**Higher ed thought leaders forecast 2015 trends**

Presidents and other thought leaders look ahead on cost, technology and learning

University Business Staff

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**Donald Farish**

*President, Roger Williams University, Rhode Island*

**Topic:** Tuition and financial aid

**Trend:** Well over half of the nonprofit private colleges failed to meet either their enrollment or revenue targets this fall. Despite this, I predict that the overwhelming majority of these schools will continue to increase both tuition and discount rates next year, and even more of them will fall short of their enrollment and revenue targets.

**Daniel Porterfield**

*President, Franklin & Marshall College (Pa.)*

**Topic:** Affordability and value

**Trend:** If you're a college or university business officer, you're going to have to continue dealing with the issues of affordability and value. Every institution—public and private alike—needs a logic for its price, and should be doubling down to create educational quality and services that add value to students' lives and to society as a whole.

**Mary Hawkins**

*President, Bellevue University (Neb.)*

**Topic:** Academic technology/analytics

**Tren**d: Universities are early in the process of gathering data on student learning and student behaviors. In the past, we relied on faculty reports or student evaluations, but now using technology, we can track learning. Businesses—Amazon, Google, Netflix—have invested in analytics, but education lags this capacity. Analytics may change education and the role of faculty.

**Carol A. Leary**

*President of Bay Path University (Mass.)*

**Topic:** Personalized online learning

**Trend:**Online learning platforms will become adaptive, customized environments integrating robust, personalized learning analytics for instruction. Students will receive immediate feedback on their academic performance, as well as support such as coaching, virtual learning communities and social networking. The result: students will have greater control of education, complete their degrees faster and have stronger connections to professors.

**Rene Cintron**

*Assistant dean of business and technology, Delgado Community College (New Orleans)*

**Topic:** Academic affairs/prior learning assessments

**Trend:** People learn skills on the job and often have to change careers. These skills can be assessed and transcribed as college credits using various formats of evaluation (industry-based certifications, credit exams, live demonstrations, etc.). I see an increase in changes of policies to accept these types of nontraditional credits and provide a grade based on the course and program outcomes.

**Jim Carroll**

*Futurist, trends and innovation expert*

**Topic:** The future of education

**Trend:** When it comes to the future of education, it's all about “just-in-time knowledge.” Increasingly specialized careers and skills, and accelerating technological change, mean more organizations will need people who can deliver the right skills, at the right time, for the right purpose. Knowledge development and deployment will accelerate to keep up with trend.

**Meg Mott**

*Professor of politics, Marlboro College (Vt.)*

**Topic:** Safety and security

**Trend:** Due to an increase in Title IX complaints, insurance companies and risk managers will determine that it is no longer worth the risk to house students on campus, particularly in coeducational dorms. Instead, colleges will outsource housing requirements to private landlords, who are not held to the same standard of providing protection for their tenants.

**Monica Jacobe**

*Director, Center for American Language & Culture, The College of New Jersey*

**Topic:** Student success

**Trend:** First-generation college students will no longer be primarily American-born students from working class families. Instead, many more students in that category will be recent immigrants, born all over the world, who completed high school in the U.S. For many schools, they will "look" on paper like domestic applicants, but the support they need will be very different.

**Howard Nixon**

*Professor emeritus of sociology, Towson University (Md.); author of The Athletic Trap: How College Sports Corrupted the Academy (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014)*

**Topic:** College athletics

**Trend:** The O'Bannon decision, antitrust lawsuits, the Northwestern NLRB ruling, Congressional pressure and the push to increase big-time conference autonomy combine to increase pressure on the NCAA to allow big-time athletes to share more of the financial rewards of big-time college sports. This will move them further and further away from the amateurism model, which has actually been about sham-ateurism.

**Ben Nelson**

*Founder and CEO, Minerva Project*

**Topic:** Academic affairs

**Trend:** I believe that at least one major college or university will declare a series of introductory courses (such as Calculus 101 or Psychology 101) to no longer confer college-level credit at that institution. The rationale would be that these courses are freely available online and that awarding credit and charging for the privilege will be deemed immoral.

**Darrow Zeidenstein**

*Vice president, development and alumni relations, Rice University (Texas)*

**Topic:** Fundraising

**Trend:**Total university fundraising revenue will continue to climb in 2015, primarily due to the overall rise in the stock market and the large number of public campaigns taking place after the low number of such efforts from 2008-12. Fundraising increases will spur a lot of innovation in the academy and, unfortunately, another arms race for faculty and student talent.

