

Message from the Publisher

Densil A. Williams

This issue of Trends in Higher Education examines the social factors that are impacting the higher education landscape and forcing universities to rethink how they treat with faculty, student and the wider society which they serve.

It focuses on developments in areas of workload policy and work-life balance that are important in increasing productivity in the workplace.

It also addresses mental health issues that are becoming prevalent among students and staff and which impinge on their performance and overall productivity in the classrooms and workplace.

In addition, this issue focuses on academic freedom as it relates to free speech and expression within the protective walls of higher education institutions, at a time when these freedoms are being curtailed by external forces.

The issue references a number of academic studies and practitioner reports which validate the importance of the issues discussed.

I invite you to read this volume and hope that you find the information useful.

Social Trends in Higher Education

This issue of Trends in Higher Education focuses on social factors in the environment that are influencing both staff and students in the higher education landscape. It looks at issues such as academic workload and work-life balance; provision of mental health services; staff recruitment and development among others. Also included are issues which directly affect students such as free speech, provision of safe working spaces and mental health services as well as factors which impact their successes.

Activism and Inclusion

Higher education institutions are viewed as neutral grounds to promote academic freedom of speech and creative and critical thinking among its faculty and students. They also provide a public sphere for civic engagement on diverse topics which impact society. For universities, institutional autonomy and academic freedom are seen as integral to research, teaching and societal discourse thus, permitting free expression for staff and students in the community. Recently, higher education groups and scholars have expressed concern over current threats to academic freedom and institutional autonomy as well as violations to basic human rights, which have been prompted by nationalist-populist trends, and the role of social media and 'fake news' (Blessinger and de Wit April 2018, n.p.).

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Editorial Team

Dr. Indrani Bachan-Persad
Dr. Halima-Sa'adia Kassim
Mr. Leighton Duncan
Mr. Anand Dass

Contact Us:

St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago
Phone/Fax: (868) 645-5795
E-Mail: uopd@sta.uwi.edu

Mona, Jamaica
Phone: (876) 977-0055;
970-2986; 977-0771
Email: vcprojoffc@uwimona.edu.jm
Website: <http://uwi.edu/uop/>

The American Council on Education (ACE) notes that university leaders are concerned about protecting free speech and promoting campus inclusion. The findings from a 2018 ACE survey (2018, n.p.) in which a total of 471 presidents responded showed that almost all presidents (98%) agreed that protecting freedom of speech and promoting an inclusive society are very important in building a healthy democracy. Also, these presidents overwhelmingly indicated that it is more important for colleges to allow students to be exposed to all types of speech (96%) rather than to protect them by prohibiting offensive language on campuses.

SCUP (2018, 2) noted that “many colleges and universities have found, maintaining civil discourse and the free expression of multiple points of view is not always easy to do.” This challenge is reflected in the ACE survey (2018, n.p.) where 70% of the respondents were very or somewhat concerned about violence and student safety when managing efforts around campus inclusion and free speech. Presidents rely on the senior executive (i.e. vice presidents of student affairs/deans of students, provosts/chief academic officers, and legal counsel) to set the institutional policy on potential conflict between campus inclusion and free speech and in responding to active conflict between campus inclusion and free speech. Measures such as clear, public statements (88%) and open community forums (80%) were among the top practices used by presidents to manage tensions on campuses.

Moreover, “in this era of safe spaces, “trigger warnings,” and free speech, universities are often focal points for the expression of opinions” (SCUP 2018, 2). To protect free speech on campuses, the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) with assistance from the National Union of Students, the Home Office and others have provided guidance to student unions and universities (Rawlinson 2019, n.p.). The guidance indicated that while a student union can choose not to invite a speaker they should not ban them from using their facilities

altogether and further universities must not allow student complaints to affect course content. Additionally, “safe spaces”, from which some people are banned in order to ensure that a particular group can express itself without fear, and “trigger warnings”, giving people notice about possibly upsetting subject matter were not identified as unlawful according to the guidance given (Rawlinson 2019).

Academic workload and work-life balance

Academic workload is crucial to the effective and efficient operation of academic units. In a recent survey of 347 academic faculty in the United Kingdom, Grove (2019, n.p.) noted that 45% of academics believed that workload models¹ are designed to exploit them or to cut costs, while only 7% see the tools as intended primarily to support staff well-being. The survey which also examined academics’ attributions of the purpose of their institution’s workload management framework also found that just 16% of staff felt that their workload model had helped to make them more efficient (Grove 2019, n.p.).

