



Designing a Modern Student Experience

A Framework to Bridge the Gap
Between "Customer" Expectations
and Campus Reality

EAB Technology



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Bringing the Modern Experience to Life

1

Competing in the Age of Experience

The line between “student” and “customer” continues to blur, and most institutions find themselves looking for new ways to define and communicate their value. As institutions reimagine their student experiences in response to these consumer pressures, out-of-industry exemplars provide novel inspiration for innovation.

Heightened Expectations in the Post-Vaccine Economy

Pandemic Experience Exacerbated Students' Higher Ed Discontents

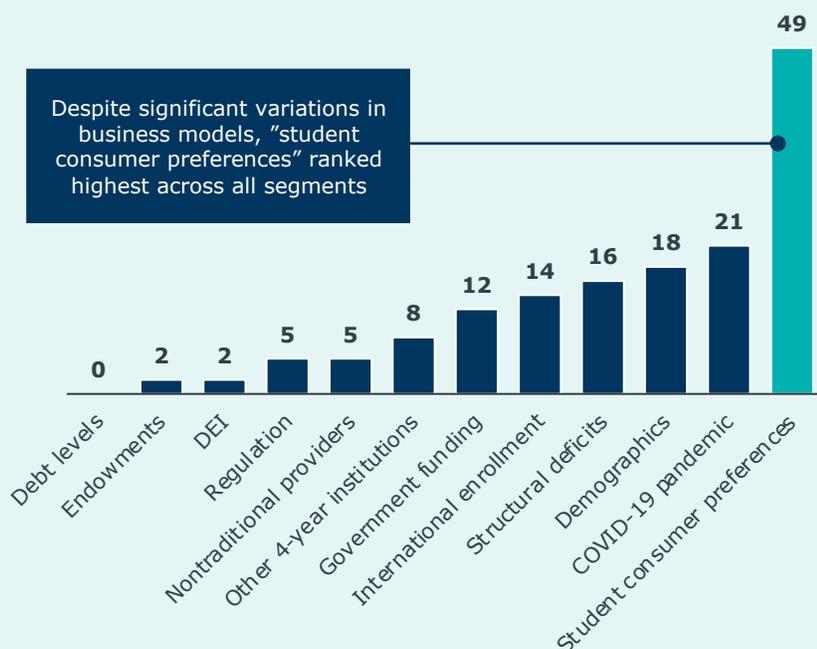
As higher education continues its protracted recovery from the jolts and pivots of the coronavirus pandemic, college and university leaders are faced with the challenge of a lifetime: how to build back better as an industry—and seize the opportunity to optimize their offerings for the students of tomorrow. During the depths of the tumult, students' voices became increasingly critical (and increasingly loud) regarding the disappointments of contemporary higher education that preceded the pandemic's onset. For some students, remote instruction was a big step forward, with colleges finally providing the flexibility for students to balance schoolwork with other commitments. But for others, the new modalities were such a deviation from the on-campus experience that they wanted their money back: "tuition refunds" trended on petition website Change.org in 2020.

In the business office, the focus on modernizing student services to respond to these concerns is an existential quandary. In EAB's 2021 Business Transformation Survey, CFOs and other business leaders ranked "student consumer preferences" as the greatest threat to institutional business models across segments. Similarly, shifts in the surrounding economy are putting pressure on institutions to prove return on investment to tomorrow's students. In the lucrative tech world, for example, employers increasingly tout their willingness to "train on the job," with 15% of IBM's employees now joining the firm without a college degree.

To meet this moment—and emerge from it stronger, with compelling "consumer" value—executives must reflect on students' mixed emotions and begin the work of architecting a modern experience fit for the classes of tomorrow.

"Consumer" Behaviors Pose Greatest Perceived Risk to Today's Higher Ed Business Model and Strategy

EAB's Business Transformation Survey Asked Business and Finance Leaders to Identify the Top 3 Risks Facing Their Institution¹



78%

of Gen Z say mobiles are the most important devices for accessing the Internet

40%

of Gen Z say they are easily influenced by other people's opinions; they are 17% more likely to say this than the global average

65%

of Gen Z say to get real value for their money is either "important" or "very important" when deciding where to purchase a product

64%

of customers expect to receive real-time assistance regardless of the customer service channel they use

1) n=113; graph represents total number of institutions identifying a specific risk within their Top 3 risks.

Source: Change.org; "Apple, IBM and Google don't care anymore if you went to college," Quartz, August 2018; "The Youth of the Nations: Global Trends Among Gen Z," GlobalWebIndex, 2019; "Uniquely Generation Z: What Brands Should Know about Today's Youngest Consumers," IBM Institute for Business Value and the National Retail Federation, 2018; "The Omnichannel Customer Service Gap," ZenDesk, 2013; EAB interviews and analysis.

Innovators Look out of Industry for Inspiration

Higher Ed Has Much to Learn from Leaders in Experience Management

When it comes to designing student experiences, the forces that shape what students expect are at work long before they arrive on campus. The bar is now set by consumer industries, and it's up to today's higher ed leaders to bring our industry—known for its more sluggish approach to change—up to modern standards.

From unique content recommendations to seamless, multichannel customer service interactions, today's consumers—who are today's students—increasingly value personalized experiences.

A recent survey of Gen Z shopping behavior found some of the most appealing shopping technology innovations revolve around personalization:

What new shopping technologies would you most like to see in the future?

48%

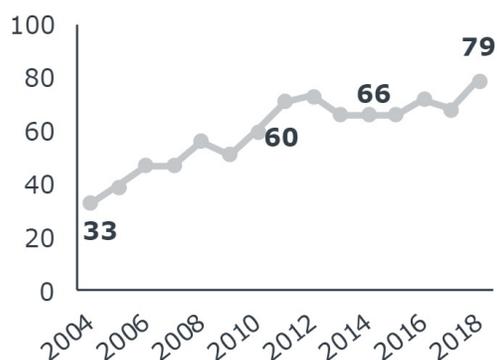
Tools that allow me to customize products for myself

42%

Ability to design unique products and create on-site with a 3D printer

Individuals Seek Out Personalization

*Normalized Google Search Ranking of "For Me"*¹



-  What **running shoes** are best for me?
-  Which **dog** is right for me?
-  What is the best **haircut** for me?

1) Data snapshot taken from April of each reported year. Data represents "for me" as percentage of all Google searches, indexed to 100.

“

When I think about where we need to be, **I don't care about other schools**—I'm looking at the real leaders in digital. **I'm looking at companies like Disney.**

And then I ask my team: **How do we bring that kind of magic to the educational experience?**

CIO

Large Public University

”

As leaders begin the work of intentionally redesigning institutional experiences to meet these demands, some are turning to consumer industries to inspire their innovation.

