



A rare opportunity to reinvent

What higher ed experts
are saying about the future
of education



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The coronavirus pandemic has created a slew of new challenges for higher education institutions, but that doesn't mean pre-COVID obstacles have diminished. This period of disruption and impromptu transformation has created a rare opportunity for institutions to reimagine and rebuild higher education from the ground up.

During this year's Ellucian Live Online event, three higher education associate leaders came together during a panel discussion led by Ellucian President and CEO Laura K. Ipsen and moderated by Executive Editor at The Chronicle Higher Education Liz McMillen. During this eye-opening conversation, panelists recount a year of disruption and examine strategies to overcome future challenges for higher education. (Comments have been edited for clarity and length).

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THE ROLE OF INNOVATION IN REDEFINING EDUCATION

FEATURING:

Walter Bumphus

President and CEO, American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC)

Michael Reilley

Executive Director, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

John O'Brien

President and CEO, EDUCAUSE



Addressing inequity

How the pandemic exposed profound inequality in education



“The pandemic uncovered a number of inequities and pulled back the sheets on some things that we didn’t necessarily want to see. Probably the most extreme circumstance that I had a chance to hear about was a college providing internet service at their stoplights, and students would go there and try to use that as a hotspot.”

WALTER BUMPHUS, PRESIDENT AND CEO, AACCC



“We look at the data around our most vulnerable students and we see the gap between low-income and high-income students—the gap in expected GPAs has doubled. We know the pandemic disproportionately hits our most vulnerable populations. The vast majority of campuses, 74%, are doing loaner laptops. 25% were mailing equipment to students in the spring. **Giving them a tablet is great, but if they don’t have broadband, what use is it?**”

JOHN O’BRIEN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, EDUCAUSE



“All your traditional recruitment models are gone. We’re going to have students that will not have taken SAT or ACT tests. Many of them will have pass/fail grades. Evaluating a student without those two components is difficult. We’re going to see this switch to a virtual admissions world for a while, and **hopefully we don’t exacerbate this digital divide and make students lose access to virtual admissions by not being able to get on to these new platforms.**”

MICHAEL REILLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AACRAO





A willingness to be flexible

Meeting the needs of an evolving future workforce



“**COVID has made us realize how wrong our thinking is on so many different areas**, and one of the things that we’ve known for many years is that community colleges lead the way with flexibility, and the willingness to be flexible. I just want to do a shout-out to our community college institutions for really doing a great job in terms of responding to this situation, where everything is different.”

JOHN O’BRIEN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, EDUCAUSE



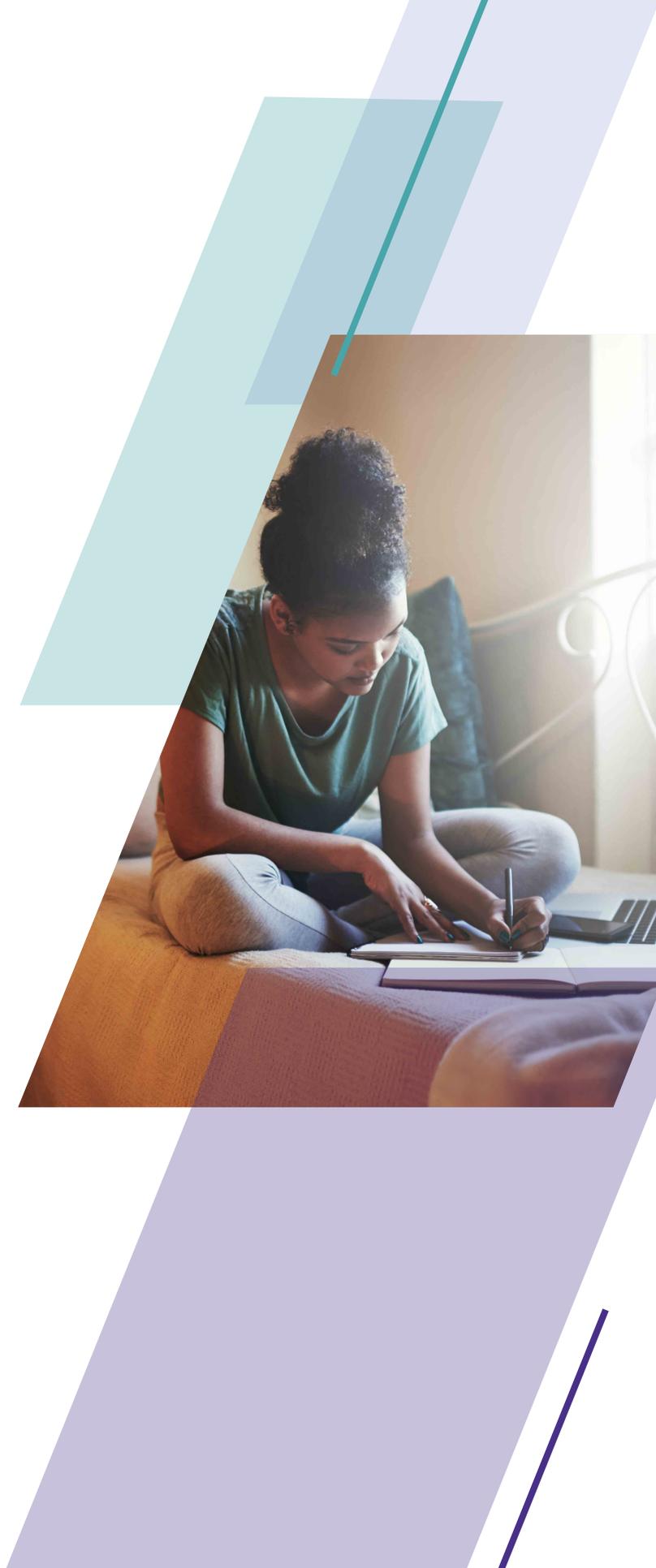
“All of the community colleges in the country had to pivot and go almost 100% online. **We went from being 9% online to probably 90% online for all of our course offerings with the exception of what we call CTE, our career and technical education.** Courses like welding and some nursing programs and others couldn’t be taught online. If I could say one thing about community colleges, I think most folks would agree that we have been able to be as flexible as any sector of higher education.”