The first major global survey of university staff views on work-life balance by Times Higher Education (THE) in 2017 showed that academics felt stressed and underpaid, and struggled to fit time for personal relationships and family around their escalating workloads (Bothwell 2018, n.p.).² The findings showed that about two-fifths of all university staff said that they have been working longer hours during the working week over the past three years. Some 31% of scholars and 27% of administrators typically work on both days over the weekend. Generally, academics tend to go on fewer holidays away from home than professional staff do. Scholars were more likely to report that they worked while on holiday (86%) than their non-academic colleagues (69%).

A supplementary survey by THE³, which focused on mental health and caring responsibilities, found that a sense of an unmanageable

workload is often blamed for raising stress and anxiety levels. Male academics were the most likely to say that work negatively affects their mental health “a lot” (31%) compared with 26% of female academics and just 17% of professional staff. Professional staff⁴ were also the most likely group of respondents to be able to switch off from work “often” or “always” when they were at home (24%) compared with just 6% of male academics and 7% of female ones.

The survey also asked respondents if they considered working in a different sector and what would they expect to improve. An overwhelming majority of university staff have at least occasionally considered working in a different sector (85% of both academic and professional staff). Academics were most likely to expect that their work-life balance would improve if they worked in another sector (31% compared with 21% of non-academics), while professionals were most likely to aspire to a higher salary (29%, compared with 27% for academics).

Demand for Mental Health Services

Demand for mental health services at higher education institutions (HEIs) is likely to increase as the factors inducing anxiety is likely to remain present - economic burden heightened by the cost of college attendance, increase connectivity to social media, and academic competitiveness. Researchers from the World Health Organization (WHO) surveyed nearly 14,000 first-year college students from eight countries (Australia, Belgium, Germany, Mexico, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Spain and the U.S.) and found that 35% struggled with a mental illness. The most common mental illness was major depressive disorder, with 21.2% of respondents experiencing lifelong symptoms, followed by general anxiety disorder, which affects 18.6% of students (Hess 2018, n.p.). These illnesses were also observed by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health housed at the Pennsylvania State University along with an increasing number of students exhibiting “threat-to-self indicators” (Gordon 2018, n.p.). According to SCUP (2019,

3), the American Psychiatric Association reported that the percentage of college students being treated for mental health issues increased from 19% in 2007 to 34% in 2017 (SCUP 2019, 3). Moreover, the use of campus counselling centres have increased by an average of 30-to-40% between 2012 and 2017, while overall college enrolments increased by only 5% (Gordon 2018, n.p.).

The increased demand for mental health services has overwhelmed some colleges; the average ratio of campus mental health professionals to students around the country is close to 1:1,600, with ratios hitting well above 2,000 at large schools according to a 2017 survey by the Association for University and College Counselling Center Directors or AUCCCD (Gordon 2018, n.p.).⁵ The same survey also indicated that while only 32% of college counselling centres have a waiting list, the average wait time on those lists for a first appointment was 17 business days. Colleges and universities, therefore, are using multiple channels to address this challenge, including online tools including apps (e.g. Headspace and Calm or specific apps designed for students such as Fika, Emoodji and Enlitened), peer-to-peer discussion groups, and healthy living workshops (SCUP 2019, 3; McKie (1) 2019, n.p.). However, concerns have been raised about the efficacy of the mental health apps and the confidentiality of the users’ data.⁶

Interest in university staff and faculty mental health is increasing following recent suicides of US academics.⁷ Gorczynski (2018, n.p.) noted that many academic staff are stressed and at risk of burnout. He cited the results of a survey at the University of Portsmouth where 43% of 158 academic staff who responded indicated at least a mild mental disorder, which is nearly twice the prevalence of mental disorders compared with the general population. Primarily to blame are the increased workloads of academics and demands to publish and obtain external revenue. The study also showed that 6.7% ever disclosed a mental health condition.

In another survey undertaken in 2017 in the US among faculty who self-identified with mental disabilities, mental illness or mental-health histories; it was found that from among the 267 respondents nearly 70% had no or limited familiarity with accommodations, and even fewer used them (87%). Less than two-thirds (62%) disclosed to at least one person on campus - primarily colleagues (50%) and department chairs (21%). Respondents felt most supported by spouses/significant others (75% very or extremely supported) and friends (51%) rather than colleagues (29%) and supervisors (25%) (Price et al 2017).

