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Subject: Thursday Update March 19

Dear LSC Colleagues:

It is a very quiet campus here today on the hills above Lake Superior. Yet I know there is so much work already underway by 7am. Plans are moving forward, people are shifting to distance work lives (and maybe already finding it challenging to cope with pets, kids, and significant others in your new work space). Supervisors are working hard to adapt work duties to distance alternatives or to find different work on and off campus for those who may not have enough work or proper technologies for distance work.

Those of us who must have some physical presence on campus to perform our duties are practicing “social distancing” and other recommended strategies. Many people quickly learned to set up Zoom meetings (Thanks, Stacy Leno!) and to think creatively about how best to handle students and others who must come to campus for tours, advising, tutoring, wi-fi, and so on.

I have to say here that I have never liked the phrase “social distancing” as it seems to conjure images of shunning, isolating, and even a form of xenophobia. That of course not how we behave or treat each other at Lake Superior College.

This morning, during my usual 4:30am scan of higher education online journals, I came across this article from The Chronicle of Higher Education written by Goldie Blumenstyk entitled “Coronavirus Crisis Underscores the Traits of a Resilient College.” Yes, the article is likely of great interest to all of you and I will include a PDF for your reading pleasure. But what really caught my eye was the closing personal note at the end of the article. Ms. Blumenstyk says:

“I’ve read and heard a lot of good advice this week on how to cope. No doubt you have, too. The bit that has stuck with me the most came from one of the rabbis at my synagogue here in the D.C. area, Sid Schwarz, who counseled that we rethink the notion

of social distancing. Continue to practice “physical distancing,” he said, but also “social solidarity,” by making extra efforts to support folks in our various personal communities.”
(article attached as a PDF)

Yes! Social Solidarity. That is the very essence of how we must support, help, and respect each other. This is how we will move forward, with social solidarity and willingness to stay focused on how we bring our best selves to this crisis and to our lives beyond this crisis.

We all chose the field of academia because we wanted to improve the world and change lives. Our work as maintenance workers, support staff, office workers, teachers, administrators, tutors, advisors, librarians, retail staff, and so many more ALL contribute to our common calling to improve lives and change the world. You are accomplishing that by doing your best, avoiding rumors, and treating each other with respect. We succeed when we reduce the drama that often accompanies times of uncertainty: humans tend to fill in the perceived gaps with stories and wild assumptions that lack solid facts. We will succeed by staying in communication, sticking to the facts, working together even when there is physical distance between us, and staying positive.

Keep up to date on LSC’s response and any new updates by accessing this website:

<https://www.lsc.edu/coronavirus/> . Send questions, comments, and ideas to info@lsc.edu . You might also wish to review the Minnesota State website:

<https://www.minnstate.edu/coronavirus/index.html> that has more resources.

Through our new operations plan that shifts us from primarily on-campus to limiting (but still providing) F2F time on campus to support our students, we have an opportunity to save lives and slow the spread of COVID-19. Follow the health protocols.

But...every time you see “social distancing” think instead that for our LSC community, this practice is “physical distancing with social solidarity.”

Patricia L. Rogers, Ph.D.
President
Lake Superior College



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THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

TECHNOLOGY

Coronavirus Crisis Underscores the Traits of a Resilient College

By Goldie Blumenstyk | MARCH 18, 2020

You're reading the latest issue of The Edge, a weekly newsletter by Goldie Blumenstyk. Sign up here to get her insights on the people, trends, and ideas that are reshaping higher education.

I'm Goldie Blumenstyk, a senior writer at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, covering innovation in and around academe. Here's what I'm thinking about this week.

The traits of a resilient college (and maybe a resilient society, too).

Last week I wrote that the coronavirus crisis is a “black swan” moment for higher education, which would show us how crucial the skills of agility, flexibility, and resilience are for 21st-century colleges, not just their students. Since then, it's become clearer that a skill I forgot to mention — dealing with ambiguity — also belongs on that list.

Like many of you, I've been hearing a lot about what it takes, beyond pivoting to remote education, to be a nimble institution. Several of the ideas you shared with me — and some other suggestions I've seen elsewhere — are important and useful. This isn't about should've or could've. If you've done any of this already, more power to you. But it's not too late to take some steps.

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By far the most common pieces of advice I've heard involve **the ability to communicate**

readily and frequently with the college community and to provide a safety net for its most vulnerable members. Communication is a skill that Tulane University president emeritus, Scott Cowen, shared in a Chronicle essay and in a Future U Podcast interview with Jeff Selingo. It's also a point that Tony D'Angelo, one of The Edge's most devoted correspondents, made to me on Twitter: "Always it will be about engagement. HigherEd execs must over-communicate during times like these: parents, students, faculty & staff first. Then everyone else."

Concern for students' losing their lifelines to food and housing when their campuses shut down has also come up often — a testament, I'd argue, to the awareness of students' food and housing insecurity that has grown in the past five years. Matt Cohen, a consultant, put it succinctly: Institutional agility, he said, "must include continuity of care, particularly for a (school) community's most vulnerable members and especially concerning their most basic human needs." Cohen is a paid consultant for a company I've written about, Edquity, that helps colleges manage emergency-aid programs. But I heard this idea from many other folks, too, and I think his comment best sums up the sentiment.

