The 7 biggest challenges of adult learners

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The career college sector has entered a new era, vastly different from the mere threats of Sens. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Dick Durbin (D-Ill.). Following the shuttering of campuses from one of the largest school conglomerates in the sector and more investigations of other schools, the entire career college realm is being portrayed with an overwhelming negativity in the news media. Warranted or not, all schools are being held accountable by the failure of others. But that shouldn’t be the reality. Career College Central Editor Kevin Kuzma argues that the government’s success in shutting down colleges should not suspend belief in career education.

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For the second summer in a row, our family prepared a child for the trepidations involved with transitioning to middle school.

Last year, it was my oldest daughter, Annie, who was anxiety-ridden about the possibility of not being able to work her locker combination correctly or finding herself late for class on the first day. Her worries also reached into the realm of making friends, which was a needless concern given her sweet disposition and outgoing personality, but, nonetheless, to her it was a real fear.

This summer, my son Charlie barely spoke a word about his fears of starting fifth grade in a new school building until the summer was halfway past. He had mentioned not wanting to leave his elementary school around his final few days of fourth grade, but aside from that it didn’t seem to be a concern. After all, his sister had survived, and he was employing the same strategies she did to find success.

For practice, their uncle bought them both combination locks similar to what would be placed on their lockers. My mom bought them clothes for the first few days of school so they could at least look good while living out their terrible fates. And I shared with them some humorous stories of my days in middle school. We all have them. The seventh-grader who flunked three times and looks about 40 years old. The horrors of gym class and showering (thankfully my kids have been spared this experience until high school). The prospect of learning from multiple teachers and moving from class to class, tossed in with a new group of students from other schools.

Those are the intense but passing fears of 10-year-olds. But the ones adults face are more realistic – and often more dire.

In this edition of Career College Central, we have focused our attention on the decisions adults make to go back to college. While going back to school is a year-round occurrence at career schools, which often have a variety of staggered start dates, we felt there was no better time than autumn to pay tribute to these students and their brave decision to fit the pursuit of an education into their lives.

Those of us involved in the career college sector know that the majority of our students face enormous challenges in pursuing their education. Most of them work full-time jobs and have children depending on them for regular meals, a place to live and the direction that parents give. Many, unfortunately, have families who aren’t supportive of the path they’re taking to change their lives. Some of them made unfortunate choices or maybe have children who came along unexpectedly and delayed their plans for an education. On the following pages, you’ll read more about the challenges students face and personal stories about overcoming these obstacles. And in our editorial “A New Era,” our magazine continues its tradition of standing up for our sector and giving it a voice in a time of need.

Going back to college is not an easy choice. For children, those fears eventually pass. But for older students today, they persist, even after the degree is earned.
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LIFE HAPPENS
A first-person account of heading back to the college classroom

By Brjden Crewe, Contributing Writer

Walking into the classroom as a 28-year-old college freshman, I was surprised by how young and fresh-faced everyone looked. It’s a weird experience, actually, almost like stepping back inside your high school for the first time after being away at college for a year and watching the kids sprint up and down the hallways. You think, “Did I look this young when I was a freshman?” It was that same uncomfortable, surreal feeling that filled my mind as I sat down and scanned the room for a person older than I was who didn’t have “professor” in front of his or her name.

It had been four years since I earned my first degree, and my decision to return to school to further my education included a lot of self-doubt about my ability to fit in with younger classmates, as well as questioning whether I’d be able to find the motivation to go to school and hold down a full-time job at the same time. These are just some of the fears that adults face when they decide to pursue higher learning – but it doesn’t stop there.

Fish out of water
After we had been sitting in the classroom for a few minutes, an older man (I’d say in his early 40s) carrying a bag walked into the classroom. By the look of confusion on his face, I could tell he wasn’t there to teach the class. He sat next to me and we exchanged greetings, and I could tell that he felt uncomfortable being surrounded by kids half his age who were typing away on their gadgets in abbreviated code. (I had to explain to him what “jelly” and “GTFOH” meant.)
Once the professor arrived and began teaching the class, the man and I were in the small minority of students taking notes with pen and paper. The rest of the students were using their tablets, laptops and even their phones to take notes, with some of the students even glancing at us and chuckling at our old-school note-taking methods. The man clearly felt a bit awkward about not fitting in with most of the students, but I explained to him after class that we should not let these fears about feeling out of place get in the way of pursuing our education.

Attending school with a campus full of young people who aren’t sure whether you’re a student or a parent can be intimidating as an adult.

Most of us have heard adults say that they feel like they’re too old to go to college. Attending school with a campus full of young people who aren’t sure whether you’re a student or a parent can be intimidating. But in today’s economic climate, pursuing a higher education could be the difference between landing your dream job and missing out on the opportunity entirely. According to the U.S. Department of Education, nearly 40 percent of all students enrolled in college are 25 years old or older. And as of 2013, nearly 9 million people over the age of 35 were enrolled in college, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. So, you need not feel intimidated, because you are not alone.

The technology gap

As I mentioned in my second-time-around/first-college-classroom experience, I’m not a big fan of using gadgets in the classroom. I like the feel of a pencil against a notebook, and that’s always worked for me. But when I’m at home studying and researching, I can Google with the best of them and use the technology to my advantage if need be. But many adults who have the desire to pursue their education often feel intimidated by the perceived difficulties of enrolling, communicating and even taking courses using electronic devices that they have had little or no experience using.
My mother is a good example. She calls Twitter “The Twitter.” “Are you online talking on The Twitter?” she will often affectionately ask me over the phone. She still uses dial-up Internet service, keeps a flip phone stashed in her closet and has no idea what Netflix is (although she has heard the name). The technological revolution somehow eluded my mother and others like her. Without giving her age, as I’m sure she will read this article, I’ll simply say that when it comes to technology, there is an enormous gap between the abilities of a 14-year-old and a baby boomer.

This disparity isn’t lost on many online universities when it comes to their websites and their features. In the past 10 years, colleges have made amazing strides in making attending online classes easier and more convenient. From simplifying the enrollment and search features on websites to increasing bandwidth in order to allow digital and communication functions to work more smoothly, colleges today respect and understand the issues facing technologically challenged students who are looking to pursue their education. With online universities understanding these issues and working to accommodate all students, it’s become so easy that even my mother can do it!

**Life happens**

Oftentimes, adults feel as though they’re too old or too busy to go back to school. Having to juggle a home life – and bring in a paycheck to support that home life – can be reason enough not to pursue higher education. When I was 13 and my brother was 11, my mother decided to go back to school. She was a stay-at-home mom while my dad worked at the mill. She always wanted to go back to school but needed to be home to take care of us when we were young. But once we were old enough to know how to use the microwave, she saw an opportunity to finish the education she failed to complete in its entirety 15 years earlier.

She enrolled at a local community college, which allowed her to study by day and attend classes at night. After nearly seven years of classes (as well as my brother, father and me mastering the culinary art of the microwave dinner), my mother earned her Doctorate in English at the age of … let’s say 40-plus. She was able to prioritize her marriage, home life and two teenage kids in order to achieve her educational goals, which made all of us proud beyond measure.

Many students have found the convenience and anonymity of online college courses to be a great way to pursue higher education. With flexible schedules and limited commutes, online courses are perfect for on-the-go adults whose responsibilities limit the amount of time they have each day. Online courses also eliminate the intimidation felt by some adults who fear sitting in a classroom full of 19- and 20-year-olds poking away at their phones taking notes – or talking on “The Twitter.”

Although the fears older adults face about fitting in with typical college students on campus are real, a “typical college student” is actually becoming harder and harder to find as students these days come from all ages and backgrounds. And with the tremendous growth of online colleges each year, the obstacles that may have once stood in the way of attaining your educational goals are disappearing before your very eyes.
Dread is everywhere. The words that only used to surface in our thoughts of worst-case scenarios for career colleges have become reality: teach-outs, sell-offs, shuttered campuses and shutdowns of large school conglomerates.

Those terms make for an ugly vocabulary. Now that they have become commonplace, they make for a dismal reality in which the sector strives to push ahead – to focus on education and continue meeting the bottom line.

