which contracts with the university to supply and serve food on campus.

Typically, around 300 Bon Appétit workers serve the campus, Cook said. But reduced operations would require only about 50 workers or fewer, he added, with the remaining 250 left in limbo. Fearing the loss of competent workers, Bon Appétit was trying to retain those with uncertain futures in any way it could, Cook said.

Henry S. Webber, executive vice chancellor and chief administrative officer of the university, told *The Chronicle* that the 250 Bon Appétit workers would continue to be paid for the rest of the fiscal year. Though workers' duties might shift to adapt to the new reality on campus, Webber said, there would be no layoffs of Bon Appétit's rank and file before the summer break.

But for Washington University, like nearly all other colleges wrestling with the pandemic's fallout, there remain countless unknowables. Most campus food-service workers are employed seasonally, with reduced staffing during breaks that gears back up when students return. But whether this fall semester will bear any resemblance to those of past years remains to be seen, and with it, the employment prospects of these and other workers.

'Essential' or 'Nonessential'

Fallout from the current crisis will be a major test for many already-struggling private universities and colleges, said Robert Kelchen, an assistant professor of higher education at Seton Hall University. After paying its expenses, for instance, Washington University had a $1.39-billion surplus at the end of the 2018 fiscal year. The 12-month cost of its Bon Appétit contract? Just over $17 million. But fewer and fewer institutions have a balance sheet that looks like Washington's.

If the outbreak persists, some private universities and colleges with tighter cash flows will have to cut costs. Most institutions will delay cuts in personnel as long as possible, Kelchen said, for fear of losing competent employees, who can be difficult to replace.

But institutions could be forced to make tough decisions: Should they reduce payments to certain contractors in order to invest in better distance learning? Or perhaps terminate some "nonessential" employees in order to continue to pay those deemed "essential"?

By classifying employees as either "essential" or "nonessential," contingency plans aim to maintain the continuity of an institution's academic and business operations, said David J. Hubeny, executive director of Binghamton University's Office of Emergency Management and chair of the International Association of Emergency Managers' Universities and Colleges Caucus.

Universities and colleges function like small cities, Hubeny said, and can't simply be mothballed until trouble passes. Heating and water utilities still need to be maintained by a critical mass of facilities workers. A certain number of security officials or law-enforcement officers need to be on campus and on call. If key labs must remain open, or certain research experiments can't be delayed, a whole set of staff members must be retained for monitoring, safety, and services. And for all of those employees, as well as those working remotely, someone still needs to process paychecks.

Kelchen pointed to the diverging policies on campus housing that have been announced by hundreds of institutions this week. Generally, he said, the colleges that told students to leave are the richer ones. Should students or parents seek refunds, those institutions are better situated to write off that lost revenue, Kelchen said.

Other, less-affluent institutions have taken less-draconian measures. Some have asked, not required, students to move home to their families, thereby sidestepping potential ethical and contractual issues. Still other institutions have resisted any and all changes in their operations.

"You'll see colleges exercising both an abundance of caution towards students but also an abundance of caution towards their financial stability," Kelchen said. "For some colleges, that potentially can be difficult to balance."

Dan Bauman is a reporter who investigates and writes about all things data in higher education. Tweet him at @danbauman77, or email him at dan.bauman@chronicle.com.

This article is part of:
Coronavirus Hits Campus

Published on *Inside Higher Ed* (https://insidehighered.com)

A college student expresses his concerns to university administrators about policies related to the coronavirus (opinion)

Submitted by Will Walker on March 16, 2020 - 3:00am

Dear university administrators:

I am sharing my thoughts and perspective with you because I think that it is important that you understand what many low-income, first-generation college students are experiencing in the heat of the coronavirus situation.

While I understand your concerns about maintaining the safety and health of the campus community, it is not uncommon for students from low-income and first-gen backgrounds to support themselves through on-campus employment opportunities. Because so many students are dependent on these, the loss of income that many students will experience should be at the top of the priority list.

As it stands, I have three credit card bills, multiple medical bills and a cellphone bill that do not care about the coronavirus. Regardless of where I am and what I am doing, my creditors expect to get paid. And it will be me via my credit score that takes the hit if I cannot pay them.

Students are not faculty and staff members with guaranteed salaries. We are mostly hourly employees or contract workers whose lives depend on our ability to support ourselves. We are our own last resort because we have fully maximized the resources provided by our schools, families and peers.

Students understand that things are evolving, but the last-minuteness of the coronavirus does not change the fact that we need strong directives and guidance that are fully fleshed out and considerate of the challenges that we

face. Living in limbo land, waiting for a new update or being referred to empty webpage, does not alleviate the stress and anxiety that I and many others feel as we consider our next steps.