WALTER BUMPHUS, PRESIDENT AND CEO, AACC



“We know that student transcripts don’t have a lot of value for employers. Things like internships become more important in building comprehensive learner records. Moving more toward experiential learning, more self-reflection, working in groups, and capturing that. **I think there’s good work being done to create a better link between the learning that students have and the skills that are required for employment.** It’s been there in the community college world for a long time, but I think you’re starting to see that more at the four-year university sector.”

MICHAEL REILLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AACRAO





New disruption and old problems

Addressing access, demographics, and campus logistics



“**The big concern I’m hearing now is about reopening.** Yesterday, you were able to put 80 students in a classroom—in some cases 400 students. Tomorrow, you can only put 10 people in that same classroom, or 20—how do you make that work financially?”

WALTER BUMPHUS, PRESIDENT AND CEO, AACC



“We had already been anticipating an enrollment cliff in higher education in about 2024–25. **Parts of the country are going to have very reduced numbers of high school graduates.** The elites are going to do well—they’ve got deep applicant pools; they can be selective. Those institutions that tend to be access institutions, that serve the majority of students in the country, are the ones that are going to get impacted the most in this enrollment cliff scenario.”

MICHAEL REILLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AACRAO



“Imagine asking students whether they have access to library services, or access to mental health services, or health services. Our data showed up to 40% of students saying that they found it extremely difficult to access these student services. **The lifelines that they have to rely on to help boost them are stretched and challenged by the remote teaching.**”

JOHN O'BRIEN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, EDUCAUSE





Finding the silver lining

Creating positive outcomes after mass disruption



“Despite a lot of the changes in terms of learning outcomes and microcredentials, **I think a college degree is still the great differentiator and traditional students will pursue that.** And once you can enroll virtually, your recruitment outreach area greatly expands.”