We have entered a new era in career education, vastly different from the mere threats of Sens. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Dick Durbin (D-Ill.). Today the entire career college sector is being portrayed negatively in the news media. Warranted or not, all schools are being held accountable by the failure of others.

In a little more than 10 years, the trajectory of career colleges has changed.

In the early 2000s, there was explosive growth and innovation. Career colleges, with much success, had embraced online learning and the development of flexible course scheduling to connect with a new generation of learners who wanted to learn on their time in circumstances they dictated.

With this unprecedented growth came added attention from leaders in government and from other areas of higher education. Surely growth at such a tremendous rate was a testament to unscrupulous marketing tactics and underhanded academic practices.

In addition to those doubts, the naysayers were more concerned about an even larger picture. While state subsidies and enrollments were shrinking in traditional schools, the career college sector’s financial aid dollars were rising. And that was unconscionable – a direct threat to the sustainability of traditional colleges and universities.

From 2007 on, a period of uncertainty descended on the career college sector. Government leaders questioned everything, from the aforementioned marketing practices to the price of tuition, the quality of education, retention rates and placement into careers that matched students’ education. Harkin led undercover investigations, orchestrated senate hearings and launched investigations of individual schools.

The Department of Education introduced its “gainful employment” rule in an effort to deny federal student aid to programs in which too many students default on their loans or in which students’ debt, relative to their earnings or discretionary income, is too high. The rule singled out for-profit college programs and was cause for alarm for career colleges of all sizes. Where would the government’s oversight end, and why weren’t traditional colleges being held to a similar standard?
The negative attention on our sector right now will pass. How? By continuing to focus your abilities as educators on these students who want nothing more than to make something better of themselves. I still find this a meaningful cause – I know you do too.
The war over gainful employment has raged for more than three years now, and it's going to continue for some time.

But gainful employment hasn't yet proved itself to be the major threat to career education that some might hope it to be. Instead, an even larger fear came in the summer with the announcement that the Department of Education was cutting off funding to Corinthian Colleges, and the school group's subsequent announcement that it would sell off and shutter some campuses.

The announcement and aftermath have seemingly taken all the energy out of the sector as career education leaders contemplate what it means. Rumors abound about other large school conglomerates, and we wait, now, for the next school to fall. Will it be University of Phoenix? Will it be Anthem? Rumors abound – you see?

But we all can agree there is little we can do now, as individuals, about government scrutiny and regulations – especially when we know our students are well-represented, and we are giving them our best effort. The shutdown of a school such as Corinthian cannot – and will never – undermine the need for career-based training in our nation. The government's success in shutting down colleges should not suspend belief in career education. And no government action can overshadow the thousands of prospective students every day who come to

the profound realization that they need a higher education – and one that cannot come from the rigidity of a university schedule or the related classroom teaching strategies. Nothing can stop their pursuit of something better in life.

After students make their decisions, what follows are what I call the “quiet moments” – those moments no one sees where lives are changed: when a student who works a full-time job (or a few part-time gigs) wakes up before his or her children climb out of bed and works diligently at the kitchen table on homework assignments, or later puts the kids to bed early and underlines textbook passages on the couch. These are the moments where career education will always have its place.

The negative attention on our sector right now will pass. How? By continuing to focus your abilities as educators on these students who want nothing more than to make something better of themselves. I still find this a meaningful cause – I know you do too.

Kevin Kuzma is Editor of Career College Central. His feature writing, essays and short stories have appeared in The Kansas City Star, Urban Times, Review, Ink Magazine and Present Magazine. He can be contacted at Kevin.Kuzma@CareerCollegeCentral.com.
THE 7 BIGGEST CHALLENGES of Adult Learners

Our list of the fears, misnomers and realities of being an adult student.

By Jenni Valentino, Contributing Writer
average American college student isn’t as fresh-faced as before. Due largely to lingering, recession-fueled job market competition, nontraditional students are going back to college in droves.

Adults older than 25 who are returning to school after a hiatus from education – usually spent in the workforce, serving in the military or raising children – are the fastest-growing student population. A 2012 study by National Student Clearinghouse found more than one-third of college students to be older than 25, and The National Center for Education Statistics found that “In recent years, the percentage increase in the number of students age 25 and over has been larger than the percentage increase in the number of younger students.”

This trend, however, doesn’t necessarily provide adult learners with a feeling of safety in numbers. Instead, they often feel afraid, alone and discouraged by the prospect of taking the first step back into education.

Fortunately, by recognizing the initial challenges adult learners face and implementing the resources to help combat them, your school can provide the helping hand a nontraditional student needs to make a seamless transition back into education.

Some of the biggest challenges facing adult students include:

1. **A perceived lack of time.** Balancing a job, family and other responsibilities is challenging enough for most adults. The prospect of adding in a higher education course load can seem impossible. However, the distance and part-time options available at most colleges and universities can make the time commitment of higher education much less daunting. While studies have shown the more credits a student carries at once the more likely he or she is to complete his or her degree, a full-time schedule just isn’t feasible for many adults. Your career college probably already offers some of the most efficient degree programs on the market – help your nontraditional students find the one that fits their schedule and career goals. Encourage them to reach out for a course syllabus ahead of time so they can prepare (themselves and those around them) in advance for upcoming busy days and weeks.

2. **Concern over finances.** Paying for college is a major concern for students of any age. For adult learners specifically, who don’t have parents to financially assist them or guidance counselors to lead them through tuition payment options, they’re left feeling alone. They can’t pay for college outright, and they’re uncomfortable taking on student loans that may last too close to retirement for comfort. Fortunately, student loan, grant and scholarship
options are plentiful for students of all ages. Make sure your financial aid staff understands the unique financial challenges and opportunities facing older students and provides help getting them the fiscal support they need.

3. Lack of confidence in schoolwork. When it’s been a decade or more since an adult student has taken notes, studied for a test or taken a final, it’s no surprise he or she may lack confidence in his or her ability to do so again. Returning students often worry their response time may be slower or they may not be able to keep up with the technology used in today’s classrooms. Be sure your school provides tutoring and technology support from day one, but don’t be surprised if these concerns never come to fruition. After all, more than one nontraditional student has found that the act of learning is just like riding a bike.

4. Social anxiety. It turns out high schoolers aren’t the only ones worried about fitting in with their fellow students. Many adult students worry about how they’ll look to their younger, more traditional classmates. Tell them not to worry! Sure, embarking on a new experience like higher education can be daunting no matter what your age. But adult students may soon realize the life experience they’ve gained over the years between high school and today is invaluable – both to themselves and to their classmates. Encourage them to join study groups and other available programs to take advantage of the differing perspectives their peers have to offer.

5. Lacking a support system. High school students are overwhelmingly indoctrinated with the idea that heading off to college after senior year is (yes, still) the best way to begin a career and secure a future. This means that resources and support are abundant to students of traditional age. Those who have been out of a school environment and in the workforce for years, however, can feel subtly discouraged by family, friends and managers, who often have fears of their own about how a spouse, peer or employee returning to school will affect them. By implementing technology solutions into your enrollment services that free up your staff to actually spend time talking with prospective students, your admissions personnel can be one of the greatest assets in a returning student’s corner. Make sure your representatives aren’t afraid to get to know applicants, advocate for them and encourage them throughout the student life cycle.

6. Issues with accessibility to campus and classes. Everything from lack of transportation to lack of at-home technology can feel discouraging to adults looking for a degree program that fits their needs. Many of today’s career college programs, however, include a variety of options for completing coursework – through the mail, online, at night, on a satellite campus, etc. Together, your school and your determined student can find a solution that works.

"You are going to be 53 regardless. Wouldn't it be nice to have the degree?"

Nancy Wajler
Director of Adult Learning
at Harper College

7. Fear that it’s “too late.” Will employers take a new degree seriously? Will I have any better chance of finding a new job after graduation than I do right now? Yes and yes. “We hear that a lot: ‘My time is gone … I’m going to be 53 when I’m done with my degree,’” said Nancy Wajler, Director of Adult Learning at Harper College in a July 2014 Chicago Tribune article. “You are going to be 53 regardless. Wouldn’t it be nice to have the degree?”

