

REPORT OF FINDINGS

HERDI NATIONAL BOARD THINKSPACE

FALL 2023



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WHAT'S TOP OF MIND THE BIG 6

(IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE)

6

Becoming a
Data-Driven
Organization

30%

5

Enrollment
Growth

30%

4

Aligning to
Workforce
Needs

30%

3

Completion
and Retention

40%

2

Blending Credit
and Non-Credit
Programs

45%

1

Re-Inventing/
Modernizing Our
Business Model

55%

Transformation

If you are already embarking on, or planning to embark on transforming your institution in one or more of these areas, here are some insights we hope will confirm the direction you are already headed in, or provide some next steps as you move forward.

This insight is based on active engagements we are involved in with community colleges, as well as our ongoing research into areas like culture, entrepreneurial mindset, the future of work, and the future of the campus enterprise.

What's In The Way

Other than some obvious obstacles like funding and board support, there are three roadblocks - that can effectively be turned into opportunities that community college Presidents are facing..

1. LACK OF INSTITUTION-WIDE STRATEGY FOR TRANSFORMATION WITH A “RALLY THE TROOPS” WIN THEME.

It's no secret that a lack of an institution-wide strategy for transformation can be a major barrier to progress. Without a clear vision and plan for the future, it can be difficult to get everyone on the same page and working towards the same goals. This inevitably leads to wasted resources, duplication of effort, and a lack of coordination.

Taking on areas like the Big 6 for any meaningful outcome requires a culture that is ready for transformation. Unfortunately, most community college Presidents inherit cultures in dire need of revitalization.

SIGNS YOUR CULTURE NEEDS A REBOOT BEFORE (OR AT LEAST CONCURRENT TO) ANY TRANSFORMATION

- A. Silos and fragmentation: Different departments and units are working on their own initiatives, with little-to-no alignment and collaboration with each other.
- B. Lack of passion: People are doing the block-and-tackle well, but there's no burning desire to transform.
- C. Slow progress: Things move at the speed of higher ed, not the speed of business, and life.
- D. Resistance to change: Even small changes are met with "but this is how we've always done it." It's all about "my turf", and "our tradition".

If an honest assessment of your institution's current state reveals a culture problem, consider making that the foremost priority. Otherwise, you risk deploying a lot of money on technology and other initiatives related to the Big 6, only to see marginal-to-no improvement in outcomes.

WHAT "HOPE AND CHANGE" AND "MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN" HAVE IN COMMON

It's shocking, we know, to suggest that those two campaigns have anything in common with each other whatsoever. But oblige us for a moment as you consider this. Both Hope and Change and Make America Great Again are Win Themes that encapsulate a massive vision and platform, boiled down to a simple phrase. Each statement in its simplicity, represents a very specific, yet detailed vision, mission, values, and strategy to amalgamate tens of millions of people. Each Win Theme won the hearts and minds of its constituents and brought missional clarity.

PRO TIP: Every great, and transformational strategic plan should have a Win Theme that embeds itself in the hearts and minds of its people so that it can fuel the work ahead for years to come.

DESIGNING A "BIG 6-LEVEL" STRATEGIC PLAN

Whether your institution is going to take on 1, 2, or all 6 of the Big 6 ideas, your current strategic plan likely needs a reboot - or at least, a refresh. If your

plan fits that qualification, here are some recommendations.

- **Start with a bold vision for the future.** This can't be about single-digit enrollment growth, or buying a new data dashboard software from a vendor. You must cast a vision so big, it almost scares you, and certainly scares everyone around you. Chances are you want some great things for the institution you lead. Start by getting the big and scary version of that vision out of your head, and onto paper first.
- **Involve all stakeholders:** The strategy on how to make that vision a reality should be developed with input from all stakeholders, including staff, students, faculty, community partners, and industry. This will help to ensure that the strategy is aligned to their needs, and gets their all-important buy-in to the vision.
- **Align the strategy with the organization's mission and values:** Just because one community college is doing a great job with repurposing their buildings, doesn't mean it's the right move for your institution. Point people to the true north of your institution's vision and mission. Rebuild the vision and mission from the ground up if necessary. Then make sure any plans align to that true north.
- **Make the strategy clear, concise, and measurable:** The best strategic plans give constituents the guideposts while allowing them to create and innovate within those guideposts. Make sure the strategic plan is clear on **what is to be achieved**, but make sure the plan doesn't get specific on **how** to get there. That's what makes it concise. Most importantly, the **outcomes should be clearly defined** so people can measure progress toward each outcome, and the institution can celebrate small wins along the way.

PRO TIP: Grab the family, and watch (or rewatch) the movie Jerry Maguire this weekend. Enjoy the story and the characters, but don't miss the very important business lesson on the value of vision, a "people moving" Win Theme and manifesto, and courageous leadership amidst opposition and difficult circumstances.

2. THERE AREN'T ENOUGH HORSES TO GET THE BIG 6 WORK DONE

Assuming you have a culture that is thriving and a vision, mission, and strategic plan that is focused on the Big things, the next obstacle we see community colleges face is the **lack of enough A-level talent to drive new progress.**

Truth be told, your A-level talent is already doing the work of 2-3 people and called into every new initiative known to man. You're likely impressed with how much they already carry but fear they could burn out at any moment.

