



Strategic Initiatives Inc.
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

Planning and Leadership in a Transnational World



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Introduction

A number of years ago I wrote ***A Guide for New Planners*** for the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP), which they distribute to new members. Recently, SCUP asked me to craft a new edition taking a fresh look at the full range of challenges and opportunities facing campus planners and leaders in the 21st century. The reasons are both obvious and compelling.

The most obvious and dramatic change is the impact of globalization on higher education. Just as economic relationships are being “flattened” so are educational relationships and value propositions. Many leading institutions in North America, Australia, Asia, Europe, and the Gulf are referring to themselves as “transnational,” rather than “international” or “global”. The leadership of medallion universities such as Cornell University use the term transnational to express their strategic intent to engage all students, faculty, and staff in international/global perspectives and experiences. Transnational also suggests the need to evolve new approaches, practices, and cultures. Transnational institutions across the globe must be concurrently local and global if they are to be successful.

The multi-institutional learning centers springing up from Dubai to Doha to Bahrain to Kuwait City are spoken of as “transnational hubs.” They exist both in the traditions of the past and in the globalized present and future. Such transnational institutions are on paths to discovering new practices, policies, processes, and cultures appropriate to the emerging Gulf Region context. Reinvented approaches to planning and leadership will be critical to their success.

Much of the management, planning, and leadership advice that is on offer worldwide is not customized to the transnational institution and to distinctive contexts like the Gulf Region. Thoughtful leaders across the Region are realizing that prevailing, traditional styles of leadership and management will be unsuccessful in transnational enterprises. This lesson has progressively been learned in Japan and South Asia and now is confronting China, India, and the Gulf Region. Relying overmuch on family and personal connections, favoring centralized decision making, and treating expatriate employees as disposable resources will not lead to global success, as transnational enterprises headquartered in the Gulf Region face withering global competition. This observation holds for educational, scientific, and medical enterprises, but also for commercial ventures in other sectors as well.

This context of globalization and transnationalization has accentuated many of the other challenges that are being faced by college and university planners across the globe. Financial exigencies have forced public and private institutions to rethink their financial models, seeking new sources of revenues and innovative approaches to enhance productivity. Government and policy makers at the state and federal levels are demanding greater accountability. Colleges and universities are finally beginning to realize tangible results from leveraging their massive investments in information and communications technology (ICT). This is transforming the nature of learning, scholarship, and knowledge sharing, leading to improved performance, reduced costs, and new experiences for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other stakeholders. Domestic and global learning competitors are challenging existing practices. Many are showcasing e-learning innovations whose value propositions are high and whose costs are low. The nature of campus master planning is changing to accommodate sustainability and learner mobility. The impact of digitization is driving more learner-focused facility design and revealing the potential dividends from leveraging facilities far more effectively.

The following discussion highlights the impacts of these challenges on planning and leadership in the emerging transnational world.

Impacts on Planning and Leadership

The new generation of transnational colleges and universities are being shaped by a combination of conditions, challenges, and values in their home countries and in the locations where there have established campuses or serve on-line learner cohorts.

Accountability and Focusing on Value

For the better part of a decade, colleges and universities across the world have been under increasing pressure to demonstrate their value. In North America, support for higher education as a public good waned during the recession of the early 2000's. Public institutions in many states have experienced increasing scrutiny and a variety of performance funding measures that drive state appropriations. In the United States in 2005, the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education (NCAHE) was formed to federalize accountability for higher education in a similar spirit to the No Child Left Behind movement in K-12. The Commission's Report has provoked associations representing public and private institutions to suggest specific Website formats that institutions can use to make public the levels of success of their students.

National institutions in the Gulf Region are also being held accountable for results. Until recently, the standard of comparison was how far national education had come in a short time. By this measure, laudable progress had been made. Over the past few years, however, an inflection point has been reached. The new standard of comparison is how effectively the graduates of National institutions in the Gulf Region measure up to global competitive standards. Here the comparison is not favorable to Gulf Region schooling. Recent reports have chronicled that K-12 education is inadequate must be transformed. Moreover, K-12 and postsecondary education must be reinvented to prepare Nationals to be globally competitive for jobs in the private sector. Schools and institutions must receive adequate, sustainable funding and aggressive, demanding leadership to achieve these goals.

