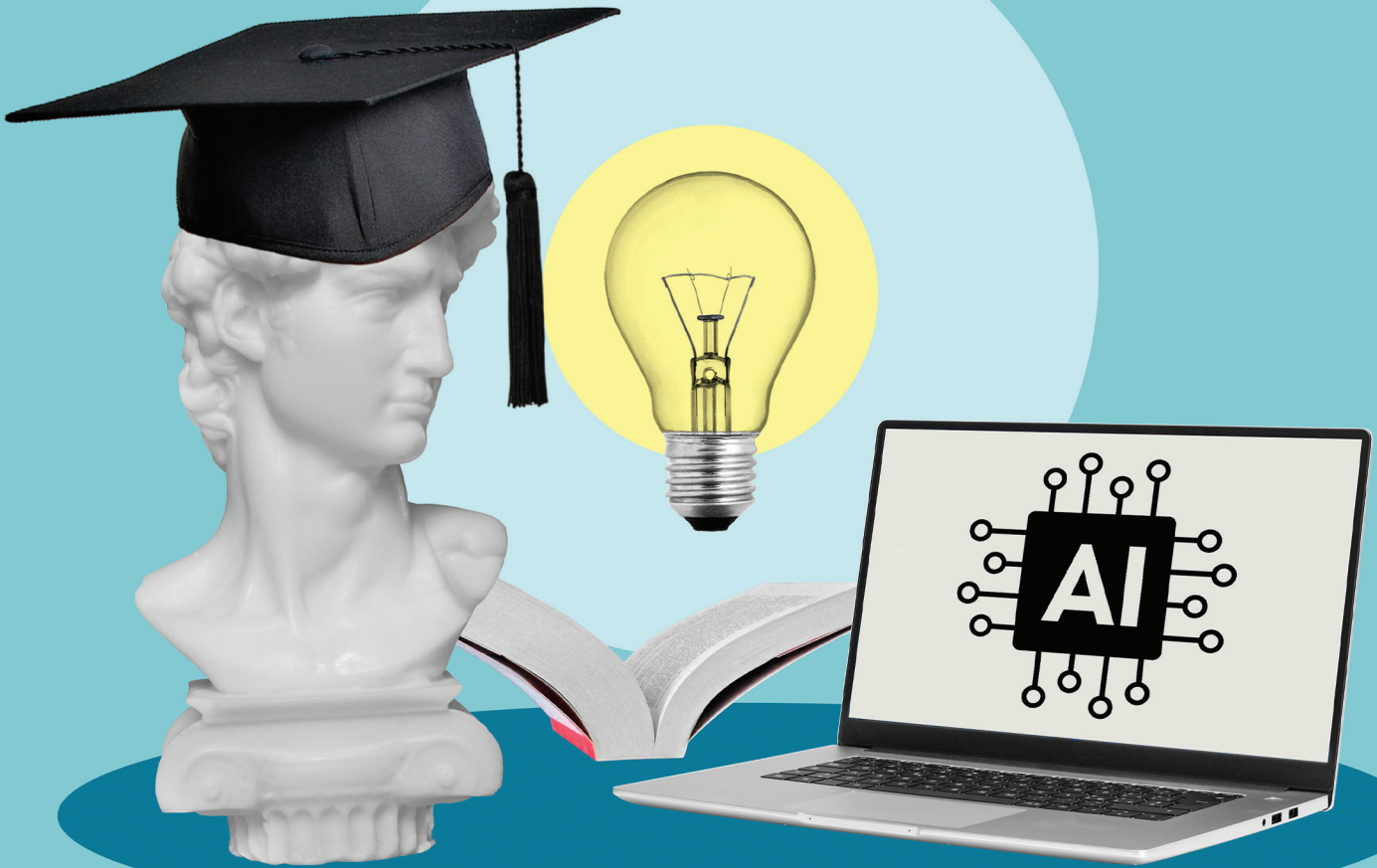


Supporting Higher Education Business Leaders

EnvisionED

Vol 8 | Issue 1



FRAMEWORKS

AI GOVERNANCE ON CAMPUS

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RESILIENCE IS THE STRATEGY

Higher education has never operated in a calm environment. Funding models shift. Demographics tighten. Public scrutiny intensifies. Technology accelerates faster than policy can keep up. And yet, institutions endure. Not because conditions are easy—but because resilience is built into their DNA.