Staff recruitment and development

Institutional culture is seen as a key contributor to an organisation's success. There exists cultural principles that define work and the work environment. Building and maintaining that institutional culture is also seen as important in hiring practices (SCUP 2018, 2). Srivastava et al in their study of 10 million internal emails from a technology firm sent between 2009 and 2014 using linguistic analysis to monitor cultural fit over time found that adaptability was important to employee and institutional success (quoted in Walsh 2018, n.p.). An employee's ability to recognise and internalise cultural codes and standards and shift behaviours accordingly may be signaled by "whether a prospective employee has lived in a different country or successfully transitioned between different work environments" (SCUP 2018, 2). These, the authors of the study suggest can form part of hiring questions.

While universities and colleges provide knowledge and skills to citizens, less focus is placed on promoting learning opportunities for employees. SCUP (2019, 2) noted that staff learning and development should be viewed as an expectation yet, the general institutional leadership/development programmes are viewed as optional or something extra.

The Chronicle of Higher Education survey of "Great Colleges to Work For 2018" identified 84 colleges with strong workplace practices from a survey of more than 53,000 people at 253 institutions. Some characteristics were that leaders communicated well with employees and gave them the freedom to do their jobs. A recent Gallup survey found that only 40% of staff and faculty in HEIs said they had opportunities to "learn and grow" in the past year, which puts higher education in the bottom quartile on "learn and grow" measures (SCUP 2018, 3). In comparison, "many organisations outside the field of higher education.... seven in 10 employees strongly agree that they have opportunities to learn and grow at work and that they have someone who encourages their development and progress" (Busteed 2018). HEIs, therefore, fall short not only on upholding their mission of advancing learning, but also on "learn and grow" measures. They should build a "learning culture" that emphasises regular, meaningful staff development exercises utilising cross-functional projects, role rotations, special assignments, and geographic relocations, if available (Hedges 2018, n.p.).

Developing a culture of learning by nurturing a growth mindset can stimulate innovation and competitiveness according to researchers, Carol Dweck and her colleagues at Stanford University. They found that there are two primary ways in which individuals approach intelligence and learning: with a fixed mindset or with a growth mindset.⁸ Institutions where there is a growth mindset are likely to be more innovative, support collaboration and employees are committed to learning and growing. Moreover, employees were more likely to hold positive views of their organisation and work colleagues and these growth-minded organisations were more likely to recognise leadership potential among employees than peers in organisations with fixed mind-sets. Thus, organisations focused on employees' capacity for growth will experience significant advantages.

Student-Focused Culture for Student Success

Most universities enrol a variety of students beyond the traditional 18-to-22-year-olds, but programmes which are still structured for students just out of secondary school are not likely to serve the interests of mature students particularly those looking for a career boost. This includes the length of programmes, credentials offered, and student support services.

As the higher education system expanded it meant that HEIs developed additional structures, programmes and/or services to meet the needs of these increasingly diverse learners organised under a student affairs and services. In a 2010 study of student affairs at 14 institutions in Ontario cited by SCUP (2019, 3), two broad models for how institutions structure their student affairs work were identified: student-focussed and institution-focussed. The research suggested that a “student-focused approach and a culture that encourages collaboration in support of student success was more effective than an institution-focused structure with programming delivered via siloed departments” (SCUP 2019, 3). A deeper consideration should be given to how it structures its student affairs work and manage/improve institutional culture to support faculty and staff collaboration for student success.

HEIs serve a variety of students from Gen Z to lifelong learners making it almost essential for universities and colleges to understand the motivations of these students and to create/expand programmes to serve their needs. In a 2018 survey by the Chartered Association of Business Schools, nearly 96% of respondents agreed that business schools would have to evolve the products that they offer to meet the rapidly evolving skills required by businesses (McKie (2) 2019, n.p.).