For the Chief Information Officer at one large public institution on the west coast, there is unlikely inspiration to be had in the business of making magic. He sees the Disney organization's focus on leveraging digital technologies to create enchanting, compelling, and integrated experiences across a suite of physical and online products as synonymous with the demands of tomorrow's higher education.

"For residence-based institutions especially," he says, reflecting on his own campus, "we are essentially running a theme park. We can do a lot of things digitally, but place matters, and face-to-face education matters to us."

For Disney, their most recent experiential revolution took place at a time when—like higher education—guests grew disillusioned with the theme park's value relative to the exploding cost of attendance.

How Disney Keeps the Magic Alive

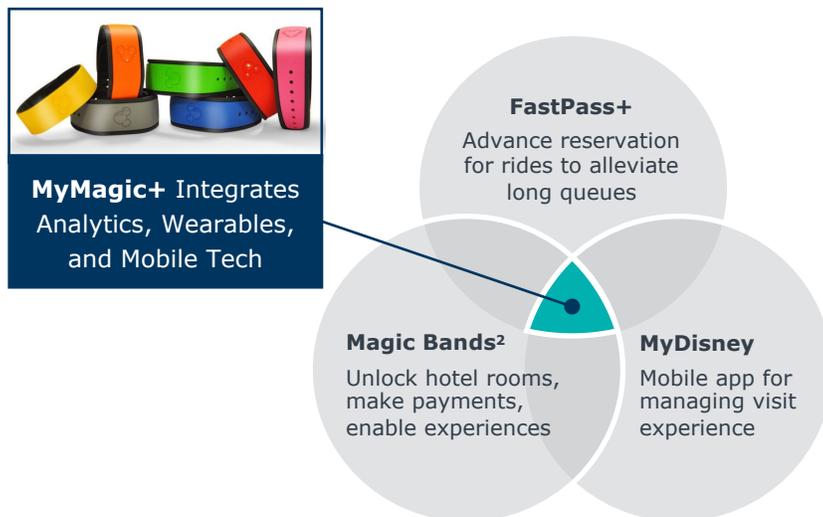
A Blend of Physical and Digital Underpins the Brand’s Enchanting Experiences

With ticket prices climbing and customer satisfaction waning at the turn of the 21st century, Disney initiated their Next Generation Experience project to explore how emerging technologies could help them transform the customer experience through greater personalization and more connected services.

Across 2014, Disney spent more than a billion dollars on new digital capabilities to enhance customer relationships and create magical experiences through personalized, customized interactions. Through investments in data and analytics, wearables, and mobile technology, the resulting **MyMagic+** experience blends physical and digital infrastructure and uses unique wristbands to support customer-centric interactions across Disney’s various customer touchpoints.

These wristbands—called Magic Bands—are at the heart of the new Disney vacation experience. They are fitted with RFID¹ chips that store data input by customers on the MyDisney Experience website (e.g., credit card information, itinerary details). The bands can be tapped at readers throughout Disney World to pay for meals, check into hotels, and even store a catalog of photos taken on rides. To make this work, Disney’s customer experience investment included training over 70,000 employees and equipping more than 28,000 hotel rooms with radio frequency-reading technology.

Today, **customers’ vacation experiences now adapt around them**, with characters greeting guests by name and noting special occasions with customized greetings—all while the theme parks see reduced ride wait times and higher customer volume.



Disney’s Framework for Action

Disney created the Next Generation Experience project to address four core objectives at the intersection of customers and emerging tech:

- 1 **Drive Operational Efficiency** with a data-driven approach
- 2 **Transform the Customer Experience** with analytics and wearable technology
- 3 **Increase Personalization** with connected products
- 4 **Enhance Interactivity Across Channels** with digital tools

\$1B

Investment to support RFID¹ technology in physical spaces

30%

Reduction in guest wait times for popular rides at Disney World

5K+

Increase guests that can be admitted to the park daily

90%

of Disney guests rate the new experience as “very good” or “excellent”

1) Radio Frequency Identification: technology that uses electromagnetic fields to track tags on objects.
2) MyMagic+ Wristbands image source: Disney Press Kit.

Source: Capgemini, *Disney: Making Magic Through Digital Innovation*, 2017; “Disney’s MyMagic+: Transforming the Theme Park Experience,” *Harvard Business School Student Perspectives*, April 2017; EAB interviews and analysis.

Designing the Student Experience of Tomorrow

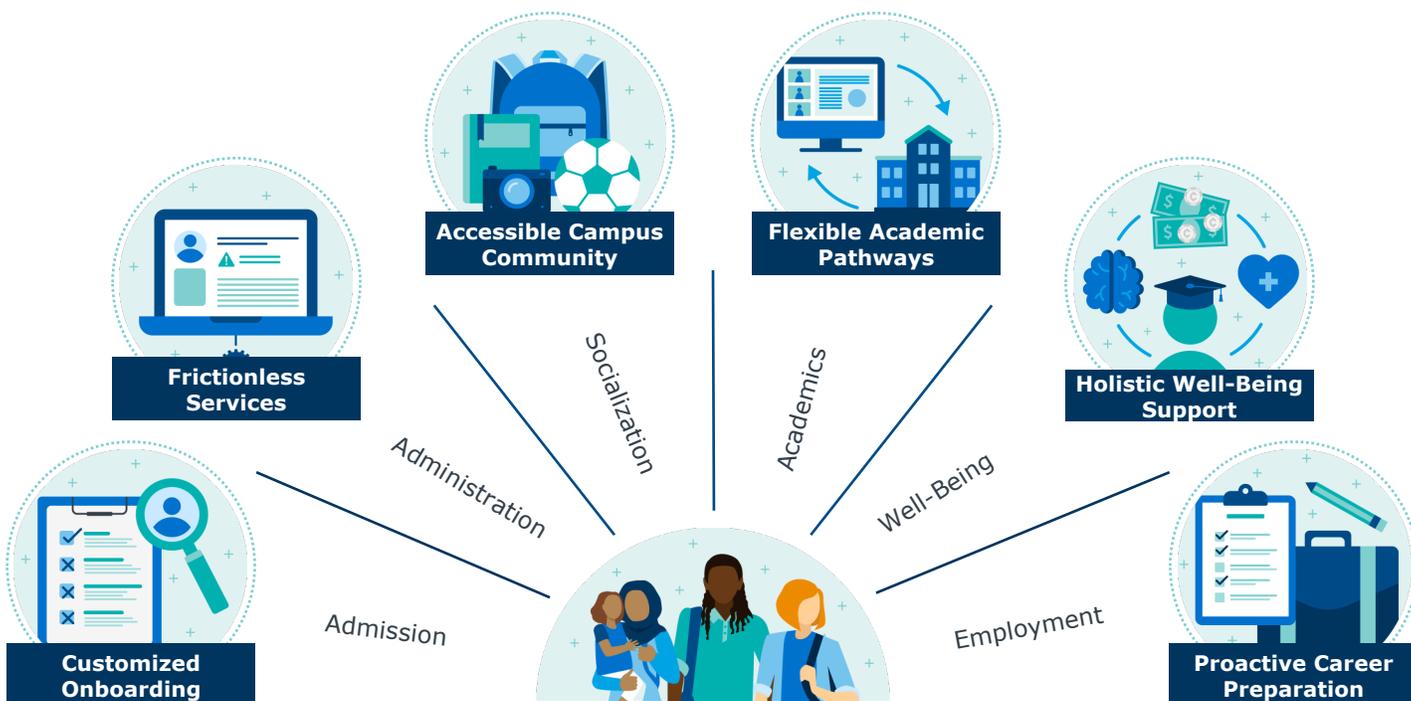
Six Opportunities for Ideation and Differentiation