Resilience in higher education is not about stubbornly defending the past. It is about adapting without abandoning mission. It is about confronting uncomfortable realities—enrollment pressures, budget constraints, AI disruption, workforce skepticism—and choosing to respond with clarity rather than fear.

The institutions that will lead the next decade are not the ones waiting for stability to return. Stability is not coming. The leaders who thrive will be those who build cultures capable of absorbing shock and continuing forward. They will diversify revenue streams, rethink program portfolios, strengthen industry partnerships, and invest in operational discipline. They will modernize infrastructure while protecting academic integrity. They will treat innovation as a responsibility, not a buzzword.

Resilience also requires intellectual courage. It means asking hard questions about value and outcomes. It means measuring what matters. It means aligning student success, research impact, and financial sustainability into a coherent strategy rather than operating in silos. In an era where every decision is scrutinized, transparency becomes strength.

There is another dimension to resilience that often goes unspoken: people. Faculty navigating new teaching technologies. Staff stretched thin by

operational demands. Students managing academic pressure and personal uncertainty. Institutions that invest in their people—training them, supporting them, listening to them—build the internal strength necessary to withstand external turbulence.

“The leaders who thrive will be those who build cultures capable of absorbing shock and continuing forward.”

The future of higher education will not be defined by the loudest headline or the latest disruption. It will be defined by institutions that remain steady, disciplined, and mission-driven while the landscape shifts around them. Resilience is not reactive. It is strategic. It is a long-term posture built on adaptability, fiscal prudence, innovation, and trust.

If higher education has proven anything over centuries, it is this: the core purpose endures. The form may change. Delivery models may evolve. Governance structures may adapt. But the commitment to knowledge, discovery, and societal advancement remains.

The next chapter will belong to institutions willing to face reality head-on, make bold but thoughtful decisions, and build systems that can bend without breaking. The future is not something to wait for. It is something to prepare for—with resilience as the foundation.

Enjoy this issue of EnvisionED magazine.

Warmest regards,
Kiyoshi Oka
EVP, GM, Marketing Strategy Unit
Canon U.S.A., Inc.