One anguished reader from a research university in the Midwest pleaded for colleges to step up. "Agility for me means the ability to react swiftly to provide students, staff, and faculty with the resources they need to manage a crisis: securing housing, food, child care, and other resources," he wrote, sharing his name in an email to me but asking to remain anonymous. "I've been dismayed at how many institutions are leaving their students out to dry, sometimes with literally no place to go once they are removed from campus. While I understand the need to prevent Covid-19 from spreading further, the decisions to basically render hundreds of students houseless and food insecure is simply appalling."

I can imagine some college leaders thinking that this kind of outreach goes beyond their mission — and their budgets. But every institution in our society is in uncharted waters right now. It's hard to imagine that, looking back, people will fault colleges for showing humanity by prioritizing the needs of vulnerable students.

What else?

D'Angelo also noted some more-tangible tips, including **the importance of managing cash flow**. He's right. It's hard to be agile when you're running out of money.

In the same vein, André Mayer, a veteran educator and work-force-development policy maker, noted that **keeping an eye on borrowing is critical**. "Low interest rates are nice, but debt can kill you," he wrote to me. I'll quibble with that one. While it's true that colleges under a heavy debt load may find themselves with a lot less ability to maneuver, I expect that many institutions will and should take advantage of extraordinarily low interest rates (part of the Fed's effort to keep the economy from freezing up) to bridge the gaps.

"Plan for the worst" is another piece of advice from college officials who've managed crises before. (Read more tips along those lines in a free report available [here](#).) Donald Guckert said that, and he's associate vice president for facilities management at the University of Iowa, which faced catastrophic flooding in 2008. Planning doesn't happen only in advance, he said, but involves constantly adjusting to changes on the ground. While it may seem impossible (and, honestly, terrifying) to anticipate the worst right now, it's not too late to prepare further — and hope you're wrong. We certainly now recognize that our reality is changing by the minute.

As colleges try to improve their ability to **put not only instruction but also operational services online** — a suggestion I heard from several people — they also need to think about digital security. One reader tweeted at me, "What will happen to our online world when another kind of virus takes down the internet?" No joke, that. Protecting against computer viruses, phishing scams, and cyberattacks on the digital tools that are keeping us together is vital. The challenge of **keeping digital communication both readily accessible and as insulated as possible from threats** is no cakewalk. But it's another essential feature of a resilient institution.

The consequences of uneven access to broadband.

The coronavirus crisis has laid bare our digital divide. Readers of The Edge know I've been following the challenges already facing rural populations ([here](#) and [here](#)). Now, as schools and colleges rush toward remote learning, millions of students who lack decent

or affordable broadband could be left in the lurch. (That the digital divide is leaving so many people vulnerable in other ways right now is a topic I'll leave to others to explore.)

In the short term, it's heartening to see that internet-service providers are responding. Some are offering free internet to students for 60 days. Nearly 200, at last count, have signed the Keep America Connected Pledge being coordinated by the Federal Communications Commission. By doing so, they agree that for 60 days they'll open Wi-Fi hotspots, maintain service for people who can't pay their bills because of the crisis, and waive late fees.

Longer term, a recent report from Pew Charitable Trusts suggests some powerful strategies for closing digital gaps. And as if we needed any more reminders of the important ways that governors can assert leadership, this report provides one, describing successful efforts to expand broadband access in several states. Once we get past this crisis, governors will have plenty on their agendas. The higher-ed community should be sure that broadband lands high up there.

I'll report on our "Shark Tank: Edu Edition," but later.

As I noted last week, when SXSW EDU was canceled, we were able to hold a virtual version of our annual panel in which start-up founders and social entrepreneurs pitch us their ideas for improving higher ed. It was a bit slapdash, but the show went on — and to date, nearly 600 people have watched it on YouTube. (You can, too — here's the link.) That's far more than would have fit in the room in Austin, Tex., so in that respect going virtual was a plus.

Our contestants had some great ideas to share, and the back-and-forth with the sharks was illuminating and fun. I'll recap the lively hour when more of us have the head space to reflect on ideas beyond the challenges of the moment.

A personal message.

I've read and heard a lot of good advice this week on how to cope. No doubt you have, too. The bit that has stuck with me the most came from one of the rabbis at my synagogue here in the D.C. area, Sid Schwarz, who counseled that we rethink the notion

of social distancing. Continue to practice “physical distancing,” he said, but also “social solidarity,” by making extra efforts to support folks in our various personal communities. I like that idea. As we stay apart, wash our hands, and try to stay safe, it’s good to remember that we’re all in this together.

Got a tip you’d like to share or a question you’d like me to answer? Let me know, at goldie@chronicle.com. If you have been forwarded this newsletter and would like to see past issues, or sign up to receive your own copy, you can do so [here](#). If you want to follow me on Twitter, [@GoldieStandard](#) is my handle.

This article is part of:

The Edge: Newsletter Archives, Coronavirus Hits Campus



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