MICHAEL REILLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AACRAO



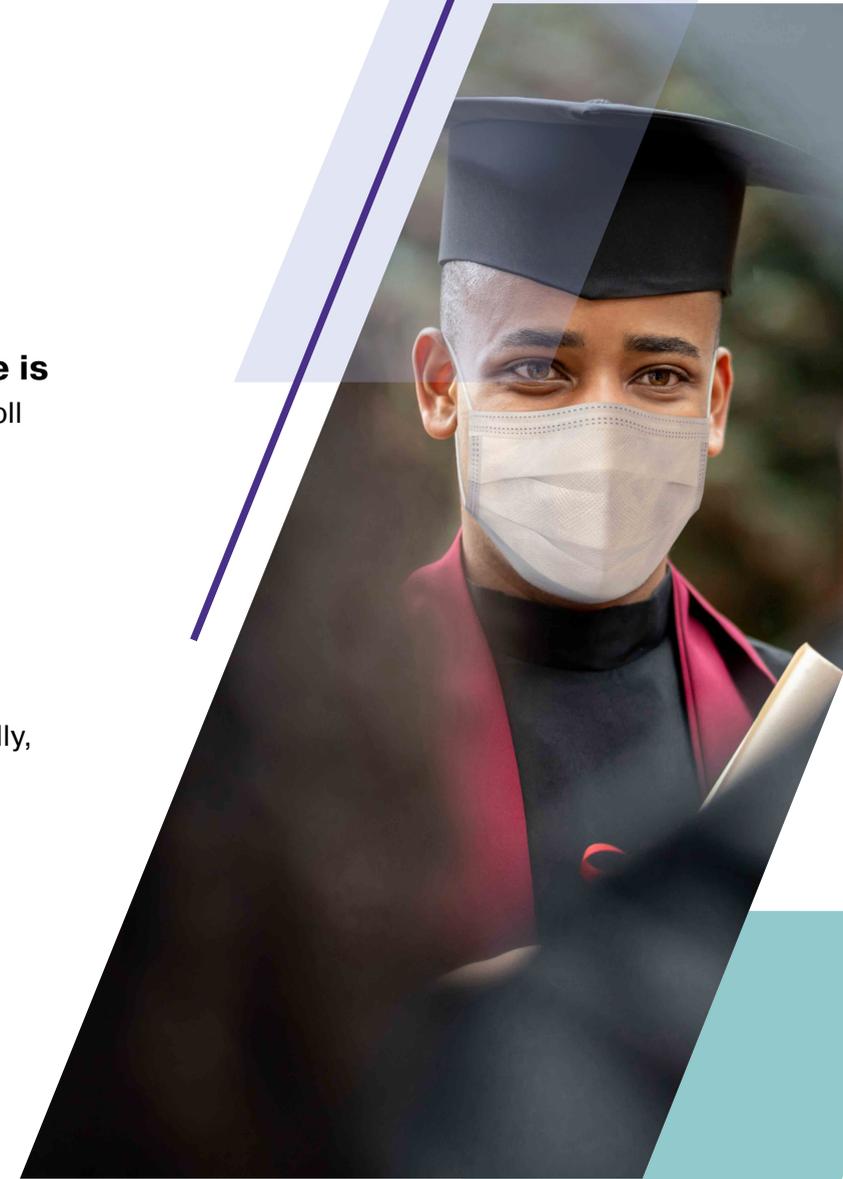
“**We moved faster than we ever thought we could, we accomplished more than we ever thought we could, and it all happened right before our eyes.** And we can't unsee that, thankfully, so once the dust settles, we have a whole new starting point to think about everything. That is something that is really positive. It's amorphous, but it's something to build on in the future.”

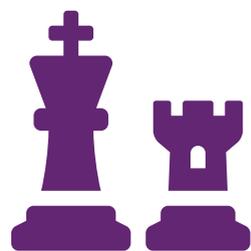
JOHN O'BRIEN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, EDUCAUSE



“Eighty percent of community college students were working at least 20 hours a week prior to the pandemic, but like the rest of the U.S., most of them either lost their jobs or their hours were reduced significantly. Ginni Rometty has **a wonderful project called P-TECH at IBM that affords students an opportunity to truly work and learn.** They're providing them with 20 hours of work experience, in addition to their college classes, and then paying for them to transfer onto a four-year school.”

WALTER BUMPHUS, PRESIDENT AND CEO, AACC





Technology as a strategic asset

The role of innovation in redefining education



“We’ve viewed technology innovation too often as a silo. The old thinking was what I call ‘utility thinking,’ which is that IT is something that is usually in a cubicle, and nobody knows that we even have IT until something breaks. I believe that this new higher ed is one in which we acknowledge that technology is a strategic asset, that CIOs are on the cabinet working effectively across the C-suite. **Technology innovation is part of the strategic fabric of our colleges and universities.**”

JOHN O'BRIEN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, EDUCAUSE



“**I do believe technology will become a more integral part** of the planning and operational pieces of every institution—two-year, four-year, and any other kind of higher education institution.”

WALTER BUMPHUS, PRESIDENT AND CEO, AACC



“**I think these virtual tools are going to stay even if we return to a more analog approach**—having 24/7 things that students can access about advising, healthcare, counseling, et cetera. We’ve seen studies that some students prefer to use a chatbot to air out some of their questions and concerns as opposed to sharing with a human.”

MICHAEL REILLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AACRAO



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