Colleges are not quite theme parks—and most certainly don’t have \$1 billion lying around to invest. But they are multimillion-dollar organizations with complex offerings that will increasingly span the physical and digital worlds.

In the context of the *student* experience, higher education leaders must apply “magical thinking” to the growing range of intersecting needs and challenges that face the students of today. Demographics are shifting, nontraditional is the new norm, mental health is in crisis, and learning flexibility is a growing demand. Therefore, institutions should be thinking holistically about the student experience and seeking to understand how better efficiency and more customized support at high-impact touchpoints can enable frictionless progress through the academic journey—as well as improve student outcomes by reducing their peripheral burdens.

What Do Today’s Students Expect, and How Can You Deliver It?

Six hallmarks of a modern student experience



Three imperatives to guide your work redesigning the student experience



Center equity and promote anti-racism



Embrace ongoing digital transformation



Foster cross-campus collaboration

About this white paper

As your leadership team looks to apply “magical thinking” in an intentional redesign of student experiences, this framework can help you **organize your efforts** and **rally your teammates** around important guiding principles. Use the examples profiled in the following pages to **inspire discussion** about what the modern student experience will look like at your school—and **prioritize initiatives** that will deliver outsize impact for your institution.

2

Six Hallmarks of the Modern Student Experience

Individual students will place outsize value on different aspects of their experience, depending on their unique definition of success in their engagement with your institution. Modernization initiatives will have the greatest impact when focused on the hallmark or hallmarks that cause the most significant disruptions for your students today.

Customized Onboarding

What if every incoming student knew you understood them as an individual with unique interests and goals?



Students Are Willing to Share for Personalization¹

62%

of high school sophomores (and 57% of juniors) say they want personalized content that identifies them by name or area of interest

91%

of prospective students provide some personal information when asked (44% provide all the information they're asked for)

<50%

of students say that college websites they visited asked them for personal info (e.g., name, email, area of interest)

WHAT IT MEANS

Customized interactions that take into account students' goals, interests, and preferences when welcoming them to school

Personalized and customized content represents table stakes in today's consumer economy. At every turn, tracked online behavior funnels unique recommendations for products and content to students in every other aspect of their lives—and they expect this tailoring from colleges and universities too. Each interaction you have with students as they start their college journey should center the individual student, their interests, and the unique value that your institution can provide to them.

Traditional orientation revolves around one-to-many informational sessions. How can you restructure the experience to help students articulate their goals and hit the ground running? Personalized onboarding creates an opportunity to collect from students any information that should inform their first advising appointments, course registration, and more.

Is your institution set up to harness the wealth of information students provide to build interactions that speak directly to every student as an individual?

“

“Orientation is ‘old school’; onboarding is ‘new school.’ Orientation is a one-time, cohort-level program where students are treated the same. ...Onboarding is a **continuous, individualized journey** that begins upon deposit and ends when the student meets a goal of being **successfully integrated into the community.**”

Kim Reid

Eduventures Principal Analyst at ACT | NRCCUA

”

¹ N=15,291 high school students surveyed between late Feb. and mid-March of 2021. Among respondents, 91% plan to go to college after high school and 21% will be first-generation students; 40% of respondents are high school seniors, 40% are high school juniors, and 20% are high school sophomores; 62% are female, 35% are male, and 3% identify otherwise. Household income is evenly distributed between low, medium, and high, and students are evenly distributed across the four main regions of the country.

Source: EAB Enrollment Services 2021 Survey of High School Students; “Orientation vs. Student Onboarding: Four Questions for Student Success,” Encoura, January 2020; EAB interviews and analysis.

Interest-Based Exploration Kick-Starts College Journey

York Technical College Puts Student Interests at the Center of Onboarding



Personal plans help maintain momentum

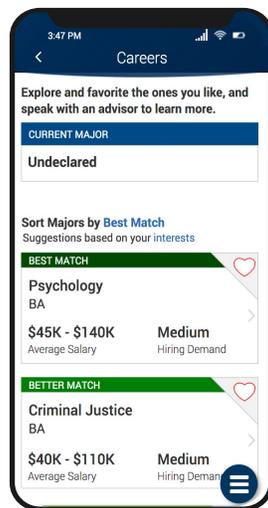
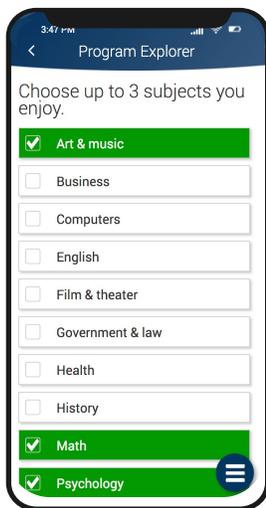
2x

Higher likelihood that students re-enroll if they've created an academic plan

4.4%

Increase in graduation rates at York Tech after improving onboarding and academic planning

Program Explorer highlights potential majors that match students' goals and interests



Student success leadership added the Program Explorer into York Tech's College 101 curriculum during onboarding.

At community colleges—where many admitted students drop off before enrolling—onboarding is a high-stakes opportunity. For York Tech, adding tech-enabled academic planning to customize onboarding set every new student on a course for success.

York Tech partnered with EAB's [Navigate](#) to overhaul their onboarding process. Students can now download an app that prompts them at key points and lets them complete tasks such as bursar hold resolution directly from their phones.

The app also includes a Program Explorer: students take a survey that captures their preferred activities, lifestyle preferences, academic goals, and career aspirations. The Program Explorer then generates a customized list of best-fit major recommendations combined with job and career data provided by O*NET¹ and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Students can save their favorite results, which advisors can then view in a student's profile.