The National Center for Education Statistics expects the percentage of college students older than 25 to grow to almost 50 percent by 2019. By finding out what makes them tick and learning how to help them succeed, you’ll be preparing your school, your community’s workforce and the students themselves for success.

Jenni Valentino is a freelance writer and editor with years of involvement and experience in the career college sector. She can be reached at JZValentino@GMail.com.
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The Imagine America Foundation has been at the forefront of providing essential financial assistance to this extremely deserving group of students. We continue to be amazed by the extraordinary successes of our students. Yet, we realize that many of our graduates do not fully understand the ramifications of taking out student loans and are part of a demographic group with a higher risk profile for default. In March 2011, we launched the Financial Planning Made Simple (FPMS) tool to address these concerns.

The Foundation’s Financial Planning Made Simple avatar-based video tutorial helps career college students clearly understand the financial decisions they are making with regard to student loans and are part of a demographic group with a higher risk profile for default. In March 2011, we launched the Financial Planning Made Simple (FPMS) tool to address these concerns.

How is this tutorial impacting student borrowers? Are students beginning their education on solid financial footing? Do graduates understand the terms of successful loan repayment?

Joining forces with Wonderlic, the Imagine America Foundation has completed a second financial literacy survey of our career college students. In this issue, we look at the results of these surveys.

On the following pages, you will see the impact the Financial Planning Made Simple video is having on student borrowers. A few pertinent facts from our respondents:

- **93%** agreed the FPMS video provided useful financial information.
- **87%** made more informed financial decisions after viewing FPMS.
- **51%** borrowed less money as a result.

Read on to get the facts and opinions directly from career college students. We believe education is the path to success, and it is clear that financial literacy needs to be an integral part of that education.

Sincerely,
Robert L. Martin
President and CEO
Imagine America Foundation
With student loan debt exceeding $1 trillion, the Imagine America Foundation felt a responsibility as the national foundation for career colleges to develop a tool for students that addresses responsible borrowing. Financial Planning Made Simple (FPMS) was created four years ago and has been incorporated into the Imagine America scholarship application process. To date, the Foundation has had more than 60,000 students view our FPMS tool. We have surveyed these students on the usefulness of the tool. Read on to discover what knowledge and preconceived notions your incoming students bring, and find out if providing a financial literacy tool upfront makes an impact on how much students will borrow.

Figure 1. Before viewing the Financial Planning Made Simple video tutorial, I was knowledgeable about financial aid.

![Bar chart showing percentage of students' agreement levels before viewing the FPMS video tutorial](chart)

“This tool was very useful, especially being a transferred student. At my old school, the financial aid office did not tell me half as much as the Financial Planning Made Simple tool! Very useful information that I can use years after I graduate college! I wish I had known the information I know now then! With using this tool, I made several informed financial decisions, one being how much loan money I really need to cover expenses for school. Being a college student who does not live on campus anymore, I have many bills. The Made Simple tool section on budgeting really helped out a lot. It made me think not to overspend and save money, and with being a college student, that is very hard to do at times! But with this Made Simple tool, I have more assurance that I can make responsible financial decisions!”

Estianna Spurlock
Sullivan University- Lexington KY
The Financial Planning Made Simple tool assisted 93% of our student respondents with making responsible borrowing decisions, creating an environment in which they can plan their own success.

“I think the expense calculator was useful. Everything costs money, so having a guide for how to spend/save that money is important. I have been making very informed financial decisions, so this calculator was a helpful refresher on just how to do that. I decided to review my finances and found that I am borrowing more than I needed for school, so I decided to take out just enough to offset the book and laptop expenses. I can use every bit of money I can get being a poor college student, but it’s important for me to not be in unnecessary debt when I graduate.”

Chris LaChance
Spartan College of Aeronautics and Technology- Tulsa OK
As this graph illustrates, 87% of students agreed that watching the FPMS video aided them in making more responsible financial choices.

"This program has helped me so much to plan for my future so I know I will not struggle with debt. I would recommend everyone attending school to use this tool."

Stephanie Shimer
Sullivan University
Louisville KY

"It was very useful! The tool made the process easier for me to understand. I had decided on what other loans or grants I would be able to use so I could complete my education.

It did make a couple of changes to the loans that I picked. I decided on what would be easier to pay off and what would cost the least to me while I was still in school. I did make a budget that would allow me to live happily and successfully!"

Kirsten Curry
Spencerian College- Louisville KY
I used the Financial Planning Made Simple tool from the Imagine America Foundation. The tool was very useful in terms of creating a financial plan that worked for me. I’m now in my second year of college at Art Institute of Michigan – Troy and I’m loving it! :)

I did make more financial decisions. I became a student worker on campus! It helps with my gas and everyday expenses. One of the best jobs I could’ve chosen! Especially since it was my first job!

The changes I made – I borrowed less. I went from $20,000+ to only $10,000 and paying $300 a month to the school. I did create a budget for when I would buy gas and how much, also when to make purchases for myself and the limit for those purchases."

Katie Moss
Art Institute of Michigan- Troy MI
“The number one problem in today’s generation and economy is the lack of financial literacy.”

Alan Greenspan

“We were not taught financial literacy in school. It takes a lot of work and time to change your thinking and to become financially literate.”

Robert Kiyosaki

Figure 6. Which of the following steps listed below were taken as a result of viewing the Financial Planning Made Simple video? (Choose all that apply.)

- Created a budget: 51.3% All Years, 55.4% 2014
- Eliminated “wants” from my budget: 51.5% All Years, 50.6% 2014
- Re-evaluated my budget: 51.1% All Years, 55.3% 2014
- Obtained part-time employment: 28.2% All Years, 29.8% 2014
- Obtained full-time employment: 7.4% All Years, 13.2% 2014
- Took out a lower amount of student loans: 21.6% All Years, 22.4% 2014
- Not applicable: 11.7% All Years, 12.7% 2014
- Other: 3.3% All Years, 3.4% 2014

Figure 7. I used the Financial Planning Made Simple budgeting tool to (choose all that apply):

- Created a budget: 50.3% All Years, 34.2% 2014
- Calculated estimated loan amount: 22.3% All Years, 15.8% 2014
- Calculated monthly repayment options: 20.4% All Years, 14.4% 2014
- Calculate interest rates for repayment: 13.6% All Years, 5.1% 2014
- Not applicable: 38.3% All Years, 30.4% 2014
"The Financial Planning Made Simple tool was very helpful to me because it forced me to stop and take a realistic look and consider my financial decisions. Up until now, I have been dependent upon my parents’ support, and going through the tool really helped me to see a clear picture of what it takes (and doesn’t) to support me while in college.

Because my school’s tuition cost more than the financial aid I was awarded, I wasn’t able to borrow less, but I was able to accept the awards I have been offered soberly. I know a lot of people who think that student loans are ‘free money,’ and learning what they truly are gives me a better perspective on what I need to do to supplement the cost of my education so that I can borrow less going forward.

I have created a budget for myself beginning now, even before leaving for school, and am forcing myself to stick with it. I know that the tough decision to do so now will certainly pay off later, which is one more reason why I am glad to have access to the Financial Planning Made Simple tool."

Charles X. Rhynes
Art Institute of Pittsburgh- Pittsburgh PA
“The tool is very useful for measuring my loans and getting to know more about the options I have between subsidized and unsubsidized loans, including many others. The steps were slow enough to grasp the basic concept about how to use the methods given in the Financial Planning Made Simple tool.

The Financial Planning Made Simple tool gave a very good visual view of what it would be like after we graduate using those same methods. I learned that there are many repayment options available to me after college I can use during any kind of situation which comes up, and the loan service is very helpful. I did not make any informal financial aid decision, but I did discover deferment and forbearance options, which I can use if I didn’t find a job yet when my grace period is over.