You should also know that I and many other students are not able to buy plane tickets at the flip of a coin. I make most of my flight arrangements around regular seasonal holidays and expected breaks. I fly home for Thanksgiving and winter break because they are baked into the academic calendar -- they're where they have been and will be for the next few years. These dates are solid and set well enough in advance that students have ample time to prepare.

The directive of "go home and do not return to campus," however, is one that does not allow us to prepare. I am from a small rural town where the local airports see little traffic, so a trip home for me is nothing less than $300 for a one-way ticket. Worse than that is the doubled amount of $600 that I will have to pay if I am required and expected to return to campus in, say, a few weeks or at the end of the month if courses return to a face-to-face format.

On another note, I also think that it is worthwhile to start considering the other financial impacts that this situation will have on students. Many institutions, like Harvard University, frame their academic prestige around face-to-face contact where classes have 20 students or less. This practice falls apart the moment you shift intense discussion-based courses to an online format. While professors certainly know their disciplines well enough to instruct online courses, courses of this sort (at least for colleges/programs that regularly offer only face-to-face courses) reflect a loss of value to me.

What happens when professors are forced to redesign their courses midsemester? How are scientists supposed to engage students in labs online? What happens to office hours? All of these are important questions that at least one low-income, first-gen student is asking.

I am also thinking about the fact that there is no Blackboard or Moodle discussion box that is big enough to contextualize all the thoughts that students have in class. Professors have very few ways to encourage connection and interaction online, and I fear that students will just not care

about their courses as much as they do in an actual class where the professor or other students hold them accountable.

I hope that you, as administrators tasked with making big decisions, are also considering, at minimum, a refund or advance credit for room and board charges. Many parents and students, me included, have paid tens of thousands of dollars for our room and meal plans that will not be utilized in the foreseeable future. Many of us take out loans to cover these expenses, and it is harsh and unreasonable to force us to pay for things that we won't use. Students and parents are counting every penny that it takes to finance a college degree, and paying for things we don't use is literally like throwing cash in the trash.

As questions and concerns arise, please continue to consult your stakeholders, but know that students and their parents are the most important constituencies. While you all undoubtedly report to a supervisor of some sort, your decisions should be informed not only by those supervisors but by students and their parents, as well. That means listening to the concerns of your minority student population and doing everything that you can to ensure their needs are being met and supported. Do right by them, and worry about the consequences later.

Will Walker is a junior at the University of Richmond.

Editorial Tags:
Coronavirus [1]
Is this diversity newsletter?:
Newsletter Order:
2
Diversity Newsletter publication date:
Tuesday, March 17, 2020
Disable left side advertisement?:
Is this Career Advice newsletter?:
Email Teaser:
Don't Forget About Us Minority Students: An Open Letter to University Administrators
Trending:
Live Updates:
liveupdates0

Links

[1] https://insidehighered.com/topics/coronavirus

Published on *Inside Higher Ed* (https://www.insidehighered.com)

Saturday was not an ideal day to take the SAT

Submitted by Scott Jaschik on March 16, 2020 - 3:00am

Saturday was a testing day for the SAT, but not everyone who signed up for the test took it.

Many high schools and colleges -- frequently the sites for people to take the SAT -- were closed. More than 100 testing locations were closed in California, according to an official College Board list. Only a minority of the sites listed alternate sites or plans for a makeup test. And the College Board said that some test cancellations might not be known until Saturday.

In Maine, the Portland school district closed and didn't report that to the College Board. Students showed up to take the SAT, found no one and eventually left, *The Portland Press Herald* [1] reported.

Some school districts took to social media to communicate that they were closed for the SAT, or that they were open.

FultonCountySchools
@FultonCoSchools

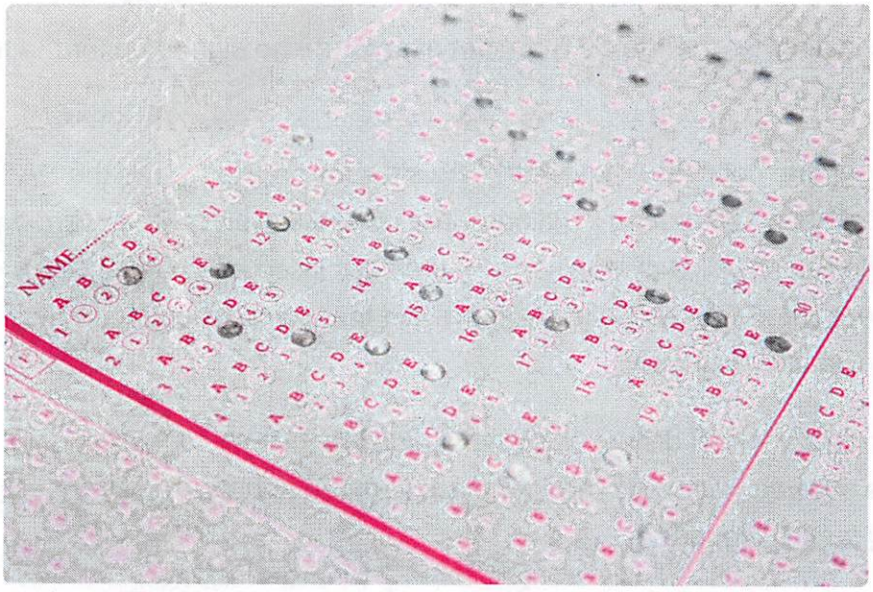
In order to reduce our students' risk of exposure, the SAT administration scheduled for this Saturday, March 14th, has been canceled. Please contact CollegeBoard about future administrations and questions.