Key Recommendations for Modernizing Your Onboarding Experience

- **Automate the collection of student data**

Simplify collection of personal information and preferences from your incoming students
- **Prioritize knowledge management**

Implement content tagging to help match your offerings with student-specified interests
- **Invest in workflow optimization tools**

Allocate resources to support the delivery of individualized experiences at scale

1) Occupational Information Network.
2) Image source: EAB.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Frictionless Services

What if your students could complete administrative tasks quickly and easily—from anywhere?



Administrators See the Writing on the Wall

89%

of business leaders foresee greater automation of campus services and administrative processes¹

70%

of students would urge their university to change and review its digital strategy for student administration²

67%

of students agree with the statement “it’s frustrating to have to sign into more than one app to get the info I need”

WHAT IT MEANS

User-friendly and digital-first processes that minimize the burden of admin tasks and refocus student attention on the educational experience

Every moment students spend filling in forms and searching for information is a distraction from the student experience. The more friction involved in daily admin, the more likely a student is to become overwhelmed, distracted, and disengaged from their primary educational focus. For students, what staff may perceive as the momentary frustration of switching between apps or tracking down log-in information accumulates to create a negative experience. A UK survey found that more than 80% of students would be more satisfied with university life if their institution introduced a single digital system for administration.

As the one-touch “Amazon experience” becomes more pervasive outside of higher ed—and with on-demand answers now read directly from smart devices—colleges and universities must modernize their processes with the student experience in mind. This means not simply digitizing analog processes but completely reimagining administrative interactions to meet shifting expectations with new digital capabilities.

“

“It doesn’t take much for a student to feel alienated. **We need to be excellent operationally, so students can’t use operational problems as a reason to leave our institution.**”

Mike Coyne

Vice President of Finance and Administration, Susquehanna University

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1) N=122 business and finance leaders across the United States and Canada surveyed in August 2020.
2) From a UK market research survey of higher ed students in nine global markets.

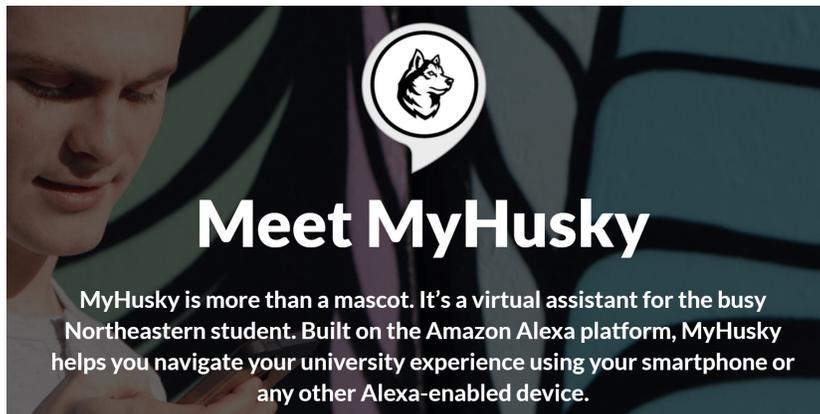
Source: EAB Strategy Transformation Survey, 2020; “[Our research finds majority of students want universities to review their digital strategies.](#)” DJS Research, 2016; “Connected Student Report,” Salesforce.org; EAB interviews and analysis.

On-Demand Assistant Eases Burden of Student Admin

Northeastern University's MyHusky Makes Admin as Easy as Saying, "Hey, Alexa"



Northeastern presents MyHusky as a tool to navigate the entire university experience¹



MyHusky can answer 300 common questions²

Balances, Dues, Financials	Do I have any library fees?	How many Dining dollars do I have?
	Have I been awarded financial aid?	How many Husky dollars do I have?
	What is my balance?	How many Laundry bucks do I have?
	When will my aid disburse?	

Excerpt of questions MyHusky can address

Northeastern University introduced a campus virtual assistant, MyHusky, to provide personalized and efficient answers to students' most pressing questions.

Built on the Amazon Alexa platform, MyHusky links a student's University accounts to the Alexa app. Once the feature is enabled and students opt in to which data they want the app to access, they can ask their phone or any Alexa-enabled device questions by saying, "Alexa, ask MyHusky..."

In addition to the voice-activated features, MyHusky also includes a chat interface.

Today, MyHusky answers over 300 different administrative questions such as "Do I have any library fees?", "When is my FAFSA due?", and more.

Key Recommendations for Modernizing Your Administrative Experience

- Map current experiences**
Thoroughly examine each process from start to finish from a student's perspective to identify key friction points
- Redesign, then digitize**
Using your experience mapping, design the ideal experience and then digitize it to avoid creating digital versions of existing roadblocks
- Fund digital integrations**
The decision trees behind chat bots and other automations rely on connected (and high-quality, well-maintained) data

1) Image source: <https://myhusky.northeastern.edu/>
2) Image source: <https://myhusky.northeastern.edu/questions-for-myhusky/>.

Source: "Meet MyHusky," "Questions for MyHusky," "How to Enroll," Northeastern University website; EAB interviews and analysis.

Accessible Campus Community

What if all your students felt welcome and connected from the moment they enrolled?



Belonging Impacts Enrollment and Retention

75%

of students said a feeling of belonging strongly influenced their decision to enroll at an institution

13%

of students drop out of college because of poor social fit

34%

of students who feel they've had a fair/poor university experience say the top reason is "feeling disconnected from other students"

WHAT IT MEANS

Digitally facilitated interactions to help students find their place on campus through student clubs, athletic teams, peer mentorships, and more

Starting college is a monumental upheaval in most students' personal and social lives. If they don't feel a sense of belonging when they start school, the ripple effects are felt not only in academics but in all facets of their experience.

Clubs, athletic teams, mentoring programs, and other activities play a huge role in creating a sense of belonging—even before a student sets foot on campus. By presenting opportunities for students to build meaningful and direct connections in established campus communities, colleges and universities can facilitate interactions that help students navigate their transition and build institutional peer networks.

Over time, institutions should aim to analyze student preferences and interactions to identify which activities positively impact retention and success. For forward-thinking colleges and universities, helping students find their place is no longer a secondary goal to academic achievement—it's a recruitment and retention imperative.

“

“The call to ‘get out there and find your place’ might be helpful to nudge students out the door, but it sets up an expectation that it’s my responsibility to find my own belonging. ...The responsibility lies with communities for welcoming students and weaving them into the fabric of campus life. **When a student feels alone and adrift, she is not the one who failed. Her campus community has failed her.**”

Lisa M. Nunn

Director, Center for Educational Excellence, University of San Diego

”

Source: "Connected Student Report," Salesforce.org; "College Dropout Rates," Educationdata.org, June 2021; "[College Belonging](#)"; author discusses her new book on first-generation students and how they navigate college life, "Inside Higher Ed," February 2021; EAB interviews and analysis.