When I was in my previous school, I created a budget for my college expenses and other needs. I do not need a job at this time during school since I will be so busy, but I will consider it between semesters when I have breaks. I did not borrow less. At this time, I need all the loans I can get, but I’m filling out more scholarships both outside and from my own school. I won another scholarship in fact. That should lower my loan amount. Anyway, I have a bright future ahead and the Imagine America Foundation has helped me out plenty with their scholarship, useful tools and prizes.”

James Simmons
Academy of Art University- San Francisco CA
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While it might seem as though the military is a completely different realm than career education, Bill Hillard says his experience as a pilot and commander was the perfect background to shape his perception on what makes strong compliance. Hillard, who is CEO of BrightStar Education, shared his innovations with compliance during Career College Central’s “Leading Through Innovation: Innovative Compliance Leadership” webinar in July.

“The most important job a commander has in a very tough environment is safety,” Hillard said. “Safety was the most important factor to be able to operate efficiently and accomplish the mission. The same goes for compliance. To function in my role, I needed to know the rules better than anyone else because if I am not compliant, I am not able to operate and complete my mission.”

Hillard leads BrightStar’s operations, which involve four career college campuses in California and one in Oregon. The schools operate under a familiar and prominent name in the career college sector: Institute of Technology. The colleges offer training in the areas of nursing, allied health, HVAC, culinary arts, technical and legal disciplines. The schools were founded in 1986 and operated as Central California Schools. In June 1991, they were accredited by the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools. Shortly after earning accreditation, they were purchased by new owners until 1994, when they were acquired by BrightStar, which was backed by Arlington Capital Partners. From 2004-2011, the schools both increased and improved program offerings and opened more locations.
The Changing Role of EDU Leadership

Visionary. Firebrand. Leader. Businessman. These are just some of the words used to describe Michael K. Clifford. As the founder of Bridgepoint Education and the transformative agent behind the success of Grand Canyon University, Mr. Clifford is one of the leading thinkers on how to successfully run a private sector school. He now manages Significant Systems.org, a company focused on helping schools of faith stay relevant to 21st century students.

The sixth and final webinar of the series will focus on the changing role of the post-secondary education leader, focusing on techniques and theories Mr. Clifford has used to keep his enterprises at the forefront of education delivery.

Register at: CareerCollegeCentral.com/2014LeadershipWebinars
Hillard joined the organization in July 2011 following the introduction of the Department of Education's new program integrity rules.

“I love that this particular sector allows you to experience what students go through as they are getting excited about their next opportunity in life,” Hillard said. “That is what draws me to this sector. I love to go to graduation and see the excitement on the faces of these students' families. Career education got in my blood and its stayed in it ever since.”

Hillard said that today there are several important compliance issues, but there also are clearly five key areas that career colleges need to observe:

- The admissions process (including claims made in marketing and advertising materials).
- Student outcomes (accurate disclosures of student-related information and avoiding the misrepresentation of student successes).
- Institutional loan programs.
- Cohort default rates (the switch from two-year to four-year default rates).
- Gainful employment (a rule that ties students’ eventual salaries to their field of study and what they paid for their education.).

With the latter, the rule has not been published yet, but Hillard said based on everything he sees and hears, the rule will be affected in the draft that is currently circulating.

“I see that from a planning perspective, I am planning that it is going to be implemented as it is currently written,” he said.

Creating an environment of compliance begins from the top down, Hillard said. Schools must create a culture of compliance. Every associate has to be aware of compliance, what's at stake if there are violations, and how to avoid such violations. He said there is not a single employee who can’t negatively impact compliance in your school.

“From janitorial and receptionist up to the highest leadership positions, everyone has to understand,” he said.

At Institute of Technology, every employee signs a code of conduct that outlines expectations. Hillard said the best organizations when it comes to compliance foster continuity and operational objectives, and carry out continual regulatory review.

"I learned very early in my life and certainly in this sector you have to follow the rules to be successful in the long run. Sooner or later if you don't, you will have to revisit it. So why not do it right the first time and set up routines and expectations so you don't have to revisit it?"

Bill Hillard
CEO of BrightStar Education
“I learned very early in my life and certainly in this sector you have to follow the rules to be successful in the long run,” Hillard said. “Sooner or later if you don’t, you will have to revisit it. So why not do it right the first time and set up routines and expectations so you don’t have to revisit it?”

Hillard said that compliance should be “one umbrella” and that schools should devote plenty of time and resources to one unit to cover compliance. He said all compliance efforts are in the areas of operation, not at the headquarters with administrative responsibilities.

“Put your compliance efforts where your operations are,” he said.

He recommended schools develop quarterly quality reports and follow up with after-action reviews in which schools determine the answers to the following questions:

- What did we do right?
- What did we do wrong?
- What could we do differently?

Another of Hillard's innovations is to establish a hotline that can be used on a daily basis to report concerns. Employees can choose to be named or report incidents anonymously.

Hillard's compliance teams also meet weekly with senior staff and again at the end of every month to offer monthly compliance recaps.

“I am fanatical about compliance,” Hillard said. “Some, in the past, were critical of that, but it is an approach that has worked for me.”

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SUCCEEDING ON A NEW FRONT

A military perspective on heading back to school

By Dr. Pietro (Pete) Savo, Chief Financial Officer of a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business
Summer has come and gone, and many highly motivated veterans are looking to spend their earned veteran education benefits, and with good reason. The unemployment statistics for Iraq- and Afghanistan-era veterans show that education provides significant advantages. Officers with college degrees show a lower unemployment rate than most enlisted personnel, whose unemployment rate is in the double digits.

If education increases the odds of employment, then going back to college becomes the logical choice. However, many variables can complicate the student-veteran’s enrollment and assimilation into higher education. For example, student-veterans are arriving at university and college campuses where counselors may not be adequately prepared for them. Even with so many veterans ready and willing to spend their education money, some schools are not yet ready to support these veterans’ educational needs. This is a shame, as there is a huge benefit to enrolling veterans, who often come academically prepared and have high educational goals – a winning combination for institutions of higher education.

Student veterans are arriving at university and college campuses where counselors may not be adequately prepared for them.

For many veterans, social class plays a large role in their interest in enrolling in college. A 2007 Associated Press report showed that the majority of veterans killed in Iraq came from towns having a per capita income well below the national average, and more than half came from towns where the percentage of people living in poverty topped the national average. This points to a lower socioeconomic status in general for men and women entering the military. And a major key to rising from a lower socioeconomic class is higher education.

Which higher education programs have the greatest employment opportunities for veterans and their families? My research has identified the health service industry as a top employer, second only to the federal government. From 2004 to 2014, three agencies – the Department of Defense (DOD) the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – accounted for about 94 percent of hiring increases. The DOD reported that military-to-civilian transitions have greatly contributed to this overall increase. In keeping with these facts, many veterans are currently enrolling in education programs designed to staff these particular industries.
I recently decided to research institutions possessing qualities especially suited to the student-veteran. I chose to search for regionally accredited colleges that boast lower tuition, have both on-campus and online degree programs, offer personalized instruction, are military-friendly, and provide access to student internships or co-ops (which can turn the educational experience into a great-paying job). Thanks to the unlimited power of the Internet, I quickly found several institutions that fit this description, including Daniel Webster College in Nashua, New Hampshire; Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Kentucky; and National University in Bakersfield, California.

I’ll close with a heads up to America’s 4,599 Title IV degree-granting institutions. The veterans and their families are coming, armed with the sheer power of curiosity and the information-gathering muscle of the Internet, and when they ask a question, they probably already know the answer. Veterans understand that the best strategy to ensure that their higher education results in a good career is to self-advocate. Veterans come military-educated, leadership-ready, mature and eager to learn – and they will succeed.

Suggestions for institutions:

• Familiarize yourself with VA education benefit programs and become a real help to student veterans.
• Don’t spend huge marketing dollars; instead, use this money to reduce tuition costs.
• Don’t enroll or sell your seats; simply provide counsel.
• Try to provide student-veterans with what they are looking for. If you don’t have it, direct them to one of the other 4,598 Title IV degree-granting institutions in the United States that may.
• Take the time to learn what drives a student’s passion. This will improve retention and graduation rates.
• Place quality of education before revenue and profit.