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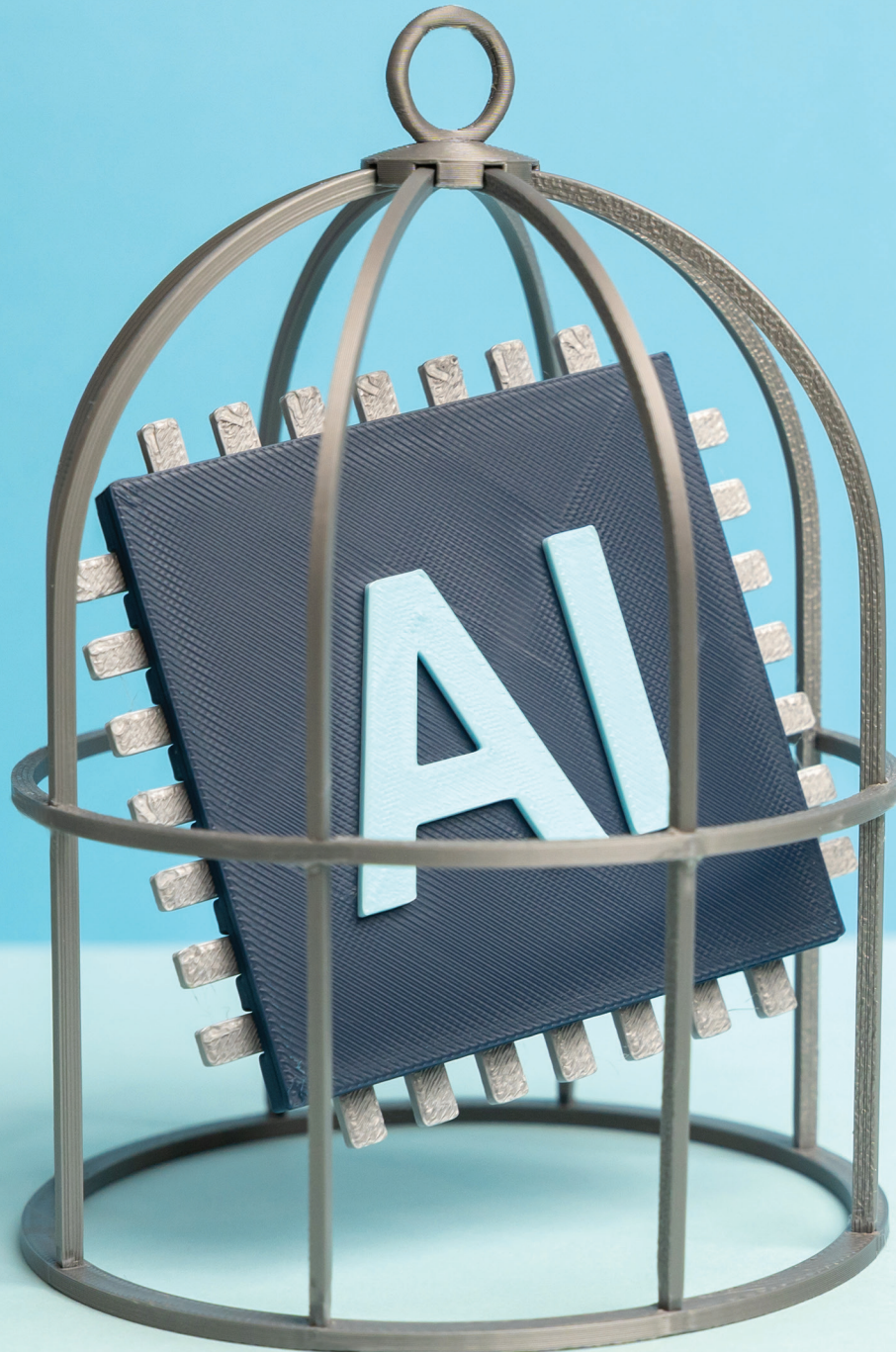
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FRAMEWORKS

AI GOVERNANCE ON CAMPUS





he first question Susana Rivera-Mills, Ph.D., often hears when the conversation turns to artificial intelligence (AI) is the simplest: Who’s in charge of it? For many universities, the answer is still evolving. AI tools continue to find their way into classrooms, research labs, marketing departments, admissions offices and student services.

Faculty experiment with generative tools to design assignments. Enrollment teams deploy chatbots to answer questions at all hours. Staff explore automation to streamline operations.

Yet the pace of adoption has often moved faster than the policies designed to guide it. At Aurora University in Illinois, where Dr. Rivera-Mills serves as President, the “who owns AI” question reveals something deeper about how institutions think about governance. “AI is not governed by our institution—it is governed within it.”

Rather than treat AI as a separate initiative or technology project, Aurora University has embedded it directly into its leadership and decision-making structures. The approach reflects a broader shift underway across higher education governance—one where the strategic framework allows campuses to embrace AI responsibly without sacrificing trust, transparency or academic integrity.

AI governance at Aurora University operates through a deliberately structured system designed to balance innovation with accountability. The framework begins with the AI @ AU Committee, a cross-functional oversight body established in spring 2024 to coordinate institutional strategy, policy development and implementation across multiple campus areas. Dr. Rivera-Mills says the committee helps ensure AI initiatives align with the university’s mission and values.

Working alongside the committee is the ITS Governance Group, a body composed of faculty, staff and departmental representatives tasked with evaluating proposed AI tools before they are introduced across campus. Every platform undergoes a security assessment and strategic review, and no tool moves forward without CIO approval.

While final authority rests with the university’s chief operating officer, governance does not stop there.

Responsibility for implementation is distributed across the institution through designated leadership roles tied to specific operational areas.

“We built guardrails into the approval process, not onto it. Every tool AU uses has been reviewed for data classification, security and compliance before it reaches faculty, staff or students.”