An initiative at Harvard, “The Sixty Year Curriculum”, focuses on what it will take to develop new educational models that will

support individuals to reskill as their occupational and personal context shifts (SCUP 2019, 3; Dede and Wirth 2019, n.p.). Education’s role therefore must be a mix of building students’ long-term capacity building (i.e. enhancing students’ interpersonal and intrapersonal skills for a lifetime of flexible adaptation and creative innovation) and supporting their short-term preparation so that they are career-ready (Dede and Wirth 2019, n.p.). HEIs should incorporate models such as micro-credentials, minimester classes, and credit for accomplishments in life; personalised advising and coaching; and blended learning experiences with distributed worldwide availability by which people can reskill later in their lives. It is possible that some of these models will require partnerships and collaborations with other HEIs (cross-institutional collaboration e.g. a parallel to Western Governors University) and/or organisations outside academia that have complementary strengths. The emphasis in these models will shift from disciplinary topics and knowledge communication to skill and competency acquisition “to develop a suite of skills and strategic attitudes to make a difference in the world, rather than just attain formal academic certifications to meet the immediate requirements of a particular occupational role” (Dede and Wirth 2019, n.p.).

As student diversity on campuses increase it means that HEIs need to understand the motivations of these new set of students and develop/restructure programmes and services to serve them. The findings from an online survey of more than 2,587 Americans, 14-to-40-years old conducted in 2018 by The Harris Poll on behalf of Pearson provides insight on the purpose of college, motivation of students, how students want to learn, and the cost-value equation (Selingo n.d., 33). Table 1 provides an overview of the results and what it means for institutions.

Table 1: Key results and implications for HEIs		
Dimension	Key results	Implications for institutions
Purpose of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults want a degree to provide broad learning; the young want financial security Teenagers want their education to apply immediately; adults are more patient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design more flexible pathways that allow students to choose among a mix of legacy majors with a healthy dose of hands-on learning opportunities, short training courses, and intensive career advising
Motivation of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College graduates are bullish about the future; high school graduates much less Alternative credentials and certificates are just as popular as degrees among both college graduates and non-graduates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design pedagogical approaches for adult students that are different from those for traditional students Focus just as much on building new kinds of credentials as they do on recruiting different groups of students
How students want to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In era of collaborative learning, students prefer to work independently Professors are still valued, but students want flexibility in their learning Technology plays a large role in how students of all ages and background learn YouTube is the new university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different delivery methods are needed to appeal to the various learning styles of students Creating more flexible learning environments is especially critical for motivating college non-completers who are often turned off by traditional college classrooms
Cost-value equation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The price of higher education is a hurdle for students who want to enrol The older you are the more you value education. And the more you're willing to pay to receive that education Cost is far from the only obstacle keeping students from enrolling in college (study, personal life, work) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospective students value higher education differently, depending on their age and experience, yet colleges often market the value of their programmes in much the same way: as a ticket to a better life Colleges would be better off tailoring the value message based on age and experience Colleges need to better understand not only what motivates prospective students to enrol, but what the hindrances are and how can institutions help mitigate them

Source: Jeffrey J. Selingo. *The Future Learners: An Innovative Approach to Understanding the Higher Education Market and Building a Student-Centered University*. Pearson. n.d. pp. 15-18.

Based on the findings, Selingo (n.d, 10) suggested that it is best if an institution starts with student segmentation to “inform academic majors, help students navigate the institution, and improve current recruitment practices.” In this regard, he proposed five population segments and their key characteristics of the learner as well as opportunities for the HEI (see Table 2).

Table 2: Five Major Segment of Learners, their characteristics and opportunities for HEIs		
Segment	Learner characteristics	Opportunities for HEIs
Traditional Learner (25%)	The biggest group of 18-24 year olds – going to brick and mortar institutions for the traditional college experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve face-to-face learning and high-impact interactions with professors Blend classroom learning that is highly valued with experiential, hands-on opportunities, including research, internships, and projects Provide add-on services of high value given pricing flexibility with this segment (i.e., boot camps focused on skills building)
Hobby Learner (24%)	Learning just for the sake of learning, not with an end game in mind. Like the engagement of a high-touch environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design shorter, flexible academic programmes, even at the single course level, that appeal to the Hobby Learner's desire to seek knowledge about interesting things Create alternative credentials given this segment's bent toward education without the need to earn a degree to get a job Adopt digital tools to satisfy this segment's desire for a mix of learning styles at a lower cost
Career Learner (19%)	Highly values education, sees it as a stepping stone for success, but prefers to learn digitally, not just for economic reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate career services into the curriculum and provide more skills-based courses Build co-ops into the curriculum that allow students to toggle between semesters in the classroom and long stretches in the workplace Create opportunities for students to align their learning experiences across school and work by tracking their progress so they can visualize what they have accomplished and translate it for potential employers
Reluctant Learner (17%)	Learning because they have to, not because they want to. They struggle in school and therefore want a high-touch environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a flexible calendar that offers dozens of start times a year and mini-sessions embedded with traditional semesters to give these learners the time and space they need to complete their academic pursuits Build a pricing approach based on progress toward a degree, rather than time spent in a seat, which would incentivise price-sensitive students to complete their studies
Skeptical Learner (15%)	Doesn't think that school is for them. Somewhat older and feel like they have gotten by just fine without a degree. If they have to go to school they would prefer for it to be digitally to minimize inconvenience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a low-price pathways programme that provides intensive instruction and support services when they enter an institution with the goal of increasing retention and graduation rates of such students Redesign the online learning environment to replicate the social aspects of face-to-face learning and make it more engaging Build a low-residency campus option and offer work experience to lower their costs and increase their perceived value of higher education