Our service members are the true 1 percent who have raised their right hand to protect us. We have an obligation to protect them as well.

Dr. Pete Savo is the Chief Financial Officer of a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB), a higher education service business that provides qualified student candidates to military-friendly colleges and universities nationwide. Savo, a respected lecturer and published author, was employed 18 years with Sikorsky Aircraft and six years as a Direct Business Operations and Lean Manufacturing Consultant for the U.S. Air Force Small Business Manufacturing Technical Assistance Production Program (MTAPP), Air Force Outreach Program Office and the Department of Defense (DOD) supply chain missions. If you’d like to contact Savo, he can be reached at PSavo@Education-Resource-Information.org or 603.321.6224.
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Are once-popular online college degree programs losing momentum?

By Frank Healy
Higher Ed Growth

Since 2002, the availability of online degrees has reshaped the education sector, and today’s students have new expectations of their institutions of higher education. Online degrees combine the diversity of a unique learning experience with the convenience of being able to study anywhere and at any time. Eager to provide students with these benefits, colleges and universities have been continually adding more online programs in different fields every year.

But while online programs saw continual growth for a number of years as more students eschewed the traditional classroom setting for more flexible options, during the past year these programs seem to have lost some of the momentum they had built up during the past decade.

According to the 2013 Survey of Online Learning report, 7.1 million students took at least one online course, which is a significant increase from the approximately 5.5 million reported in the initial survey in 2002. But the report also shows only a 6.1 percent increase in online degree program enrollment between 2012 and 2013, the lowest increase in a decade.

**Reading the data**

With more than 400 clients in the higher education sector nationwide, Higher Ed Growth is a leader in postsecondary education and a major generator of enrollment inquiries. Higher Ed Growth’s data corresponds with national enrollment trends, and we too found a sizable decline in enrollment in online courses during the past two years, correlating with the findings of the Survey of Online Learning report.

Our data revealed that in 2012, 49 percent of all students were enrolled in on-campus degree programs, while 51 percent were enrolled in online degree programs. Within a year, this distribution shifted to 59 percent of students being enrolled in on-campus degree programs versus 41 percent being enrolled in online degree programs in 2013.

This nearly 10 percent shift in program types suggests a major change in students’ decision-making processes. So, why exactly are students drifting away from the online model to an in-person setting?
New data is showing that online degree programs may be losing some of the momentum they had built up in recent years.
Changing to meet market demands

One possible reason for this shift is a change in the types of degrees that students want. For example, Higher Ed Growth’s data shows that health care and medical degree enrollments are on the rise. Enrollments for these programs have grown more than 15 percent since 2011, with medical assisting programs largely driving this trend. Nursing also rebounded in 2013 after a small decrease the year before. The very nature and structure of these programs requires students to partake in a more hands-on learning environment to gain a thorough understanding of the subject.

We are also seeing from our data that students are trending away from business degrees, a popular choice with online learners. These types of programs have seen a sharp decline of 10 percent since 2011.

In addition, there is always a correlation between higher education interests and job market demand. As students consider future career paths when enrolling in a college or university, they tend to pursue the degree type and learning environment that will best prepare them for the job market. Right now, the health care industry is seeing increased growth and momentum, and as a result there is a large interest in health-related degrees and a corresponding increase in traditional enrollments.

Meeting student needs

So, what does the future hold for online degree programs? Colleges and universities are likely to continue adapting their online degree programs to better meet the ever-changing needs of their students and to ensure that they remain competitive with traditional programs. For example, many institutions are augmenting their online programs to include more reputable materials in order to increase credibility and to emphasize that they are comparable in quality to a traditional classroom setting.

Schools may also look for more ways to bridge the gap between online and traditional coursework. Many schools have already adapted to fit this model by having lectures and coursework taking place online, but labs and demonstrations occurring in a classroom setting. This offers all the hands-on experience of the in-person model with the convenience of an online course.

Although the numbers indicate that online degree programs may be on the decline among current students, it is still too early to count online programs out of the running for the foreseeable future. Online degree programs provide the flexibility that busy students need. By continuing to provide courses that are easily adaptable to a changing audience, online degree programs are certain to always have their place in the higher education sector.

Frank Healy is the CEO of Higher Ed Growth, a full-service marketing agency specializing in lead generation for postsecondary education. Healy has a wide range of knowledge in the higher education sector and interactive marketing. Healy has worked in corporate marketing, managing interactive media and Internet lead generation for Apollo Group’s University of Phoenix campus division and the College for Financial Planning. Healy is a graduate of Arizona State University with a Bachelor Of Science in Business Management. He can be contacted at Frank@HigherEdGrowth.com.
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Each day, in our classrooms, we bring groups of students together at the same time and in the same space to engage in an activity which is, for them, both individual and passive: listening to a lecture.

We then send them off to diverse places to answer questions about the content, apply the content to problems and to make meaning of what has been presented to them: to study.

If the student has missed, or misunderstood, some element of the lecture, then there is no instructor, nor other students, around to help negotiate the meaning while the student is doing “homework.”

By recording lectures and making them available online, or using lectures that are already available there, we can move the individual, passive activities of the student to times and places where they are isolated from the instructor and their classmates. This makes more room for active learning experiences within the classroom. This is the essence of the “flipped” classroom.

There are a couple of personal hurdles that I had to overcome to undertake this class.

The first was the belief that it’s my job to tell them what they need to know; that I have to be the source of the knowledge. My job is to lead them through the process of learning what they need to know to help them clarify their understanding, process new information and ask the next question. I cannot do that job by just telling them stuff.

Second was overcoming the fixation with “covering the content.” This usually means transmitting a large quantity of factual knowledge to the students and then assessing their ability to retain that knowledge. This is often seen as a prerequisite for the students to participate in “discipline-specific thinking.” It is also backward! Memorization of
facts does not lead to conceptual understanding. Conceptual learning, however, provides the context – the cognitive hooks – that increases the retention of factual learning.

“Covering the content” should not mean reading every line of every PowerPoint slide provided by the textbook publisher to the students. It needs to mean meeting all of the learning objectives for the course, and usually those involve higher-order learning: understanding, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and creating – not just remembering and reciting.

Then, a number of questions come up in discussing flipped classrooms:

1. How do I make videos of my lectures? Doesn’t that require a lot of specialized equipment and technical skills?
2. What happens if a student doesn’t watch the video?
3. What do I do with all the class time if I don’t lecture?
4. How do the students react to this new thing? Will it negatively affect my end-of-course evaluations?

During the last two terms I have flipped two classes, Introduction to Communications and Introduction to Psychology, both general education courses within a dental hygiene program.

Teaching a flipped class is not necessarily harder or easier than teaching a class with the traditional format. Flipping a class the instructor has been teaching traditionally is more work than continuing with what they have been doing. For each of the two classes I flipped, it was my first time teaching the class (not the subject, but the specific course). I found that preparing for the flipped class was not substantially more work than preparing for any course I was teaching for the first time. I expect my second time teaching psychology will require about as much prep as any course I have taught for a second time.

Also, flipping is not an all-or-nothing proposition. One can flip individual lessons within a class.

Making videos does not have to be an elaborate process. A laptop with a webcam, capture software and a quiet room with good lighting and a blank wall are all you really need. There is also a wealth of outstanding videos available on the
web already. In my communications class, I recorded about half of the lectures myself and used found videos for the rest. In the psychology class, I made a conscious decision to only use existing lectures – mostly TED talks.

One caveat is that taking a boring three-hour lecture and putting it online will not improve it. For both technical and student-engagement reasons, 45 minutes to an hour should be the length limit of your videos. A sequence of 20- to 30-minute videos is better. I often assigned three or four short videos, rather than a single long one.

A more difficult problem is what to do with the class time that is no longer taken up by lecture. It takes more time for the instructor to prepare three hours of active learning scenarios than it does to prepare notes for three hours of lecture.

