Navigating the Learning Landscape: Where We Are and Where to Go Next

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Questions on the Landscape

• What do we know about how students learn?
• What are the great challenges facing higher education?
• What markers do we need to embrace as we move forward?

How Many Journals are in the Higher Education Domain?

What Do We Know About Learning and Cognition?

Magic Bullets and Learning Myths

– No evidence supporting notions of “Learning Styles”
– No evidence that brain games, such as Lumosity, help users perform better in school or delay cognitive impairment associated with age
– No evidence supporting digital native notions
– No evidence that Adderall improves learning
– No evidence that students learn better in rooms painted with pastel colors
1) Find out what your students know and teach accordingly

2) Performance followed by (immediate) feedback increases learning

3) Learning is often facilitated by social interaction

4) Recall Promotes Learning
Learning is S.W.E.E.T.

- Sleep
- Water
- Eating
- Exercise
- Time


5) Cognitive Processing is Key Attribute

What are higher education’s greatest challenges?

3. Greatest Challenges

1. Completion / attainment gap
2. Quality of learning
3. College affordability

Solid Basic Formula

- Build upon prior knowledge
- Leverage social learning opportunities
- Performance with feedback
- Foster recall
- Promote processing in all that we do

What are higher education’s greatest challenges?

Challenge 1: Completion

- College Persistence / Attrition
- College Completion
- Closing the attainment gap
Attainment levels (25 and over)

Challenge 2: Quality of Learning

- Need for more adaptable graduates who have achieved higher order learning outcomes.

Growth in Jobs that Require Complex, Adaptive Skills

Higher Order Learning

Solid Basic Formula

- Build upon prior knowledge
- Leverage social learning opportunities
- Performance with feedback
- Foster recall
- Promote processing in all that we do

Quality in Higher Education

“The quality shortfall is just as urgent as the attainment shortfall.”
Challenge 3

Affordability / the cost of higher education

Student Debt Trends

Cost of Higher Education

“The cost shifting - from the public to individual students and their families - has made cost, rather than either completion or the quality of learning, the dominant public concern.”

Humphrey, D. (2012). What’s wrong with the completion agenda: And what we can do about it. Liberal Education, 98(1), 8-17.

Three Greatest Challenges

1. Completion / attainment gap
2. Quality of learning
3. College affordability

Where To Go Next

• Institutions must seek a portfolio of solutions that address completion / attainment, affordability, and quality
• Solutions don’t have to be mutually exclusive:
  – Classroom-based teaching improvement: “Solid, Basic Formula”
  – Institutional learning initiatives: AAC&U’s 11 High Impact Practices
  – Meaningful, authentic assessment practices
  – Data-driven decision-making
  – Improved advising and clear pathways to degrees
  – Open Educational Resources (OERs)
• Institutions and Systems should develop branding strategies that make transparent how these initiatives work in tandem
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