Deliver the Right Match at the Right Time

How the University of Chicago’s Proactive Peer Mentoring Reduced Summer Melt



Peer mentor program yields high engagement

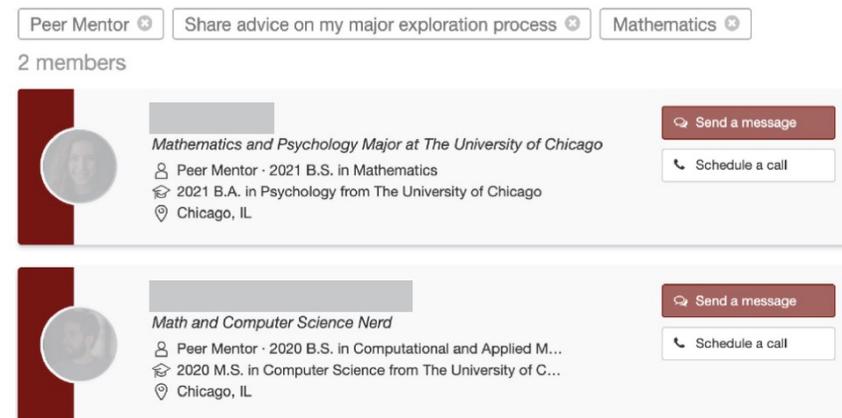
2/3

of incoming students signed up for a peer mentor within 30 days of the program launching

29%

Reduction in summer melt between 2018 and 2019 (when the mentoring program launched)

Peer mentor portal suggests connections based on point-in-time needs²



- 1) Wisr is an innovative platform that enables authentic peer-to-peer interactions and allows schools to create vibrant, virtual communities.
- 2) Image source: Case study: “Leveraging peer mentorship and a new orientation approach to impact student retention and sense of belonging,” Wisr.

After noting incoming students wanted opportunities to connect with peers prior to arriving on campus, UChicago developed a new mentor program to connect first-year and transfer students to upper-class peer mentors. Using Wisr¹ as a digital hub, UChicago created dedicated space for discussion threads, file uploads, event postings, and other content.

Peer mentors built profiles that included academic and professional experience as well as specific ways they could be helpful, like attending a campus event. Wisr’s real-time matching algorithm made suggested connections based on shared areas of interest and needs indicated in the app. Students could filter by any of these parameters to seek help directly in a real-time chat interface.

Key Recommendations for Modernizing Your Engagement Experience




Integrate activity data

Create data infrastructure for success staff to access reliable data on a student’s extracurricular activities



Personalize opportunities

Tailoring communications and options conveys that your institution cares about a student’s success and unique experience



Scale peer mentorship with a basic curriculum

Provide templates for advice on specific topics that peer mentors can share with a “pod” of freshmen

Flexible Academic Pathways

What if your students could access the right learning experiences at the right time to accomplish their goals—throughout their careers?



Students Are Ready to Learn in New Formats Post-Pandemic

2x

Higher likelihood that students reference poor quality of online instruction as a negative, rather than the online medium itself¹

80%

of UK university students said they want their courses to include some degree of online learning post-COVID

60B

Views on #LearnOnTikTok in 2020, when instructional tools arrived on the platform

WHAT IT MEANS

Teaching, learning, and assessment with flexibility—including hybrid modalities, manageable transfer pathways, and appropriate credentials

Questions about the sustainability of the traditional four-year bachelor's degree aren't new. Prior to the pandemic, many colleges and universities were redesigning programs to be more flexible and accommodate nontraditional learners but often were limited to continuing education or other separate units. With the pandemic-induced move to remote instruction, increased flexibility became the norm—and some students don't want to go back.

As "nontraditional" learners continue to dominate demographics, colleges and universities must think outside the traditional delivery structure to redesign academic pathways around student needs. Flexible pathways won't replace degrees—but they will make it easier for students to accomplish their own educational goals. This means setting up structures to let students switch back and forth between online and face-to-face learning, transfer credits, pause their studies, get just-in-time training, and more.

“

“While the typical educational path may once have looked like four years of college followed perhaps by a few years of graduate school, very soon, the idea of a ‘typical education’ may be obsolete. ...Instead, students choose what kind of education or training is right for them as they need it. ...**The path to higher education is becoming a choose-your-own-adventure.**”

Rebecca Bakken
Harvard Extension School blog

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1) Based on analysis of 130+ student newspapers.

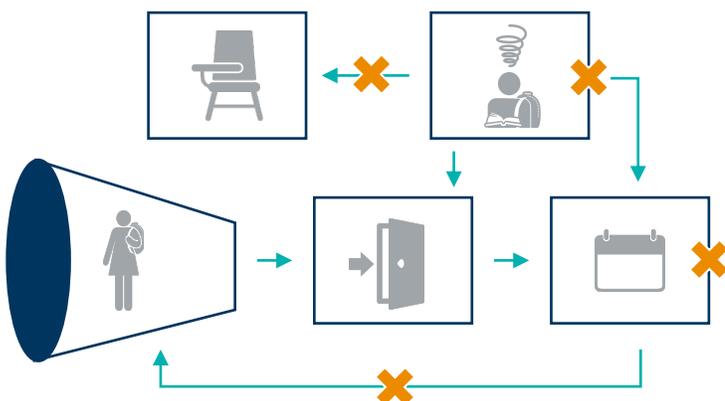
Source: “[Students’ experiences of study during COVID-19 and hopes for future learning and teaching](#),” WONKHE & Pearson, February 2021; “[Digital Learning Tools Arrive on TikTok](#),” *TikTok*, January 2021; “[Lifelong Learning: The Evolving Future of Higher Education](#),” Harvard Extension School blog, January 2020; EAB interviews and analysis.

Taking on Credit Transfer as an Equity Issue

Four Universities in Southern Wisconsin Partner to Ease Transfer Requirements



Region-wide process mapping reveals a need for data sharing and clearer academic pathways



- How many students transfer from 4-year to 2-year due to the difference in tuition?
- How does curricular variance impact 2x2 pathways?
- How many steps does it take to register?
- Which transfer policies have equity implications?

Students of color are more likely to begin their journey at a two-year institution, and transferring credits earned at these institutions is harder than it needs to be. Recognizing this, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Carthage College, and University of Wisconsin-Parkside joined forces to make it easier for students to move successfully between institutions.