**— Susana Rivera-Mills, Ph.D.,
President, Aurora University**

Student-facing AI tools are overseen by the senior vice president for student success and the director of career services. Enrollment technologies fall under admissions leadership. Marketing-related applications are guided by communications leadership. Faculty use of AI in teaching and scholarship involves the provost, faculty senate and academic innovation teams.

“Centralized control slows innovation; ungoverned experimentation creates risk,” Dr. Rivera-Mills says. “The two-level model gives us institutional coherence without institutional rigidity. Governance is not designed to limit experimentation—it is designed to guide it.”

As AI tools become embedded across teaching, research and operations, universities are confronting how to support innovation while addressing concerns about data privacy, academic integrity and compliance.

At Aurora University, those safeguards are built directly into the governance process itself. Every AI platform must undergo a formal security and compliance review before it can be used. Tools are categorized based on the sensitivity of the data, giving users clear guidance about how they may be used.

Public-facing tools such as ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini may be used only with publicly available data, while institutional tools like Copilot 365 or Aurora’s own ChatGPT Edu environment are approved for internal data use under stricter security protocols. “We built guardrails into the approval process, not onto it,” Dr. Rivera-Mills says. “Every tool AU uses has been reviewed for data classification, security and compliance before it reaches faculty, staff or students.”

Aurora University’s AI Usage Guidelines address a wide range of issues, including academic integrity, intellectual property rights, data privacy, research compliance and bias awareness.

Faculty members receive practical support through the AU Faculty Guide for AI, which connects institutional policy to real classroom practice—from syllabus language to assignment design. “AI detection capability is one layer of academic integrity oversight, but it is not infallible,” Dr. Rivera-Mills says. “Human judgment remains central.”

A Mission-Aligned Strategy

At Montgomery College in Maryland, AI governance is also shaped by institutional values—particularly its commitment to student access and opportunity. “For us, artificial intelligence is an institutional responsibility anchored in our mission,” says Jermaine F. Williams, President of the Maryland-based university with five branches and centers.

The college’s governance structure unites leaders from academic affairs, information technology and other operational units to develop a comprehensive institutional strategy. The goal is to ensure that AI initiatives reflect the perspectives of faculty, staff, students and external partners.

“Artificial intelligence is more than a technology question for higher education—it is a question about impact,” Williams says. “It has the capability to interface with, and support, all facets of the organization and the work we do.”

For Montgomery College, governance is closely tied to questions of equity and institutional trust. “Our responsibility is to ensure that these

tools equitably expand opportunity for students and help advance the impact of faculty and staff,” Williams says, “while protecting the integrity and trust that define the academic enterprise.”

While governance frameworks often emphasize risk management, university leaders are equally focused on enabling responsible experimentation. “At Montgomery College, we encourage thoughtful experimentation with appropriate tools while ensuring that clear expectations guide how these tools are used,” Williams says.

“Our responsibility is to ensure that (AI) tools equitably expand opportunity for students and help advance the impact of faculty and staff.”

— **Jermaine F. Williams,**
President, Montgomery College

Policies for responsible use establish the guardrails, while faculty guidelines clarify how AI can be incorporated into coursework. Williams says the emphasis is not restriction, but understanding. “It’s an expectation that all members of the College community take reasonable steps to understand the capabilities and limitations of such technologies.”

Across the college, AI-enabled tools are already helping improve student engagement and access. The school recently enhanced its “Ask Monty” chatbot with artificial intelligence



capabilities that draw directly from current website information while automatically translating responses submitted in different languages.

“Technology like this allows prospective students and families to receive accurate information more quickly while improving access for multilingual communities,” Williams says.

AI is also supporting recruitment, advising and student success. CRM platforms enable more personalized outreach during admissions, while enterprise systems strengthen how student, financial and administrative data are managed.