78 1:15 PM - Mar 13, 2020

50 people are talking about this

Miami-Dade Schools
@MDCPS

Attention high school seniors! The SAT administration scheduled for Saturday, March 14, 2020, will proceed as planned.



89 12:40 PM - Mar 12, 2020

71 people are talking about this

The Miami-Dade Schools tweeted that the SAT was on. And the school district received a flurry of critical comments on Twitter:

"No one concerned with mental impact and social anxiety will affect student performance?" one person wrote. Another added, "Really? Cram a bunch of kids in a room and pray nobody gets sick … no stress for the kids … it can wait."

How the College Board Handled the Date

It is of course difficult to give a test like the SAT. And the situation with the coronavirus developed during the week, with many schools and colleges closing. Many schools only made the decision to close on Friday.

The College Board webpage [6] with information on test cancellations said, "Please know that we rely on test centers to notify us if they cannot test. In some instances, test centers may need to close on short notice and you may not be directly notified. If you think your test center may be closed, please check your test center's website or local media for confirmation. Thank you for your understanding during this unique time."

A College Board spokeswoman said Friday that the organization didn't know how many people were scheduled to take the SAT on Saturday and didn't know how many would be able to. The statement said that the College Board would "be flexible, thoughtful, and collaborative when exploring how to support student learning and provide testing opportunities."

The coronavirus has already led the College Board to cancel testing in countries such as China, South Korea, Italy and Japan, among others [7].

(The ACT isn't scheduled to be given until April [8], so that organization has more time to make adjustments.)

One critic of the College Board, David Quinn, posted an open letter [9] to the College Board's board which said in part, "This week's truly awful and incomplete messaging and decision-making seemed to place 'taking the SAT' above containing the spreading virus. The College Board failed to continually update its website, and the poor communication to families stressed 'rescheduling exams' for the next date in the middle of a pandemic."

Admissions [10]

Source URL: https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2020/03/16/saturday-was-not-ideal-day-take-sat

Links

[1] https://www.pressherald.com/2020/03/14/portland-schools-cancel-sats-without-notice/
[2] https://t.co/wPdyPjRNo2
[3] https://twitter.com/FultonCoSchools/status/1238514027267002370?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
[4] https://t.co/tVXIEpngBp
[5] https://twitter.com/MDCPS/status/1238142922186534912?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
[6] https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/test-center-closings
[7] https://pages.collegeboard.org/natural-disasters
[8] https://www.act.org/content/act/en/covid-19.html
[9] https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfZybriwfCaiX5lTqfBVaVHVjSiD_tAhyuToK9vJFjdmG8rLw/viewform
[10] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/focus/admissions

The New York Times | https://nyti.ms/2TPwh03

Cap and Gone? College Commencements Confront the Coronavirus

The University of Michigan canceled its planned ceremony while students at the University of Maine threw an impromptu "Coronamencement."

By Christopher Mele

March 13, 2020

The University of Michigan on Friday canceled its commencement planned for May over fears of the coronavirus — one of what is likely to be many such college ceremonies to be reconsidered in the face of the pandemic.

The ceremony, which was to be held May 2 at Michigan Stadium and feature former Vice President Al Gore as the speaker, was scuttled to minimize the potential spread of the disease, the college announced.

More than 9,000 students would have been eligible to participate in the event, which customarily draws tens of thousands, a university spokesman said.

Public health officials have warned that such large gatherings facilitate the spread of the virus because of the proximity of attendees.

The university, which is in Ann Arbor, about 45 miles west of Detroit, said its announcement applied to "large campuswide ceremonies and individual school, college and group recognition ceremonies."

"We know that this is very disappointing to many, and we are looking at ways to celebrate 2020 graduates in the future," it added.

Lilly Hanson, 22, a senior at the university studying business, said she was not surprised to learn of the cancellation but that the news was still a disappointment.

"I knew this would blow up and be a full-scale thing," she said on Friday night, referring to the coronavirus outbreak.

The school announced this week that it was canceling classes on Thursday and Friday, and on Friday announced it was shifting to strictly remote instruction for the rest of the semester.