Leaders recently engaged in a collaborative design thinking workshop to begin crafting a new transfer experience. The design thinking framework encourages empathy and iteration—with the ultimate goal of a transfer process that is easy to follow and simplifies the path to a degree.

Streamlining transfer pathways is one part of these institutions' efforts to close regional equity gaps as part of [EAB's Moon Shot for Equity](#).

Key Recommendations for Modernizing Your Transfer Experience



First, Understand Student Needs

Student needs must dictate innovations in academic pathways. *Ask yourself:* What student segments do you serve? What aspects of the current learning experience are a challenge for your current students? What other student segments could you serve if you structured the learning experience in new ways?

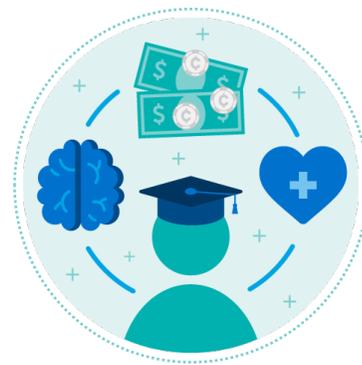


Then, Design Pathways

Based on desired student outcomes, determine the most relevant skills and qualifications (which may include a degree), and design pathways with different levels of engagement to suit.

Holistic Well-Being Support

What if your students felt empowered to bring their whole selves to school?



Students Need Support for Mental Health and Basic Needs

36%

of students experience food insecurity

15x

Higher likelihood food-insecure students will fail a class

60%

of prospective students said that mental health services are a very important factor when selecting a school¹

WHAT IT MEANS

Support staff, resources, and services that attend to students' personal needs across mental, physical, and financial well-being

There's no doubt COVID-19 exacerbated an already alarming campus mental health crisis: A survey by nonprofit Active Minds found 80% of college students said their mental health was negatively impacted. In addition to providing high-demand mental health services, colleges must support students who come to campus experiencing basic needs insecurities that hinder their ability to study and thrive at school. And given the widespread—and growing—need, institutions must find ways to provide services at scale.

Beyond higher ed, the pandemic accelerated use of virtual well-being resources, from online therapy to meditation apps. More than ever, students expect fast and easy access to these kinds of resources.

Supporting the whole student means addressing mental, physical, and financial health. And with parents and families increasingly asking about the availability of well-being resources during the admission process, colleges and universities can't afford to fall behind in providing holistic support.

“

“Well-being is used frequently as a synonym for ‘mental health.’ **Theorizing well-being in a way that feels both relevant and measurable begins with looking at what people need to thrive in their lives.**”

Chief Wellness Officer
Four-Year Public US University

”

Source: Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., Schneider, J., Hernandez, A., and Cady, C., "[Still Hungry and Homeless in College](#)," 2018; Dubick, J., Mathews, B., and Cady, C., "Hunger on Campus: The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students," 2016, retrieved from http://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger_On_Campus.pdf; "[The Growing Importance of Mental Health in University Choice](#)," *educations.com*, June 2020; "[COVID-19 Impact on College Student Mental Health](#)," Active Minds, April 2020; EAB interviews and analysis.

1) N=1,400 students from six continents.

Scaling Student Support with a Well-Being Hub

How the Cal State System Created a One-Stop Shop for Student Well-Being



High engagement beyond just health content

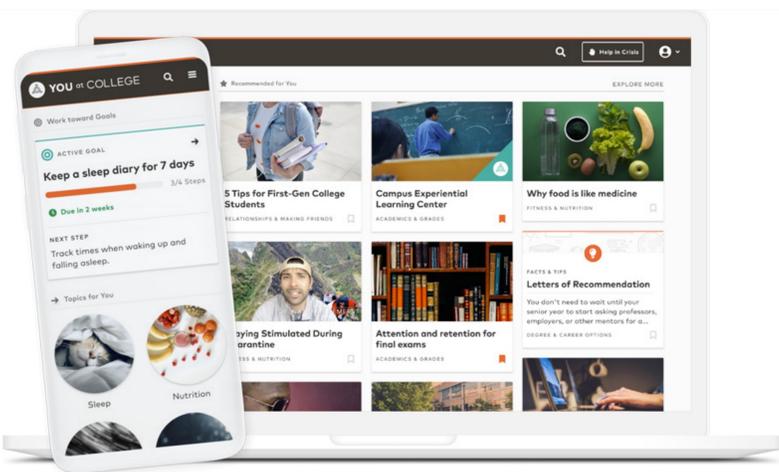
46%

of students at one pilot campus created an account within the first six weeks

65%

of users connected with material to support mental or physical health, but only 30% were primarily seeking health content

Personalized feed and active goals provide individual well-being support²



1) You @ College is a digital platform that provides personalized well-being content and resource recommendations.
2) Image source, [You @ College](#).

The CSU system began a two-year pilot of a well-being portal as part of their Basic Needs Initiative and Graduation Initiative 2025. In partnership with You @ College,¹ CSU created a wellness portal where students take “self-check” quizzes to inform what appears in their feed—and access a crisis button to request immediate support from staff.

The virtual portal provides resources, but as Candice Chick at CSU-Long Beach’s Division of Student Affairs, Health & Wellness noted, it’s also a clear signal to students that the institution cares about them as individuals.

“Just by having a 24-hour place that is a virtual home for students to log into and seek resources virtually, we are saying to students—we hear you. More than anything, we hear you and we’re here for you.”



Key Recommendations for Modernizing Your Well-Being Experience



Align leaders on holistic well-being and its implications for success

Start a conversation to establish key terms and definitions, combat outdated stereotypes, and understand the impact of mental, physical, and financial health issues on both students and institutional priorities.



Streamline access to support

Centralize information on existing campus-wide supports to help students understand the range of options available to manage their concerns.

Proactive Career Preparation

What if your graduates could find engaging work and were equipped to easily navigate a dynamic job market?



Students Can Prepare for Work Throughout the College Experience

24%

of students define college success as “securing a job”

2x

Greater likelihood of being engaged at work for graduates who had an internship or job that allowed them to apply what they were learning in the classroom

49%

of students say the career-related advice they received from faculty or staff members who were not career services employees was “helpful” or “very helpful”

WHAT IT MEANS

Tailored experiences to support career exploration, skill development, and preparation for success in the workplace post-completion

Career preparation is no longer solely the purview of the campus career center. With 24% of students defining college success as securing a job, institutions must treat career preparation as an integrated part of student success throughout the college journey.

Just like established retention-based success efforts, institutions must proactively engage students in career preparation instead of letting them opt in. Scaling equitable access to experiential learning opportunities is a must, and providing guided support at each phase of career exploration and preparation—from researching career paths to preparing for interviews—will help students on their pathway to a career that meets their personal goals.