In my communications class, I put a series of questions (four or five) on SurveyMonkey for the students to answer after they had watched the video lecture. I then reviewed their answers just before class and used them as a basis for class discussion. In the psychology class, I saved the questions and handed them out at the beginning of each class for the students to answer. After the students had answered the questions individually, they moved into permanently assigned groups. They then had to come up with a negotiated answer to the same questions within the group. Then the groups shared their answers with the class as a whole. By using permanently assigned teams and making peer evaluation of team participation part of the grade calculation, students are encouraged to watch the videos – not because the teacher says to, but because not doing so lets down their teammates and peers. Seldom did I have students come to class having not watched the videos.

Having described this process, it may sound like the instructor is passive during it. This is not the case. It is important that the instructor circulate during the team discussions to make sure that teams are on task; ask leading, probing questions; and help to clarify when needed.

Preparing for the flipped class was not substantially more work than preparing for any course I was teaching for the first time.
This process allows more class time to be spent on clarifying concepts with which the students are struggling and less time on mere information delivery.

In the psychology class, in addition, I required the students to keep a learning journal. Instead of just taking notes — recording factual information that they need to remember — they were expected to record how that new information fit (or didn’t) with what they already knew and how it changed their understanding.

Going into this new method of class presentation, I expected students to resist that I was moving them outside of their comfort zone of listen, remember and regurgitate.

In both classes, I met with surprisingly little resistance, and that was overcome within the first couple of weeks. In fact, most students seemed to embrace this “new” way.

At the end of the psychology class, I gave the students a questionnaire and asked them to respond to help me improve the class. Some representative responses are given below:

- I learned things in this class that are relevant to my life and career. Average 3.8 out of 4
- I am comfortable asking questions and for help from my instructor. Average 3.8 out of 4
- What did you like best about the class?
  - “That everyone was free to have their own thoughts and opinions without being ‘wrong.’”
  - “I appreciated that you treated us like adults and realized that its not all about memorization.”

How well did the students learn? In each class, I used a series of rubric-based assessments, based on the course learning outcomes. In each class, every student met the standard for each learning outcome and exceeded the standard for one or more of the learning outcomes.

I am generally wary of “the new big thing,” but flipping my classes makes sense to me. It has worked better than traditional lecture/test models. The mechanics of recording a lecture and making it available on the Internet are easier than they seem — there are plenty of online lectures on how to make online lectures. The driving question should be: “To what more-productive use could I put the three hours of class time each week if I didn’t spend it telling the students all the things they need to remember?”

Throughout the last 20 years, Don Arnoldy has worked at several for-profit career colleges as an Instructor, Department Chair and Dean. He is currently an Instructor at Carrington College in Portland, Ore. You can reach Don at Don@Arnoldy.us.
“Oh, so you are out of work.”

If you are not working full time but have been consulting, there are some very specific things you need to do to avoid this response.

By Vincent Scaramuzzo, Ed-Exec Inc.

It is cruel, it is unfair and it is frustrating, but unfortunately it is often very true. The second a candidate tells one of my recruiters or a hiring manager for one of my clients that they are “consulting,” our knee-jerk reaction is, “Oh, so you are out of work.”

What is it that elicits such a cynical response from us? Essentially, you are paying for the sins of those who have gone before you. It seems to be a growing trend (and one not unique to education) among those who have been laid off, fired or who have resigned from their positions. Many of these individuals seem like they can’t get to their LinkedIn accounts fast enough to change their current assignment to something more like the following (all names are fictitious):

“Anthony is now a higher education consultant at (Anthony’s last name) Consulting,” or “Andy is now founder and CEO at Higher Education Consulting.”

Let’s address these examples specifically, as my intent is not to make anyone feel bad here, but simply to try and help. First, if you are going to name a consulting company, you need to actually have a business with that name. That could be a sole

THE SECOND A CANDIDATE TELLS ONE OF MY RECRUITERS OR A HIRING MANAGER FOR ONE OF MY CLIENTS THAT THEY ARE “CONSULTING,” OUR KNEE-JERK REACTION IS, “OH, SO YOU ARE OUT OF WORK.”
propietorship, partnership, LLC or S corporation. I personally recommend either an LLC or an S-corp, depending on your state income tax laws, but of course please consult with your accountant. Anything less is like having a five-cent lemonade stand in your front yard and saying you own a bar.

Your business should be backed up by a website, literature and so on. If you are simply declaring yourself a “consultant” to bridge a period of unemployment in your career, it can look both very obvious and very desperate. The truth is, it is OK to be unemployed for short periods of time, especially if your tenure track record is very good and you have multiple references from each of your last jobs. So, make sure to tap your network and ask for references and, most importantly, LinkedIn recommendations.

Now, for the folks who are actually doing consulting, you need to quickly differentiate yourself from those who are merely borrowing the title. There are several things you can do:

- Update your LinkedIn profile and resume to reflect your current consulting assignment. Don’t be afraid to ask the person who contracted your services if you can list a project directly by name.

- Specifically list your consulting efforts, including tasks, goals and accomplishments. If you are helping to attain success for an organization, you need to highlight it. This is a huge sell to your next potential employer.

- List detailed dates and timelines of the consulting project.

- Ask for references and LinkedIn recommendations. Nothing helps more than this to seal your reputation as a trusted and valuable consultant.

Consulting is great work if you can get it. Unfortunately, many take the consulting title without actually ever doing a real consulting gig. Use the title wisely, differentiate yourself and don’t be an “out-of-work” consultant.

Vincent Scaramuzzo is President of Ed-Exec Inc., one of the leading executive search firms in education. As a specialist in the education field, Scaramuzzo works nationally with universities, colleges, online schools and career schools. He can be contacted at Vincent@Ed-Exec.com or 860.781.7641.
The Career College Central LinkedIn group is a forum full of invoking questions, thoughtful responses and animated discussion. If you haven’t joined our LinkedIn page yet, you’re missing out. Come join us and make your voice heard!

**Raul Valdes: Editorial from St. Louis Post-Dispatch**

*Bottom line first, students second at some for-profit colleges.*

**Randy Blankenship:** Hi Raul. Haven't you and I been speaking of students first for quite some time? Good article!

**Raul Valdes:** I am glad people like you are in the frontlines showing that admissions can be done right and that our schools, if run with integrity and student focus, can be part of the answer to problems in higher education. Our faculty is generally special. So is career services. When a generation of admissions leaders like you pave the way, ruffians will go by the wayside.

**Joe Nenninger:** What bothered me the most, and I live in St. Louis and see the uber-liberal slant of the Dispatch every day, was the not-so-subtle editing. In the paragraph regarding “What Everest and others like it … have in common ... is a hefty bottom line.” They had no problem listing several schools (including mine). However, in the paragraph “Not all for-profit schools are scam artists ... they should be able to prove their worth,” the Dispatch was unable/unwilling to list a single one. Use a big brush to paint the negative but make no attempt at even-handedness when it comes to the positive.

**Raul Valdes:** Joe, it is an awful time. As a sector, we can’t seem to avoid shooting ourselves in the foot. Sometimes criticism is correct, sometimes not. We all have to have our “best” on and INVEST in future quality to get out of this.
Christopher Lyons: Career colleges, for-profit vs. non-profit

Dr. Jerald L. Feinstein: Part of the problem is small independently owned and operated for-profit schools that were well run are being bought up by the Wall Street run educational institutions which are the ones appearing on the notorious hit lists and are skewing the default, graduation and placement data in the wrong direction due to their size. The small, well-run schools are not making the headlines.

For a better glimpse of the turmoil facing several education behemoths and their owners see below:


The university has always been about quality education and services being served up to students. Quality education is a lot like oats: after they've been through the horse once, there's a much lower level of perceived quality. If we're serving that up to students, they tend to notice the difference and vote with their feet.

So, no surprise as to what is going on.

Raul Valdes: I agree. When colleges are being purchased, not only do you have to insure that 20-30 percent of sales is profit, but you also have the additional burden of debt. Most of these colleges are being acquired with leverage which further reduces the amount going to education and services.