**Bill Spiers**

*Director of financial aid, Tallahassee Community College (Fla.)*

**Topic:** Prior-Prior Year to determine financial aid eligibility

**Trend:** With the move toward simplification of the aid process and the FAFSA, prior-prior year is a tool that will be on the table. Recent analysis indicates there would be little, if any, cost associated with this change. A majority of families would be able to use the IRS match, significantly reducing the number of FAFSA questions most families would need to complete and providing schools with better data for determining need.

**Frederick Lane**

*Professor emeritus of public affairs, Baruch College, CUNY*

**Topic:** Renewed importance of statewide coordinating boards

**Trend:** With so many disrupting forces—long-term state-level disinvestment, student costs and debt, technological change, for-profit competitors, globalization, private donor influence, needs of underrepresented populations, pressures for student success, inter-institutional competition, and economic development concerns—citizen groups, legislators and governors will revisit the need for effective statewide planning and coordination of higher education, impacting both public and private institutions.

**Ron Wheadon**

*Special assistant to the vice president of student learning & success, Cascadia College*

**Topic:** Partnerships with private enterprise

**Trend:** The demand for sustainably more complex processes in most industries is making it difficult to address them in a 90-plus credit associate’s degree. It is creating a work environment that the traditional bachelor’s degree holder does not have the skill or interest in accomplishing, thus the bachelor’s at community colleges. Industry complains of not finding qualified candidates for their positions.

**Simon Jones-Hendrickson**

*Professor of economics and dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, University of the Virgin Islands*

**Topic:** Partnerships with private enterprise

**Trend:** The knowledge-based economy that we are in will be the driving force for job searches and job fulfillment.

**Thomas Bennett**

*Chief technologist, Delta College (Mich.)*

**Topic:** Academic technology

**Trend:** The need for faculty to apply mobile technology pedagogy concepts to their courses will be driven by preferred student learning preferences.

**Paul Combe**

*President and CEO, American Student Assistance*

**Topic:** Finance, tuition, financial aid

**Trend:** Higher education institutions will face increasing pressure to expand financial education to students and alumni, as student loan debt continues to be a major issue leading up to the 2016 presidential election. One-and-done student loan counseling sessions, proving ineffective, will continue to be replaced by comprehensive financial education resources that deliver lifelong learning through colleges and employers.

**David Snyder**

*Contributing editor, The Futurist*

**Topic:** Recruitment, retention, enrollment

**Trend:** The traditional post-secondary client base—the 16-to-24 year-old age cohort—will shrink by 13.3 percent between 2012 and 2022, while the numbers of “mid-career” adults (25-to-55 year-olds) attending college has risen 3 percent to 5 percent for the past several years. In addition, between 5 percent and 10 percent of Baby Boomers are choosing to go back to college when they retire.

**Bruce Alperin**

*Senior director of marketing, Facility Services, ARAMARK Higher Education*

**Topic:** Enterprise Risk Management (ERM)

**Trend:** Institutions will adopt more formal strategies to address risk. Alcohol incidents, sexual assault, active shooter etc. are the obvious ones. However, risk is also included in deferred maintenance and infrastructure to weather-related events to power outages to even missing enrollment numbers. Formal enterprise risk management programs will grow in popularity.

**Tricia Dufek**

*First American Education Finance; A City National Bank Company*

**Topic:** Funding Shortfalls for Sustainability Initiatives Drive Use of Alternative Financing

**Trend:** Schools will continue to be challenged in meeting commitments to key sustainable initiatives with tightening budgets. Instead of deferring these initiatives, schools will identify alternative funding options to finance sustainable initiatives with a predictable return on investment. Pursuing alternative funding sources for such projects will enable more schools to increase the number of successful sustainability related projects completed in 2015.

**Gavin Cooney**

*CEO/Founder of Learnosity*

**Topic:** Academic technology

**Trend:** Whether facing pressure from students to provide the best education technology, or from a "keep up with the Joneses" mentality, higher education institutions struggle to keep up with the latest edtech demands. As more tech-savvy students come to class, and tech-savvy companies recruit on campus, the education world must find cost-effective way to enhance its high tech education offerings.

**Frank Menchaca**

*Senior vice president, global product management, Gale (part of Cengage Learning)*

**Topic:** The role of academic librarians

**Trend:** Academic librarians bridge the gap between the library and the classroom. Determined to measure the library’s value in student learning and faculty productivity, they firmly position themselves in college/university classrooms—as information experts helping teachers and students achieve better results.