Source: Jeffrey J. Selingo. *The Future Learners: An Innovative Approach to Understanding the Higher Education Market and Building a Student-Centered University*. Pearson. n.d. pp. 22-27.

Conclusion

The social trends which affect education such as work-life balance, staff recruitment, student developments and success to name a few suggest that universities will have to pay closer attention to their operations and services, in order to more adequately support its faculty and student bodies, in the future. For staff, this means evaluating academic and administrative workloads in order to provide support so that they can better balance their workloads and personal obligations. As it relates to students, the data suggest that there is need for universities to develop holistic student services' policies in which the students' well-being take

centre stage at a time when mental health issues among the student population, are on the rise globally.

**UWI "Triple A" Strategic Plan:
Revitalizing Caribbean Development**
Did you know the three goals of the current Strategic Plan are: **Access, Alignment and Agility**.

To learn more about the Plan, click on the following link <http://www.uwi.edu/uop/strategic-plan-about-plan>

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¹ Under standard workload models, each task or activity in a given role, such as an hour-long seminar or lecture, is assigned a number of points by university managers, who then specify the total number of points that an individual must achieve over the course of the academic year. See Grove 2091, n.p.

² Some 2,379 higher education staff – of whom 85% were academics and 67% female – gave their views on their workload and their ability to balance their careers with their personal lives. Almost two-thirds of respondents (61%) were from the UK, while 17% were based in the US and 5% in Australia. Overall, staff from 56 countries across six continents were represented. Source: Bothwell 2018, n.p.

³ The supplementary survey, with additional questions on mental health and caring responsibilities, was answered by 402 staff, 76% of whom were academics. Source: Bothwell 2018, n.p.

⁴ Professional staff answered the supplementary survey in relatively small numbers, thus responses were not subdivided by gender (Bothwell 2018, n.p.),

⁵ The International Association of Counseling Services, an accrediting agency, recommends a ratio of one per 1,000 to 1,500 students (Gordon 2018, n.p.).

⁶ Fika's founder noted that evidence mapping would be very important in the app's development and has agreed to partnerships with four

universities (Coventry, Exeter, Lincoln and Manchester Metropolitan) for research projects that will include an examination of the app's efficacy. THE author McKie (1) 2019, n.p.) citing a paper published last month in the *BMJ*, which looked at general health apps noted that 79% of the sampled apps shared users' data. This highlights the importance of confidentiality and data encryption. However, there is potential for mental health apps to augment care and if the university is willing to pay for its students to use it, then it could be incredibly useful (McKie (1) 2019, n.p.).

⁷ These include US academics Alan Krueger, a long-time Princeton University professor and White House economic adviser, and Vikram Jandhyala, the vice-president for innovation strategy at the University of Washington in Seattle. See Basken 2019, n.p.

⁸ The fixed-mindset perspective is one in which individuals believe that they are born with a certain level of intelligence and talent, and that level will not shift over their lifetime. As a result, they tend to believe that things for which they have skills should come easily to them, with little effort required for success. Persons with a growth mindset believe that intelligence, skills and passions can be developed over time. They seek opportunities to be challenged, to stretch beyond their expected capacity, to take risks, to learn and to gain insight from their mistakes. See Alaina Love, "How Leaders Can Foster a Growth Mindset." *SmartBrief*, July 23, 2018. <http://smartbrief.com/original/2018/07/how-leaders-can-foster-growth-mindset>.