In addition, publicly traded companies and private equity firms have shorter time horizons than small business owners. For a while, stocks of public companies were trading at 30-40 times earnings. The constant pressure to maintain these stock multiples required, in my opinion, rampant overexpansion.

I agree that you can have a for-profit that is also extraordinary in quality. But you have to insure your priorities are first to students, employers and employees with shareholders next. Actually, if you do the first, your shareholders will be rewarded.

Christopher Lyons: I totally agree with you Raul. If your customers are satisfied, owners will reap the benefits in profit.

Jon Vecchio: As an operator of one of those small independently owned schools, I could not agree more with Dr. Feinstein.

Dr. Jerald L. Feinstein: Another alleged abuse is the sub-prime student loan racket in which many of the large corporate players are said to be engaged, setting up internal loan companies that may charge students up to 20 percent or more in loosely regulated student debt. For a good review of past activities and what seems to be infuriating the state attorney generals in even Republican states, the article below neatly summarizes what has been going on. The small, independently run for-profit schools do not seem to be involved in the practice, yet are being blamed as they fall into the easy to target “for-profit” category. The article is not recent, but clearly describes the situation and is a good read.


Raul Valdes: In an interesting twist, Sen. Marco Rubio, who was on record for privatizing loans, and Sen. Warner have introduced a bill to allow for income based repayment on amounts of over $10,000 for everyone. Though if enacted, it would help students, this bill would encourage institutions to increase tuition without regard to impact on budget. After all, the government would pick up the difference between what is paid and the amount forgiven. Students are happy, Colleges are happy that they could raise tuition with impunity and possibly lower cohort default rates. Only ones getting the shaft are taxpayers who are used to it.

Christopher Lyons: Raul, this is a scary thought. Tuition prices have gone up exponentially over the last five years; this could justify even further escalating tuition costs. This will hurt not only the taxpayers subsidizing the cost, but also students that do not fit in the constraints of income based repayment. Those on the edge will end up even more unable to pay their student loan payments.

Join the definitive voice of the career college sector of higher education. Become a part of the Career College Central group on LinkedIn and join the conversation.
There have been times in my life when I have believed that a man can succeed in achieving his goals without a proper education, but I have found that to be the exception rather than the rule. And as someone who seeks concrete solutions to given problems, I tend to believe in rules. An education can help you refine yourself, find and define your life’s goals to a greater degree, and achieve things you couldn’t have imagined at the start of your journey.

Education has given me all the tools that I could have hoped for and has helped me develop into a multifaceted, efficient and innovative individual who works hard, not only for himself and his family, but for his organization as well. I have learned that any organization is like a living organism, with all of its employees as its organs; in order for everything to run smoothly, people need to focus on their shared objectives and goals. These are among the values that a university education has provided me.

Because of my upbringing, education has always played a central role in my life and governed the way I think about the world as well as my friends, family and self. Education develops that middle ground between idealism and realism; it has room for your dreams as long as you can develop a plan to achieve your goals. I have always had an interest in the human mind, its functioning and all that influences it. My university education taught me a great deal about the power of the human mind, not just through the books I read, but also from the professors whose expertise in psychology opened my eyes to the inner workings of the mind in ways I may never have realized alone. I also interacted with my peers and learned from their experiences, too.
I view an educational institution much like an incubation chamber for your mind; it has everything you need to grow, develop and become a powerful, self-sustaining human being capable of greatness.

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I view an educational institution much like an incubation chamber for your mind; it has everything you need to grow, develop and become a powerful, self-sustaining human being capable of greatness. It was during my time at the university that I developed my interest in the justice system. The workings of the criminal mind were an intriguing venture for me, and I knew that education would help me to better understand and use that knowledge in order to better society.

Education has a special way of bringing out my capabilities. By virtue of the subjects I studied, my experiences and those with whom I interacted, I developed key interests and passions, some of which I excelled in and pursued. The college environment exposed me to professors with vast banks of knowledge, as well as to carefully chosen friends and life as an independent youth. All of these things helped me refine my interests and develop skills I had not explored previously.

I chose to seek a degree in criminal justice. The world of law and the justice system have taught me a great deal about managing clients in criminal proceedings. I had prior knowledge of psychology, and that helped me a great deal in becoming a real problem-solver in the sphere of criminal justice, which comprises the majority of my employment history. I have worked in case management, human resources and services management, all thanks to the variety of things I learned from my formal education.

Nearly every employment opportunity I have taken has provided me with a chance to utilize and amalgamate all of my skills. My study of human psychology has allowed me to delve into the field of management, and I have worked as a supervisor and counselor in different firms. The process of case management in law firms was something I was especially suited for, as I had experience in both the criminal justice system and psychology, which prepared me for both the paperwork and the clients.

Education is an ongoing process – it’s most profound impact may be in giving people the opportunity to grow, learn and integrate different skills, as well as handle new and sometimes unpredictable situations. Someone unexposed to a formal education may hone one skill or even several, but that person may be hindered in situations that demand innovation, crucial problem-solving, and in-depth knowledge of a particular subject. In such situations, education is the most powerful tool in anyone’s hands.

Luigi Valdivieso is an Admissions Supervisor for the Distance Learning Department at Florida National University. He has a Master’s degree in Psychology and a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice. He has more than 10 years of combined experience in education and social work, a dual expertise that led to his appreciation of the many situations and obstacles students encounter during their path to a higher education.
“We are saddened to announce that our founder, Dr. John Sperling, passed away on Friday, August 22, 2014. Dr. Sperling’s vision, pioneering spirit and boundless resolve to improve the world through accessible higher education for working adult students provided a roadmap for families, nations and economies to evolve, advance, grow and prosper. Dr. Sperling’s indomitable ideas and life’s work served as a catalyst for innovations widely accepted as having made higher education more accessible to adult students.

“As we said last year in a ceremony held in his honor: John Sperling never backed down from a fight. As a boy, he fought sickness and poverty. As a young man, he fought for workers’ rights. Later, he championed the cause to help students who were ignored by the traditional higher education system. Finally, when he founded University of Phoenix, John Sperling challenged anyone who tried to stop him. As others have said before, ‘Anything worth having is worth fighting for.’ John Sperling lived these words every day of his life. Most importantly, he empowered those around him to do the same. His legacy, and ours, is to continue that fight.”

“...Our challenge is to remain innovative in how we service our students, in the types of programs we provide and particularly in the use of technology. In 20 years, I hope the Apollo Group is still focused on the future.”

– John Sperling
Gingrich Defends Career Colleges

Newt Gingrich recently defended career colleges in an article for The Daily Caller.

He wrote, “One of the best ways to predict the effect of a proposal for more bureaucracy in Washington is to consider the name its proponents give it. Usually, the actual results of their program will be the exact opposite of whatever its title implies. The ‘Affordable Care Act,’ for instance, increased premiums by an average of 49 percent. The ‘American Recovery and Reinvestment Act’ wasted half a trillion dollars and certainly didn’t produce a recovery.

“Now we have a new Orwellian euphemism to add to the list: the 841-page ‘gainful employment’ regulation, which will kill jobs and destroy opportunities for working adults to advance in their careers. With the gainful employment regulation, the Department of Education would disqualify any program offered by a for-profit college from accepting student loans if its graduates, on average, have monthly student loan payments in excess of 8 percent of their monthly income. The regulation also sets a threshold on the percentage of students who can default on their loans.

“While the regulation would also apply to certificate programs offered by non-profit institutions, it would apply to all programs – from certificate through doctoral – offered by for-profit schools.”

Synopsis of: “Obama’s Crackdown on For-Profit Colleges Will Reduce Educational Opportunities”

Source: The Daily Caller

Bill Gates’ Positive Thoughts on Career Colleges

Bill Gates addressed the business officers of colleges and universities at the annual meeting of the National Association of College and University Business Officers in Seattle.

He began from the premise that “all lives have equal value” and that the United States stands for equal opportunity. He expects to see major innovation in the delivery of instruction and the support systems that colleges provide to students over the next several years.

He anticipates the rise of some outstanding MOOCs that will beg to question the role of the professor.