As AI continues to reshape higher education, governance is emerging as a strategic leadership function rather than a regulatory exercise. Universities that build thoughtful frameworks are positioning themselves to innovate responsibly while protecting the trust, integrity and mission that define the academic enterprise. ■

THE 6 CORE PRINCIPLES OF AI GOVERNANCE

- 1 SHARED LEADERSHIP**
Oversight spans academic affairs, IT, faculty and administration.
- 2 TOOL REVIEW**
Artificial intelligence (AI) platforms undergo security, privacy and compliance checks before adoption.
- 3 DATA PROTECTION**
Tools are classified by data sensitivity to guide safe use.
- 4 FACULTY GUIDANCE**
Policies provide guardrails while preserving course-level autonomy.
- 5 AI LITERACY**
Training helps faculty, staff and students use AI responsibly.
- 6 FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORKS**
Governance models evolve as technologies change.

Source: Susana Rivera-Mills, Ph.D., Aurora University;
Jermaine F. Williams, Montgomery College

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE *reimagined*



Over the past several years, the definition of the “student experience” has evolved into a more holistic approach for today’s colleges and universities. The experience now encompasses everything that affects a student’s ability to access, persist in and ultimately complete their education.

One of the drivers for this reimagined college experience centers on the diverse makeup of today's student populations. Take Laredo College in Texas. The community college's student population includes traditional students coming directly from high school, dual credit students, working adults and individuals returning to education later in life. Many also are first-generation college students balancing work, family responsibilities and significant financial pressures.

“Delivering a modern student experience requires rethinking how they design systems, services and programs.”

**— Minita Ramirez, Ph.D.,
President, Laredo College**

For Laredo College President Minita Ramirez, Ph.D., those realities mean student experiences cannot be separated from broader social and economic circumstances students face. “This shift has led us to rethink how we support students. We've implemented initiatives such as a free meal plan for full-time students attending classes on campus, recognizing that basic needs like food security are directly tied to academic success. We've also strengthened advising, expanded student support services, and created clearer academic and career pathways.”



Laredo College approaches wellness holistically. Mental health support is critical but so are the basic needs that shape a student's ability to focus and succeed. Programs such as the college's free meal plan for full-time students recognize that hunger, financial insecurity and stress often intersect. Addressing those realities supports both mental health and academic performance.

"We're also expanding counseling resources and strengthening partnerships with local healthcare providers and community organizations to ensure students have access to additional support services," Dr. Ramirez says. "This allows us to extend the reach of our campus resources while maintaining sustainability."

Equally important is creating a campus culture where conversations about wellness are normalized. Faculty, advisors and student services professionals all play a role in helping students understand that seeking support is part of a healthy and successful educational journey.

One area where higher education still has work to do is fully aligning institutional structures with the realities of today's students. Many policies and systems were built around the assumption that students attend college full time, live on campus and have the financial stability to focus exclusively on their studies. That model does not reflect the experience of many community college students today.

Laredo College staff work intentionally to close that gap by addressing economic and academic barriers. Initiatives like the Palomino Pledge, which supports tuition affordability and programs such as the college's free meal plan for full-time students, are designed to ensure financial hardship does not interfere with educational pursuits.

Creating a campus culture where wellness conversations are normalized is essential. Faculty advisors and student services professionals help students understand that seeking support is part of a healthy educational journey. At the same time, the college is expanding workforce-aligned programs and modernizing curricula so graduates leave with skills that translate directly to employment.

"Delivering a modern student experience requires rethinking how they design systems, services and programs," Dr. Ramirez says. "When we place the lived experiences of students at the center of those decisions, we create pathways that not only allow access to higher education, but to complete it and transform lives and communities."

DESIGNED FOR ADULT LEARNERS

Many institutions are redesigning the student experience around traditional campus populations. Others are rethinking it through the lens of adult learners whose needs look very different from those of residential students.

Athens State University in Alabama is one example of this shift in action. As a public university designed specifically to serve transfer and adult learners, it focuses on helping students with prior college credit complete their bachelor's degrees and advance their careers through flexible programs aligned with workforce demand.

For Athens State President Catherine Wehlburg, Ph.D., the evolving definition of the student experience reflects the changing realities of today's learners. "Our definition has fundamentally shifted because our students are fundamentally different from the traditional residential model that has long shaped higher education."