Ms. Hanson, of Denver, said it was "bittersweet" to not be able to spend more time in person with classmates but that she was more disappointed to miss as important a milestone as graduation.

At the University of Maine in Orono, just north of Bangor, decisions are still being weighed about its commencement ceremony.

But after the school announced on Wednesday that it would shift to remote instruction starting March 23, students mobilized and organized an impromptu "Coronamencement," which they celebrated on Friday.

Hailey Bryant, 21, a senior majoring in journalism and political science, said students wanted to do something to ensure their graduation was not lost.

"It was really hard because we've all been envisioning our graduation since we started college and all of a sudden it was taken away," she said Friday night.

Ms. Bryant, of Gorham, Maine, a reporter for The Bangor Daily News, wrote that the event took root after another senior, Sophia Palangas, started a Facebook event to get together with friends for a final farewell.

"The idea caught on fast, and by this morning, more than 400 people had marked that they would attend," she wrote. Some dressed in cardboard caps and bathrobes and others in dresses and suits, she wrote.

Robert Q. Dana, the university's vice president for student affairs and dean of students, attended the event, which "made it feel a bit more official, like the school cared about our feelings," Ms. Bryant said.

Mr. Dana said the school was considering alternate venues, such as an outdoor football stadium instead of an indoor hockey arena, to host the commencement.

He said the university would be "very student-centric in our decision making" given the importance of the ceremony.

He said that the "Coronamencement" showed that the students could find light despite the darkness of the grim pervasive news.

"Today," he said, "they had their arms wide open to the sun."

Christopher Mele is a senior staff editor and weekend editor on the Express Team. He previously worked on the Metro copy desk. @MeleChristopher

The New York Times | https://nyti.ms/2TPwh03

Cap and Gone? College Commencements Confront the Coronavirus

The University of Michigan canceled its planned ceremony while students at the University of Maine threw an impromptu "Coronamencement."

By Christopher Mele

March 13, 2020

The University of Michigan on Friday canceled its commencement planned for May over fears of the coronavirus — one of what is likely to be many such college ceremonies to be reconsidered in the face of the pandemic.

The ceremony, which was to be held May 2 at Michigan Stadium and feature former Vice President Al Gore as the speaker, was scuttled to minimize the potential spread of the disease, the college announced.

More than 9,000 students would have been eligible to participate in the event, which customarily draws tens of thousands, a university spokesman said.

Public health officials have warned that such large gatherings facilitate the spread of the virus because of the proximity of attendees.

The university, which is in Ann Arbor, about 45 miles west of Detroit, said its announcement applied to "large campuswide ceremonies and individual school, college and group recognition ceremonies."

"We know that this is very disappointing to many, and we are looking at ways to celebrate 2020 graduates in the future," it added.

Lilly Hanson, 22, a senior at the university studying business, said she was not surprised to learn of the cancellation but that the news was still a disappointment.

"I knew this would blow up and be a full-scale thing," she said on Friday night, referring to the coronavirus outbreak.

The school announced this week that it was canceling classes on Thursday and Friday, and on Friday announced it was shifting to strictly remote instruction for the rest of the semester.

Ms. Hanson, of Denver, said it was "bittersweet" to not be able to spend more time in person with classmates but that she was more disappointed to miss as important a milestone as graduation.

At the University of Maine in Orono, just north of Bangor, decisions are still being weighed about its commencement ceremony.

But after the school announced on Wednesday that it would shift to remote instruction starting March 23, students mobilized and organized an impromptu "Coronamencement," which they celebrated on Friday.

Hailey Bryant, 21, a senior majoring in journalism and political science, said students wanted to do something to ensure their graduation was not lost.

"It was really hard because we've all been envisioning our graduation since we started college and all of a sudden it was taken away," she said Friday night.

Ms. Bryant, of Gorham, Maine, a reporter for The Bangor Daily News, wrote that the event took root after another senior, Sophia Palangas, started a Facebook event to get together with friends for a final farewell.

"The idea caught on fast, and by this morning, more than 400 people had marked that they would attend," she wrote. Some dressed in cardboard caps and bathrobes and others in dresses and suits, she wrote.

Robert Q. Dana, the university's vice president for student affairs and dean of students, attended the event, which "made it feel a bit more official, like the school cared about our feelings," Ms. Bryant said.

Mr. Dana said the school was considering alternate venues, such as an outdoor football stadium instead of an indoor hockey arena, to host the commencement.

He said the university would be "very student-centric in our decision making" given the importance of the ceremony.

He said that the "Coronamencement" showed that the students could find light despite the darkness of the grim pervasive news.

"Today," he said, "they had their arms wide open to the sun."

Christopher Mele is a senior staff editor and weekend editor on the Express Team. He previously worked on the Metro copy desk. @MeleChristopher