Higher education has long cherished "quality" as its gold standard. But the definition of quality has been entrusted to the educational providers and accreditation agencies that assess the inputs and throughput of institutional programs and practices. Quality is seldom explicitly linked to outcomes. It is subject to the interpretation of educational experts, not learners, employers, or

others in a position to evaluate the outcomes carried forward by learners. In today's world, excellence is esteemed more than quality, and excellence is reflected in performance.

Value is the performance standard that makes more sense for our times. Value is especially useful in dealing with learning and its related developmental experiences. Value consists of three items: 1) learning and developmental outcomes, 2) the experiences through which those outcomes are achieved, and 3) cost. Value is situational and contextual, not monolithic. Nor can value be singularly ascribed to a particular program or institution for its dealings with all types of learners. Value is based on the match between individual needs/perceptions and the variety of outcomes/experiences available to them, at particular costs. Value propositions must be differentially articulated for different groups and even individuals.

Not surprisingly, the fastest growing learning providers are those that have discovered how to deliver superior value to learners. Critical to their success is the capacity to articulate and demonstrate their value propositions. Many of the most successful and fastest growing for-profit competitors in the learning marketplace clearly focus on understanding and articulating their value proposition for adult learners. Competency-based outcomes, consistent learning experiences and standards of learning across the institution, and convenience for adult learners differentiate Capella, the University of Phoenix, DeVry University and the legions of other for-profit providers from most universities. These institutions can measure and articulate their value, something that most non-profit learning enterprises cannot achieve.

But even traditional institutions are proclaiming their value and doing something about it. The Boston Consortium consists of 14 private institutions that are collaborating to enhance the performance of administrative and academic support services for the purpose of enhancing performance and controlling cost. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) are aggressively leveraging distance learning to create new value propositions for Minnesota learners and reduce the marginal cost of learning so it is less than the rate of tuition and fees in public institutions. MnSCU is also using new, action-oriented analytics to link K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, employers, and workforce organizations to better serve underserved students and to enhance and demonstrate student success. Such performance measures are critical to demonstrating value. The list of value-oriented innovators goes on, not yet a torrent, but more than a trickle.

The additional challenge to transnational institutions is to focus on and communicate value in terms that have meaning to learners, employers, and leaders in the various locations in which they have campuses or active on-line learning cohorts. This will be especially important as local colleges and universities in Asia and the Gulf Region compete more effectively with off-shore institutions. Over the next few years, transnational institutions will become significantly more sophisticated in demonstrating their value, not just their "quality."

Enhancing Performance and Reducing Costs through Leveraging Technology

In recent articles in the EDUCAUSE Review, William Graves affirms that the new conditions facing higher education require strategies for identifying, prioritizing, and proactively meeting the critical performance expectations facing higher education. Fortunately, there are numerous case-by-case examples of value-building transformations in individual courses/programs in colleges and universities. Carol Twigg's ground-breaking work for the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) has demonstrated that almost any academic course experience can be reinvented and enhanced, using both technology and clever faculty-driven redesign. In the process, achieving better quality/outcomes and reducing cost. The newest round of NCAT's

Course Review Program is striving to promote these enhancements/savings and encourage institutions to leverage course reinvention across the institution.

The debate stimulated by Nicholas Carr's article in the Harvard Business Review and subsequent book on "Does IT Matter?" provoked educational leaders to reexamine their investments in ICT. The bottom line is that ICT yields real strategic advantage only if it is used to truly change the way an enterprise functions. The bane of higher education is that we practice innovation with a lower case "i". A thousand points of academic light do not produce enterprise-wide innovation, and the flames tend to flicker out rather than igniting new ones.

Successful innovators are finding that to maximize value, institutions must practice enterprise-wide, systemic innovation, leveraging technology to enhance productivity and reduce costs – innovation with a capital "I". Graves points out that this requires institutions to nurture an interconnected set of infrastructures and capabilities – technology, information, analytics, and innovation – if they are to engage in systemic transformation. Today, few institutions have developed these capacities to a level adequate for the challenges of the 21st century. However, new generations of analytical tools and practices are making greater strides in introducing these capacities to higher education.