Athens State primarily serves working adult learners—many with families, full-time jobs, prior college credit and significant life responsibilities. For them, the student experience is less about residence halls or football games and more about flexibility, relevance and meaningful support that fits into complex lives.

That shift has pushed institutions to rethink how the student journey is structured from start to finish. "In recent years, the student experience has become more holistic and more operational," Dr. Wehlburg says. "It now encompasses everything from the first inquiry through alumni career advancement. It is about responsiveness, personalization and workforce alignment."



For adult learners in particular, those expectations are closely tied to career mobility. Many enroll not just to earn a degree, but to accelerate their professional trajectory while continuing to manage work and family commitments. “We have intentionally embedded career development across the academic lifecycle,” Dr. Wehlburg says. “Students are connected with a career coach early in their program, not just near graduation. Curriculum is aligned with advanced workforce development priorities so learning outcomes map directly to employer expectations and emerging industry needs.”

Institutions are also investing in tools that simplify how students navigate academic and administrative processes. “Friction—whether in registration, advising or financial aid—

“We’re designing the student experience from the outside in by mapping the full student journey and aligning policies, communication and support systems around that pathway.”

**— Catherine Wehlburg, Ph.D.,
President, Athens State University**

can become a barrier to persistence,” Dr. Wehlburg says. “We’re investing in technology that creates a more seamless and intuitive experience across the student lifecycle.”

Ultimately, Dr. Wehlburg believes the future of the student experience lies in

breaking down the institutional silos that often shape how colleges operate internally. “Many institutions are still organized around internal structures rather than the student journey. We’re designing the student experience from the outside in by mapping the full student journey and aligning policies, communication and support systems around that pathway.”

As colleges and universities continue to evolve, the institutions that succeed will be those that design systems around the realities of the people they serve. When access, wellness, career readiness and institutional responsiveness work together, the student experience becomes more than a concept—it becomes a pathway to completion, opportunity and long-term impact. ■

KYOSEI CORNER

ENROLLMENT UP BUT...

- ▶ Overall college enrollment ticked up 1% in fall 2025 compared to the previous year, a gain of 187,000 students.
- ▶ Undergraduate enrollment drove overall growth with a 1.2% year-over-year increase, as community colleges and four-year public institutions saw 3% and 1.4% bumps, respectively.
- ▶ Undergraduate enrollment declined 1.6% at private four-year nonprofits and 2% at four-year for-profits.
- ▶ Other parts of the sector also dipped. Graduate enrollment sagged 0.3%, pushed by a 5.9% decline of international students in these programs, the clearinghouse found.



Source: <https://tinyurl.com/5d865knw>

PRESSURE MOUNTS

CONCEPT3D'S SECOND ANNUAL SALARY REPORT PROVIDES COMPENSATION TRENDS

Source: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3pfa5s>

\$75K

Median salary for higher ed marketers in 2025 (up from \$72k).

75%

Received a salary increase in the past year.

52%

Still say higher ed pay is not competitive with other industries.

74%

Have considered leaving higher education for another industry, citing compensation.

57%

Hybrid work leads at 57%, though demand for fully remote roles still outpaces availability.

WHERE DESIGN MEETS REALITY

Louisville students step into print



At University of Louisville, the gap between classroom learning and real-world application is not just being acknowledged; it is being actively closed. Recently, graphic design students from the Hite Institute of Art + Design took a meaningful step toward their professional futures. In preparation for their Portfolio Day, they visited the Canon Print & Mail Services Center on campus for an experience that went far beyond a typical tour.

This wasn't just passive observation. It was immersion in print. The students engaged directly with the people and technology responsible for bringing their ideas to life. They explored the print shop floor, handled production samples, and compared paper stocks, which gave them a tactile understanding of how design decisions translate into physical outcomes. In a world full of digital fatigue, that kind of hands-on exposure is a competitive advantage.

It was very cool to see how the students started to connect the dots. From file preparation to final output, the session walked students through the realities of production. They learned how choices in design impact cost, quality, and execution. And the introduction to the digital storefront added another layer, reinforcing how

modern print environments operate within a broader, tech-enabled ecosystem.