So now what?

The answer lies within (often layers deep within) the organization.

FACT: You have more A-level talent in the organization. They are likely 3-5 levels deep, and typically stuck under mediocre supervisors and managers.

Any Big 6 President must develop a strategy to identify and develop talent within the organization. Now before you call your HR director in your office and ask them to design such a program, **we strongly advise against handing this off as an HR initiative.** HR in community college higher ed simply does not have the pedigree or capability to develop A-level talent. That responsibility resides solely on you, the President. Sure, HR and professional development can organize and plan things for you, but developing leaders who think and act like you is going to have to be your job - and making time for it has massive ROI.

Meanwhile, task your HR and professional development department to develop world-class programming to upskill and develop managers and supervisors in their ability to identify and advance high-performing staff, rather than hide and quench them of their entrepreneurial mindset. Managers and supervisors (especially ones getting promoted into new roles), must be taught (and rewarded for) talent ID and advancement. This work will act as the feeder program to your Presidential talent development activities.

3. INFLUENCE OF THE STATUS QUO

Put simply, in order to have Big 6 impact you have to tune out the influence of the status quo. From what's happening in Florida, to unreasonable fear around a demographic cliff, there's always something to draw your attention away from what needs to be done.

Let's take the demographic cliff as an example. Yes, the data is real, and a population shift is taking place. But there is also plenty of data showing that a majority of high school students in your state are not entering higher education today.

What if your vision and strategy focused on capturing 5-10% of that audience instead? Your enrollment director will likely point out a lot of obstacles to making that happen because it requires outside-the-box thinking and strategy, but there's a massive underserved market to tap - even amidst a demographic cliff.

Add to that the fact that community colleges will always have an evergreen market of lifelong learners, workforce development buyers, and immigrants and migrants to upskill and certify, and there is truly no enrollment goal you could set that could not be met. Your current staff may not believe that, but it has to start with you believing that, and then providing that staff with the tools, guidance, and training, to see past the status quo.

Summary

Your institution's long-term sustainability rests almost solely on you, the President. Despite the numerous challenges—too many to even document—some of your peers have already embarked on bold, transformational missions fueled by Big 6 vision, and anti-status-quo strategies. It is our sincere hope that more and more HERDI board members take on the Big 6 - and pursue the execution of these important areas with a fresh, future-focused, anti-status-quo mindset.

There Is A Success Formula

As we continue our study of transformational community college Presidents and their approach, here's what we consistently find:

1. **Clarity of vision:** They are crystal clear on what the “future-ready” version of the institution must look like, and they are not afraid to talk about “where we must go”.
2. **Courageous leadership:** They are empathetic, yet stalworth as they take on status-quo areas of the institution where trust, turf, and tradition stand in the way of transformation. To them, the envisioned outcomes are far too important to have some uncomfortable conversations get in the way of.
3. **Consistent reinforcement of message and outcomes:** These leaders recognize that the strategic plan itself isn't worth the paper it's printed on. What matters is their unwavering, vocal, and somewhat repetitive reminder to all constituents of the “why” of the work ahead, and the urgency to stay on mission. They see their job as that of a shepherd or cat herder. Constantly bringing people back from their distractions and status-quo mindsets to the critical path(s) ahead.

ABOUT HERDI

HERDI was established to provide a forum for meaningful dialogue between business leaders and Presidents and Chancellors of key community colleges across the country. These virtual and in-person interactions based on the client's agenda allow for a company to learn the challenges and opportunities facing the community college market today.

ABOUT BEYOND ACADEMICS

Beyond Academics (BA) serves as a transformation architect, guide, and catalyst to institutions focused on modernizing and becoming future-ready. From student experience, and digital transformation, to culture shifting, and sustainable business modeling, BA's breakthrough methodology delivers on the people and process transformation first, and any necessary technology transformation thereafter.

QUOTES FROM THE HERDI SUMMER THINKSPACE

ACADEMIC INNOVATION: THE BIG IDEAS

Q: What's the big idea/vision you want to see fulfilled at your institution within the next 3-5 years?

Remove silos
between
workforce
and credit

Increasing
completion
rates for all
students

Better tracking of
students' post cc
graduation outcomes
at 4-year colleges and
in their careers

Develop stronger,
more diverse and
creative leaders in the
systems or ideas can't
be implemented or
executed well

Develop new
partnerships
with businesses
and nonprofits

Thinking
beyond the way
we currently do
things

FINANCIAL SECURITY: WHAT'S THE FUTURE?

Q:What are some “out of the box” ideas you’ve heard of, considered, or are already pursuing?

Hired someone who is solely responsible for renting out are facilities

We are also beginning the process of selling “seats” in courses for credit, non-credit, continuing education allowing students to onboard/exit at various points in classes

We have changed the state funding formula in order to ensure the economic prosperity of the state. The formula shifted from an enrollment based model to a 95% outcomes based model.

We have used a consultant to develop a program sustainability model that assists us with course size, program viability etc.