Leveraging technology is especially critical to transnational institutions. Since they operate in multiple locations, they must achieve seamless consistency in academic, academic support, and administrative policies, processes, and practices if they are to deliver equivalent, yet customized, experiences and outcomes in multiple locations across the globe. Indeed, truly transnational institutions are impossible without advanced, highly leveraged technology applications. Without technology-enabled, seamless process, policies, and practices, they are merely archipelagos of campus locations with the same name – but not necessarily the same brand.

Facilities Master Planning for the Digital Age

Higher education has experienced a building boom over the past five years in many settings – North America, Asia, the Gulf Region, and more. Many institutions have engaged in a sort of "amenities arms race" to see which institutions could build the most lavish student unions, learning resources center, computing commons, sports compounds, or residential space. Pervasive network computing and the emergence of wireless communications have created an entirely new topography of digital learning spaces on campus and beyond. On some campuses, institutional planners have created a new breed of multi-function facilities that combine library, academic, and student union space. Others have reinvented science and research buildings. These new facilities have enabled the evolution of new patterns of interactivity among faculty, students, staff, and alumni.

On the ground, institutions are becoming far savvier about designing new facilities to reflect emerging learning practices. The EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative is exploring how the new technologies will change learning experience, learning space design, and patterns of interactivity. The design process for individual projects is changing as architects and designers are becoming more familiar with instructional and student needs. Smart, flexible design concepts are emerging to deal with the reality that a building designed today will change electrical systems once, furniture at least twice, and software systems fifteen times or more.

But the real revolution in campus master planning is yet to come. Confronted with financial exigencies and the need to enhance performance and reduce costs, campus leaders will be addressing the need to systematically reduce the square footage on campuses, or at least control growth. This will involve revising the distribution of classroom and other space. Planners will

need to dramatically enhance the productivity of facilities usage. Moreover, the proportion of learning engaged in through virtual or blended modes will continue to increase. In ten years, some traditional institutions are planning to use online learning to deliver as many as 30% or more of their total credit hours. Lecture-oriented classroom space may be substantially replaced by highly flexible, expeditionary space configured for small group work using advanced collaborative tools. Teaching and research laboratories are being reinvented to emphasize collaborative research, group work, and new approaches to sharing research findings.

Under those circumstances, what will the portfolio of campus space look like? Wireless interactivity is opening new options for campus usage patterns. It is also blurring the boundaries between the campus and other learning settings of choice. In the Gulf Region, the fusion of work and learning opportunities will become even more important as institutions focus on developing the competencies needed by private employers: excellent English language communication skills, the capacity to continuously and aggressively learn in English, motivated work habits, and well-honed teamwork skills in inclusive teams that include men, women, Nationals, and non-Nationals. To develop these skills, Gulf institutions will need to use technology to give students the opportunities to interact with diverse groups in ways that respect traditional practices. With apologies to the late Peter Drucker, the campus of the future will not disappear as he predicted, but it will certainly look and feel different than today.

Campuses in the Gulf Region tend to be impressive edifices, where excellent design and generous space allocation trumpet a commitment to quality. This tendency is understandable and even laudatory in the first generation of institutional development. In subsequent generations, more effective utilization will become important. New facilities designs and models, some developed in conjunction with industrial and research partners, are likely to emerge.

Increasing Competition

The vibrant competition among institutions is likely to intensify as the focus on value sharpens. Transnational institutions will be well positioned to prosper if they pay attention to their value propositions.

Across the globs, the “medallion” colleges and universities and high-ranked professional schools will enjoy good fortunes, but tough times are ahead for institutions whose value propositions are soft and indistinguishable from other, competing institutions and learning enterprises. Dean Richard Matasar of the New York Law School predicts bad times ahead for private law schools and programs of middle-of-the-pack reputations and value. Other professional schools will experience similar reversals, especially as the levels of student debt reach unsustainable conditions. The for-profit sector will continue to grow, cherry-picking choice programs in which to compete, and promoting their capacity to deliver value and be held accountable for doing so.