He noted that it is interesting to look at the for-profit sector that deals with a very difficult student population and has expanded opportunities.

He stated that this sector has established a lot of best practices vis-a-vis student tracking and support services. He is concerned that the for-profit sector, along with community colleges and some less competitive colleges, may be forced to “cherry pick” better students in order to meet outcomes goals that may come into play as we move toward performance funding.

He noted that equal opportunity will be threatened if this happens. He urged us to make sure that we don’t create incentives so that schools do not take the difficult students, yet he noted that we need to become much more effective in helping these students succeed.

Synopsis of: “Bill Gates: For-Profit Sector Expands Opportunities at the Margin”

Source: Forbes
Doing More for Higher Ed

Congressional hearings often feature bitter partisanship and acrimonious finger pointing, but there was mostly agreement recently at a higher education hearing of the U.S. Senate’s Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

Both Sens. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) agreed that states should take a leading role in paying for and overseeing public colleges. Harkin, the committee’s chairman, reiterated his view that states largely disinvested from higher education during the most recent recession, driving up tuition costs and requiring students to go deeper in debt for a college education.

“The steady erosion of state investment in public higher education over the last few decades reflects a stunning abdication of responsibility on the part of states to preserve college affordability,” Harkin said in his prepared remarks.

While Alexander identified a different culprit for shrinking state support for public colleges – rising Medicaid costs – he too expects states to take the lead in paying for higher education.

“Despite the more than $30 billion in federal dollars that go to students each year in grants, the federal government remains a minority investor in higher education,” said Alexander, a former Secretary of Education.

In addition to freeing states from the costs of Medicaid, Alexander said the federal government could help states and colleges by reducing regulations for federally backed research on campuses and could help families and students by simplifying the process to apply for federal financial aid.

Synopsis of: “Senators in Both Parties Agree: States Must Do More for Higher Education”

Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education

Turning Around DeVry

David Pauldine recently retired as President of DeVry. Below is part of an interview by Steven R Strahler of Crain's Chicago Business.

Pauldine: “Enrollments across all higher education are soft, and we’re no exception. There was a correction that started around 2011. We’re probably in the third or fourth inning of our turnaround. We’ve made considerable investments in hiring full-time faculty and adopted a programmatic focus in areas like accounting, health care administration and entrepreneurship versus the university as a whole. We’re offering favorable pricing and scholarship programs for qualified students and improving graduation rates. Anybody in my shoes would ask if we’re better off than when I arrived. I believe the answer to that is a resounding yes.”

Strahler: DeVry stock has more than doubled in less than two years, but it still lags its peak in 2010. Is the glass half full or half empty?

Pauldine: “One of the core strengths of the DeVry education group is diversification. That diversification allows us to perform as a whole even if one or two of the institutions are down. Our medical schools, for example, focus on a much different profile of student. Supply and demand curves are much different.”

Strahler: Do you think the for-profit education sector has been unfairly targeted?

Pauldine: “No, I don’t. Performance criteria is not a bad thing. The spirit of it is appropriate. The devil is in the details.”

Strahler: Have bad apples spoiled the business for all?

Pauldine: “I know that’s been written. It’s hard to speculate. If you take care of the student, everything will take care of itself.”

Synopsis of: “A DeVry Veteran on E-Learning’s Future, Disruption, Starbucks and ‘Bad Apples’”

Source: Crain’s Chicago Business
Is more oversight needed or better training?

By Amir Moghadam, Ph.D., MaxKnowledge Inc.

The upsurge in investigations, lawsuits and school closures due to compliance issues may lead some to believe that more regulatory oversight is necessary for career colleges and universities. The reality is that career education is already one of the most highly regulated sectors in all of higher education. For example, a career college may be approved and/or licensed by several separate state agencies, an institutional accreditor, several different programmatic accreditors and the U.S. Department of Education. Amid this amount of regulation, is even more oversight a reasonable solution for reducing the number of compliance issues, or would effective employee training have more of an impact on ensuring positive compliance results?

To start, every institution has policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) that, in concert with external regulatory oversight, provide a framework for its daily operations. However, institutional compliance doesn’t stem solely from SOPs; it stems from the collective mindset of a school’s employees, the behaviors they learn, and the choices they make in what they say and do. Compliance, then, doesn’t result merely from what people know – it results from how people act.

The actions of each employee either put an institution at risk or serve to uphold its integrity. And though school executives, directors and managers may have a thorough understanding of applicable rules and regulations, most staff members do not. Why? Ironically, some institutions, in an effort to reduce compliance issues, focus more on the policies and procedures themselves than on actually providing adequate compliance training for their employees.
Many career colleges, however, are now realizing that they need to expand compliance training to all employees, as well as assess employee learning just as they would with their own students. This helps to ensure that training translates into improved performance.

Career colleges are also realizing the need for continual and frequent compliance training. Zig Ziglar once said, “Repetition is the mother of learning, the father of action, which makes it the architect of accomplishment.” If there’s any area of training that requires repetition, it’s compliance, and if there were ever an ideal time to improve compliance training, it’s now!

**Simply put, career college employees want to perform at their best; they don’t want to intentionally do something that could negatively impact the integrity of their institution or their students.**

MaxKnowledge is fortunate to work with many institutions to provide online compliance training in support of their compliance programs. We have seen a growing trend of institutions expanding their compliance training for all employees, making compliance training annual requirement, and even making successful completion of designated compliance courses a condition of hire and/or continued employment.

We’ve also seen that employees not only want training, they appreciate it! Every time I see positive comments and testimonials from career college employees who have completed our compliance courses, it reminds me of why I love education and why I love this particular sector so much. We have great people out there who want to help students accomplish their career and life goals.

Simply put, career college employees want to perform at their best; they don’t want to intentionally do something that could negatively impact the integrity of their institution or their students. Could anyone then argue that what these employees need is more oversight? Instead, it makes more sense to support employees and improve their performance by providing better training.

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Dr. Amir Moghadam is the Founder and CEO of MaxKnowledge, the leading employee training company for the career college sector of higher education. He has more than 25 years of experience in career education, serving in many capacities, including Professor, Director of Education, Academic Dean, Director of Student Affairs, Campus Director, and College President and Owner. Moghadam earned his Ph.D. in Engineering from the University of Cambridge at the age of 22. He is a recognized leader in career education and has been selected as a Top Innovator by Career College Central. Moghadam can be reached at AmirM@MaxKnowledge.com.
Ashley Derry, a 2007 graduate of the Danville, Kentucky, campus, being a “people person” is vital to her job working as the assistant food and beverage director of Danville Country Club. “I’m really great with people. We have 297 members here, and I know everybody by name,” she said with a smile.

While her people skills are essential to her job managing the dining room, poolside service, banquets and other social events at the club, the business skills that she gained in her business administration-management program at National College enable her to seamlessly orchestrate her staff and inventory, ensuring that her members’ experience is perfect in every way.

“I feel like I have so much more confidence since I went there,” she said of her time at National College. “I was able to just step into the job here.”

Ashley was working in an office with little chance for advancement when she realized that she needed a college degree to help her get ahead in her career. She chose National over another local school after she visited the campus.

“Everybody was just so welcoming. I felt like they were there to help me decide what I wanted to do with my major,” she recalled. “They were concerned. They wanted me to be there, so they helped me pick the right one.”

She felt that she could always count on her instructors for support in the classroom. “If you needed help with anything, they would stay over if they needed to,” she said. “They always made you feel like you were important and you could ask anything.”

After five years of working at the club, Ashley continues to use the business know-how that she gained at National on the job, including skills in accounting, building a clientele and staff management. “Going to college ... it definitely pays off,” she said. “Sometimes it’s about experience, but when you have both—it’s really helped me as far as where I’m at right now.”

Although she’s not sure what the next step in her career will be, she knows that she has the tools she needs to accomplish her goals. “I’m just trying to build my resume and see where it goes from here,” Ashley explained. “It could be at a bigger country club or another restaurant or somewhere else. I’ll just see where it takes me.”

To nominate a student for Why I Chose, contact News@CareerCollegeCentral.com.
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