And with today’s graduates expected to switch jobs more frequently than any previous generation, institutions must also prepare to create strong relationships with alumni—augmented with credentialing and upskilling pathways to empower students’ long-term careers.

“

“It is no longer sufficient or even plausible to prepare our students for lives based on a notion of ‘career’ as a stable and well-defined pathway through working life. ...Colleges and universities must help students develop not only the content knowledge and cognitive and interpersonal skills required for employment, but also a mindset of informed self-determination and adaptability.”

A. Clayton Spencer, President, Bates College

From the Bates-Gallup study, *Forging Pathways to Purposeful Work: The Role of Higher Education*

”

Premade Modules Help Faculty Promote Career Prep

University of Alabama-Birmingham Career Center’s LMS-Ready Modular Course



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Short modules are designed for easy completion

10 to 20

Minutes required to complete each module

Modules:

1. Intro to the Career Center
2. Self and Career Exploration
3. Gaining Experience
4. Resume Building
5. Interview Skills
6. Career Launch

Modules prescribe action steps at each stage of career exploration and preparation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify various approaches and opportunities to gaining experience at UAB
- Identify three SMART goals to implement in gaining relevant career experience
- Identify and connect with your assigned Career Consultant
- Complete your Handshake profile

MODULE ACTIVITIES

- Develop a Career Action Plan using SMART Goals focused on gaining experience
- Meet with your Career Consultant to review your SMART Goals for gaining experience
- Complete Handshake profile

ASSESSMENTS

- SMART Goals quiz
- Gaining Experience Quiz

The *Gaining Experience* module encourages students to discuss their goals for work experience with a career consultant

The module also asks students to complete their profile on Handshake, an app that connects students to jobs and internships

Knowing how important career outcomes are to today’s students—and recognizing that many students seek career advice from their professors—UAB’s Career Center and Division of eLearning and Professional Studies partnered to create a series of six modules to be integrated into existing curricula. Modules span both reflection and skill building, and each module has specific learning objectives and suggested activities, from attending a career fair to writing a resume. These modules are built in Canvas, and instructors can easily add them to their own courses by submitting a request form on the UAB website. The Career Center will even help tailor modules to the specific needs of a department or course.

Image source: [University of Alabama at Birmingham](https://www.uab.edu/).

Key Recommendations for Modernizing Your Career Preparation Experience

Intervene early, and often, across lifecycle

Create a phased action plan or curriculum that spans four years, and distribute it in the first year

Build mechanisms to nudge students

Prompt students to complete specific action steps, such as taking a career path exploration quiz or drafting a resume

Evaluate participation, and iterate to expand

Drill into participation data to understand efficacy of career intervention, and create curated pathways for unmet needs

Source: [UAB Career Center](https://www.uab.edu/) website; "Integrating Academics and Career Curriculum at UAB," Handshake; EAB interviews and analysis.

3

Underlying Imperatives for Every Institution

No matter which aspect of the student experience your institution decides to tackle first, key industry shifts and change management imperatives should inform your process to ensure that innovative and redesigned experiences are equitable, sustainable, and holistic in design and implementation.

Center Equity, Promote Anti-racism

To better serve current students—and the more diverse classes of coming years—you must identify equity gaps on campus and develop a plan to close them.



Why This Matters to the Student Experience

From recruitment and enrollment to graduation and beyond, colleges and universities can center equity and promote anti-racism at every stage of the student lifecycle. No-regrets **action steps** include:

Recruitment and Enrollment

- Confront exclusionary admissions policies and procedures that limit access for those from the BIPOC community and low-income backgrounds (e.g., legacy considerations, standardized test scores)
- Boost access for transfer students—and improve credit acceptance and recognition of prior course and work experience

Academics

- Provide equal access to all fields of study
- Promote social justice by preparing students to combat injustices in their communities through coursework or required courses
- Extend mental health and well-being resources to support LGBTQIA, BIPOC and other marginalized communities

Career Preparation

- Ensure internship opportunities are paid
- Ensure equitable access to culturally responsive academic, professional, and peer advising to address barriers to completion

In 2020, instances of police violence and the activism that followed led many people—and even institutions—to reflect on structural racism, inequity, and diversity (or a lack thereof). In higher ed, colleges and universities began reckoning with their legacies, and leaders sought ways to understand both how current campus practices and policies impact students of color, and how to make school policies more equitable.

To analyze the impact of current practices on different demographic groups and evaluate the efficacy of new solutions, institutions must be able to disaggregate data by race. Tracking socioeconomic factors and other attributes will also enable more intersectional analyses.

Yet even as colleges work to modernize the student experience, they must remain vigilant about the pitfalls of new technology. Algorithm-driven AI and machine learning are only as good as the data they consume—and can inadvertently perpetuate inequities and biases. Will tech-driven innovations truly serve every student? Colleges should be certain they can gather enough information to answer that question as they work to put new technologies in place.

Learn More

See EAB's infographic, [The Seven Hallmarks of an Anti-racist Institution](#), to explore our framework that defines behaviors and actions that promote racial justice in higher ed.

Embrace Ongoing Digital Transformation

Done right, digital transformation helps you build a tech ecosystem that evolves with your priorities. Focus on student needs to avoid adopting tech for tech's sake.



Why This Matters to the Student Experience

As your team designs new experiences, here are three **guiding principles** to keep student needs at the center of all digital innovation:

1. Student service must drive technology investments

Think this...

We need to be able to reach part-time learners more effectively. What's the best way to do that?

...Not that

We have online learning management software. Can we use it to build online programs?

2. Software is not inherently strategic

Think this...

I need a tool for managing the donor lifecycle. What's the best one on the market?

...Not that

I hope my ERP vendor releases a tool for managing advancement.

3. Data is the institution's most valuable tech asset

Think this...

We need to make sure we're tracking the right financial information in the right way to model our program costs.

...Not that

We'll run the operational reporting that's supported in our ERP, and that will have to do.

Colleges looking to build adaptive and engaging student experiences must reckon with their underlying technology ecosystem. On most campuses, technologies acquired over decades—often by leadership that has long since moved on—sit side by side in a chaotic portfolio, and functionalities often overlap across different platforms. This requires significant effort to manage and disrupts the cohesion of the student experience.

Student-centric innovation means pulling in the right technology at the right time to deliver the most impactful experiences, touchpoints, and supports to guide our students on their journeys. As student needs and preferences continue to evolve, trial and error will be the name of the game, and a college's strategic and technology plans must align to create the necessary flexibility.

For campus leadership within IT and beyond, that means putting in place a comprehensive digital strategy that aligns with the need to support agile decision-making and service pivots. Today, every leader needs to be a digital leader, and embracing digital transformation is everyone's job.