And then there is international competition. Thomas Friedman asserts that “the world is flat” in many industries and knowledge-based industries are not immune. [Transforming e-Knowledge: A Revolution in Knowledge Sharing](#) described the dimensions of the boom in e-learning enterprises across the globe. This includes efforts in China, India, and Southeast Asia that are developing world-class e-learning experiences at a fraction of the cost of current best practices in the United States, Australia, and other developed educational provider countries. Sometime in the near future, one can expect these approaches to “sneak in on little cat feet in the middle of the night.” The providers will not be “foreign” institutions, but struggling national colleges or universities acquired and repurposed to provide high-value, low-cost postsecondary learning with a national institutional brand.

Over time, these approaches will be adapted by national learning providers and a greater range of choices and value propositions will be available to learners. Increasingly important will be learning and developmental experiences that are “embedded” in the culture of organizations, delivering significant value within the values and context of those organizational cultures. Many institutions are customizing learning offerings to particular corporate clients, using in-house problem solving and case studies. Some of these offerings are organized not by degree or disciplines, but by performance outcomes. For example, the Cooperative Learning Institute at Virginia Tech is crafting embedded, contextualized, leadership development experiences that are co-created with corporate and institutional clients. Contextualized, embedded leadership development efforts are likely to be critical to the development of enterprises in the Gulf Region.

Sustainability

A growing numbers of students, faculty, staff, and alumni are pressing that **sustainability** perspectives and principles be applied to create socially and environmentally sound decisions. Several years ago SCUP launched Campus Sustainability Day, an event that focused attention on what sustainability principles mean when they are applied to the planning and operations of colleges and universities. The response has been remarkable. Participation in subsequent Campus Sustainability Days has mushroomed. SCUP is accumulating a growing body of knowledge on cloning sustainability practices into campus planning and decision making processes. In many ways, sustainability is becoming SCUP’s “brand.”

In its broadest context, planning for sustainability may be precisely the principle college and university strategic planning needs for the 21st century. The campus of the 21st century needs to be financially and programmatically viable. It should fulfill differentiated value propositions for a wide range of stakeholders, in the face of withering competition and changing conditions in the professional marketplaces on which it depends for sustenance. Across the globe, tomorrow’s campus, physical and virtual, should be environmentally, socially, and professionally sustainable.

For institutions in the Gulf Region, sustainability will become an increasingly important issue. While energy has been an abundant and relatively inexpensive resource, the future of “smart buildings” that utilize energy highly efficiently will be critical to the long-term financial viability of Gulf-based educational enterprises. But the most important facet of sustainability for institutions in the Gulf Region is discovering sustainable financial models that will support their expanding efforts to deliver high value outcomes and experiences to the learners and employers in the Gulf Region.

Smart Change and Leadership

In the face of these challenges and opportunities, colleges and universities need bold leadership that can mobilize the vision and energies of its University communities, engaging in smart change to discover solutions to the accountability, performance, technology, facilities, and sustainability challenges of the 21st century.

“Smart change” is a term used to describe the aggressive application of the principles and practices of change management to create systemic, enterprise-wide change in colleges and universities, for the purpose of discovering sustainable futures. Change management is an iterative process that provides a strategic context for the institution’s ongoing efforts at process improvement, capacity building, and value enhancement. Change management weaves these initiatives together so they focus on and develop enterprise-wide capacities and outcomes. Effective change management requires clear articulation of the performance leaps expected of

institutions in the 21st century. Accountability for progress toward these performance goals is imperative.

Some institutions are focusing on value and practicing smart change. One example is The Boldness by Design initiative at Michigan State University. The University is positioning itself for transnational success as the premier land-grant university for the 21st century. This involves building on and repurposing the values and value propositions that distinguished land grant-universities in the 19th and 20th centuries. Broad-scale participatory processes are engaging members of the University community to discover and shape what these principles mean around the world, nationally, and at home. Other transnational universities are participating in similar planning initiatives to shape their future and mobilize their energies.

Colleges and universities in the Gulf Region are contemplating their futures, searching and planning for the combination of visions, values, and actions that will enable them to become genuinely transnational institutions, respectful of local cultures and competitive by global standards. This is a tall order, but a necessary one. Supple leadership and smart change will be needed to achieve these goals.

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