The visit concluded with an open Q&A and each student left with a Canon coupon code to support the creation of their own portfolios.

Portfolio Day at Louisville isn't just another academic milestone. It's a proving ground. At its core, Portfolio Day is an event where design students present their work to professionals, educators, or potential employers to receive feedback, refine their craft, and position themselves for what comes next. In many cases, it acts like a creative job fair that offers direct access to industry insight and real-world critique.

And that's exactly why experiences like this one matter. The University of Louisville isn't just preparing students to design. They're preparing them to deliver. They are equipping them with the practical knowledge, confidence, and context needed to succeed in a competitive, fast-moving industry.

In the end, great design isn't just about what you create. It is about how it shows up in the real world. ■



The New Equation of Decision-Making

Higher Ed leaders share how dynamics have changed

There was a time when decision-making in higher education followed a relatively predictable path—optimize costs, ensure quality, and execute efficiently. That model, while still foundational, is no longer sufficient for the environment institutions now face. Today's leaders are operating in a landscape defined by volatility, speed, and structural change. Technology is evolving faster than procurement cycles can keep up. Supply chains remain strained and unpredictable. Financial pressures are intensifying. And perhaps most significantly, institutions are being challenged to rethink not just how they operate—but how they position themselves for long-term relevance.



What emerged from this recent Higher Education Advisory Board discussion is a clear shift: decision-making is no longer purely operational—it is strategic, adaptive, and increasingly tied to risk, partnerships, and institutional identity. From the tension between centralized and local control, to the growing influence of AI, to the need to align operations with broader institutional strategy, today's leaders are navigating a far more complex equation.



The following perspectives highlight how these dynamics are reshaping the way decisions are made and what it now takes to move an institution forward.



Carmen Gonzalez, University at Buffalo:

At SUNY, in general, there's a big effort to look at how the SUNY central procurement organization can provide better service and create better contracts for all the SUNY schools.

Working on it is complicated because it can run into some of our local initiatives where we're trying to leverage our own spend and work on our own relationships with suppliers. But when things are driven from the top, it becomes a big dynamic in our work.

“You can't cut your way out of a change that higher ed is facing today.”

— Cody Powell, Miami University

I think the other thing is that technology is changing so rapidly. Negotiating with all the big tech companies is becoming challenging. And it is not just software. Some of the hardware companies are consistently trying to raise their prices and it causes a lot of strain on the supply chain.

$$\log_a AB = \log_a A + \log_a B$$

Glenn Richey, Auburn: I think Carmen rang a lot of the bells there. The old model was very operational oriented. Very focused on optimization, cost, and quality delivery. However, it's kind of moved from that operational optimization to more strategic risk management. In other words, we now think in terms of the risks of investment and the resiliency of the partners' ability to deliver.

Another thing to note is that speed's always important in the supply chain business. But we've kind of gotten people addicted to speed, which probably is not a great thing. I think consistency is just as important. Being able to get consistent supply is critical.

Gilberto Carles Barraza, Notre Dame: We have been using AI for efficiencies in our processes and that is helping us in so many ways. We are utilizing AI in some of our processes, and it is allowing us to review our hiring needs more closely. We no longer hire someone just because they need to be replaced. We have made a shift in thinking so that we make sure that each department has the right team to support the university.

We are trying to be much more intentional in our work. We want to always pay attention and be flexible when the markets and indexes change. And while any procurement organization follows a sourcing methodology, we're always trying to look at the market and adapt.



“Working on it is complicated because it can run into some of our local initiatives where we’re trying to leverage our own spend and work on our own relationships with suppliers.

— Carmen Gonzalez, University at Buffalo

Cody Powell, Miami University:

From 2008 to 2015, our focus was on efficiencies in cutting operations.

But, you can't cut your way out of a

change that higher ed is facing today. So, we developed a strategy on becoming a national brand and we must ensure that strategy is operationalized moving forward.

We must find partners in that context. For example, we have aligned with providers that offer career and tech ed and it has opened pathways not only for future students but for a lot of federal funding. And that means we have to grow beyond the walls of our campus. To be able to provide a meaningful experience in today's landscape is the biggest dynamic at play.

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