▶ Learn More

Explore our white paper, [Sustaining Student-Centric Innovation](#), for a primer on setting your institution's digital strategy and prioritizing your technology investments.

Foster Cross-Campus Collaboration

Operational silos pose a huge risk to your mission, slowing down decisions and stifling innovation. Break down your silos to limit the friction of misalignment.



Why This Matters to the Student Experience

Better collaboration can help uncover and scale innovations across campus. As you seek to promote collaboration, here are five **indications that silos are limiting innovation** at your school:

1. Innovators **fear that involving others will slow things down** or lead to the project being taken over; when they do involve others, it's often people they know rather than most relevant colleagues
2. Staff and faculty across campus **constantly reinvent the wheel** rather than build and enhance best ideas
3. An **unwillingness to stop or deprioritize initiatives** makes it difficult to double down on others
4. Central administration may not always be aware of **decentralized ideas** that deserve greater investment and attention
5. Even for "on the radar" innovations, attempts to scale run into **conflicting policies, systems, or funding models**

Silos exist for a reason. Specialized skills and knowledge—disciplines, we might say—have been a hallmark of complex organizations since the turn of the 20th century. But now we live in a multidisciplinary world, and solving higher ed's strategic and operational challenges requires crossing traditional boundaries. [Our leadership and practices need to catch up.](#)

A holistic view of the student experience reinforces the need for better collaboration. If we think of the student experience as extending beyond academics to include well-being, social community, career preparation, and more, the number of teams—and technologies—that need to work in concert to support student success will keep growing.

With this view of the student experience work ahead, whom do you need to bring to the table and what part will each person play? What needs to change to lay the groundwork for cross-campus collaboration?

Learn More

Data teams and shared insights are crucial to understanding and improving the student experience. [Take this diagnostic](#) to see how your data teams in IT and analytics can improve their collaboration.

4

Bringing the Modern Experience to Life

Taking innovative student experiences from idea to reality relies on careful planning and implementation that will touch processes, technologies, and institutional support staff roles and responsibilities. As you activate new experiences, developing thoughtful vendor partnerships will accelerate progress and improve sustainability.

Make the Magic Happen with Digital Infrastructure

Ecosystem Investments Turn Student Experience Visions into Reality

Disney’s “magical thinking” project didn’t start with technology. Instead, their customer teams envisioned the ideal vacation experience and worked backward to determine the right infrastructure to make it happen. In turn, this meant big investments in RFID technology,¹ wearable technology, website and app development, and staff training to create a connected experience.

For most colleges and universities, approaching the work of redesigning the student experience means confronting a complex and fractured system of underlying campus technology. As your team envisions new experiences for students, innovation will inevitably rely on the incorporation of new technologies and vendor partnerships, and others will require more reliable integrations between existing systems.

With every effort to reimagine and redesign the student experience, take the opportunity to implement a technology ecosystem that supports further innovation—delivering enhanced experiences for the students of today, while laying the groundwork to keep up with the shifting expectations of the students of the future.

“

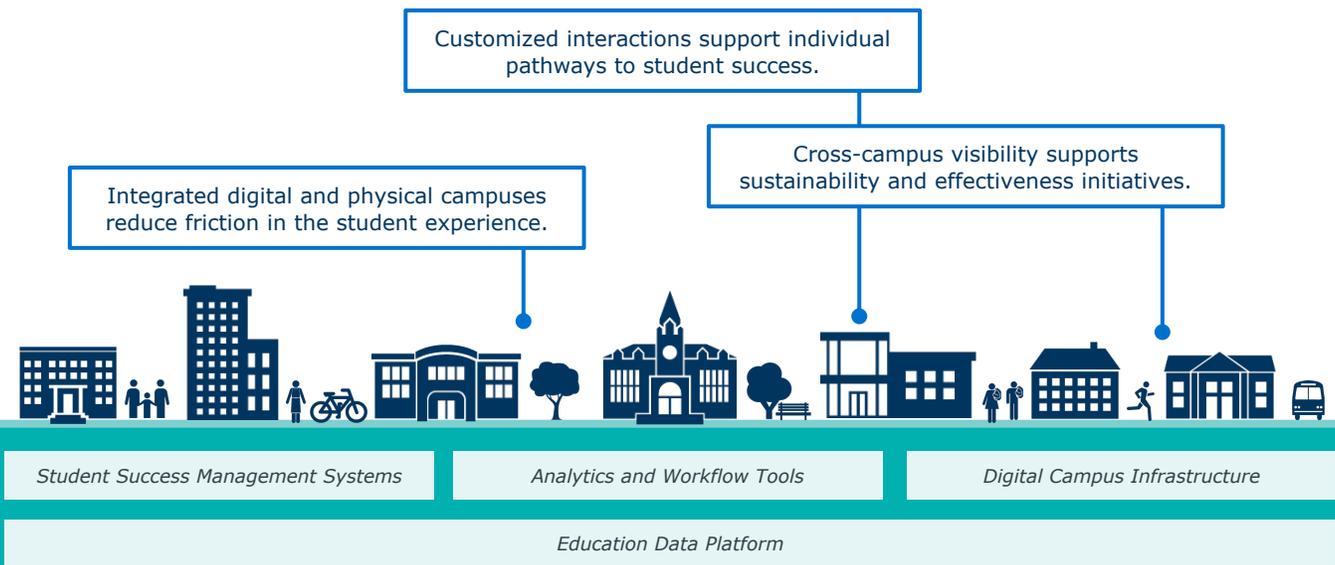
Any sufficiently advanced technology is **indistinguishable from magic**.

Arthur C. Clarke
Science Fiction Author

”

Integrated Tech Works Hard Behind the Scenes on the Modern Campus

The Digital Ecosystem of Tomorrow Connects Data and Applications Beneath the Surface





How Can EAB Help?

Technology Solutions to Modernize Your Student Experience

NAVIGATE

Comprehensive Student Success Management

Access all the tools you need to support student success on campus



3 to 15%

Increase in graduation rate for Navigate partner institutions

WISR

Virtual Student Communities

Accelerate student connections and build institutional affinity at scale



90%

of first-year and transfer students joined one campus's community

TRANSFER PORTAL

Custom Credit Articulation Solutions

Meet prospective transfer students where they are, today



30%

Increase in application completion percentage among Portal users

EDIFY

Higher Ed's First Data Platform

Take back control of your data to power new campus experiences



\$750k

5-year technology spend recaptured at one institution

Learn More

Schedule a student experience consultation by contacting eabcommunications@eab.com—or visit us online at eab.com.



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from enrollment to graduation and beyond

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with us year after year,
reflecting the goals we
achieve together

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