PRESIDENT TO PRESIDENT

VIEWS ON TECHNOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EDITED BY: JACQUELINE POWERS DOUD, MARYLOUISE FENNELL, AND SCOTT D. MILLER

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Foreword

By Richard Ekman and William Graves

In recent years, the uses of technology in higher education have increased in ways that were not anticipated even a few years earlier. For presidents of smaller, independent institutions, the challenges have been several: 1) to learn about possibilities for new uses of technology on campus; 2) to obtain disinterested advice about which of many options to pursue, especially insofar as most purchases of technology are significant expenditures; and 3) to stay informed about even newer possibilities for using technology to improve academic and administrative outcomes while decisions made just a few years earlier are still being implemented.

The Council of Independent Colleges recognizes that most presidents cannot immerse themselves in the changing roles, capabilities, and cost structures of the latest technologies. CIC accordingly tries to help presidents understand enough about technology-related matters to act prudently on technology purchasing and deployment decisions in the short timeframes associated with technology advances. CIC has arranged for sessions on specific technology-related topics at the annual CIC Presidents Institutes, the participation of many technology experts in the Institute, and the publication in 2005 of two publications for presidents *(Information Technology Benchmarks: A Practical Guide for College and University Presidents* and *President to President: Views on Technology in Higher Education)*. Among the many technology companies that serve independent colleges and universities, SunGard Higher Education, the largest devoted exclusively to higher education, deserves our thanks for supporting the latter 2005 publication and conceiving of the current collection of essays as a way to help CIC presidents address rapidly evolving technology issues and opportunities.

With the encouragement and continuing gratitude of CIC and SunGard Higher Education, CIC's Senior Counsel Marylouise Fennell and two college presidents, Jacqueline Doud of Mount St. Mary's College (CA) and Scott Miller of Bethany College (WV), have shepherded and edited a fresh set of essays on how technology is being used to help independent institutions operate more effectively, all written by presidents from the perspective of their direct experiences. Several of the essays focus on functional areas of the campus that correspond more or less to units of the typical campus organization—board relations, advancement, and enrollment, for example. Several others focus on subjects that are often sources of major time-consuming problems for presidents including cost efficiencies, retention, and making the institution more distinctive. And still other essays introduce presidents to aspects of technology that are likely to be of greater importance in the coming years—portals, social networks, cloud computing, collecting and analyzing data, and the emerging role of technology in "institutional productivity."

What drives most of this inquiry is, indeed, a growing concern about the productivity of smaller colleges and universities. With pressure from families and public officials to control prices, most colleges are reexamining their cost structures and looking to utilize technology not only in back office functions, but also in highly visible aspects of a college's operations that include enrollment, instruction, and assessment of learning outcomes. The rhetoric of international competition and American workforce development has given immediacy to these discussions in recent years.

Technology and academic culture may sometimes collide, especially within the rhetoric of "productivity." In the sense of McLuhan's "medium-is-the-message" insight, however, technology is changing the larger environment in which students learn. The dilemma for smaller independent institutions is that small scale, plentiful student-faculty and student-student live interaction, and substantial co-curricular activity have been the hallmarks of these institutions for many years. There is good evidence that a college education that utilizes these (admittedly, expensive) features is very effective—indeed, often more effective than other formats of education. The challenge today, therefore, is to utilize more cost-effective means, while preserving what has been so successful in the past by adapting it to the evolving cognitive modalities of this and subsequent generations. Happily—within these essays—there are examples of innovative uses of technology that honor traditional philosophies of education, while also improving efficiency and increasing learning and institutional effectiveness. (An additional "thought piece" is available from SunGard Higher Education for those who want to dig deeper into the broad policy context for today's "learning productivity" challenge in education.[1])

CIC and SunGard Higher Education are grateful to presidents Richard Artman of Viterbo University, Esther Barazzone of Chatham University, Christopher Blake of Mount Mercy College, Larry Goodwin of the College of St. Scholastica, Arthur Kirk of Saint Leo University, Ruth Knox of Wesleyan College, Theodore Long of Elizabethtown College, Kevin Manning of Stevenson University, Kevin Ross of Lynn University, and Michael Victor of Lake Erie College for contributing essays to this effort to advance our collective understanding of the role of technology in the independent institution. We encourage you to read their timely and insightful essays, which we believe will stimulate fresh thinking among all college and university presidents about better ways to conduct and assure both the efficiency and the quality of the "business" of learning—even at the most intimate scale of intellectual interaction.

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[1] Waste Not the Learning Productivity Crisis, William H. Graves, first version posted to the Web in June, 2009.

http://institutionalperformance.typepad.com/WHG/Waste_Not_the_Learning_Productivity_Crisis.pdf

About the Authors

Richard Ekman
President, Council of Independent Colleges

Richard Ekman has been president of the Council of Independent Colleges since 2000. He previously served as vice president for programs of Atlantic Philanthropies and, from 1991 to 1999, as secretary of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. From 1982 until 1991, he was a member of the staff of the National Endowment for the Humanities, first as director of the Division of Education Programs, and subsequently as director of the Division of Research Programs. He currently serves as a member of many boards, including those of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, the National Humanities Alliance, Project Pericles, LSU Press, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and the Overseers' Committee to Visit the Harvard University Library. Additionally, at Harvard he has been a member of the Villa I Tatti Council and the Graduate School Alumni Council.

His previous experience includes service as vice president and dean of Hiram College, where he was also a tenured member of the history faculty. Earlier, he served as assistant to the provost at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, and as associate director of the Department of Expository Writing at Harvard University. Ekman holds a Ph.D. from Harvard in the history of American civilization, the institution from which he also received his A.M. and A.B. (*magna cum laude*) degrees. He is co-author, with Richard E. Quandt, of *Technology and Scholarly Communication* (University of California Press, 1999).

Ekman has previously been active as a member of a variety of advisory and governing boards, serving the American Association for Higher Education, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, the Rackham Advancement Council of the University of Michigan, the Society for Values in Higher Education, the Washington Higher Education Secretariat, Georgetown Day School (Washington, DC) and Collegiate School (New York), and the Ohio Board of Regents.

William Graves
Senior Vice President, SunGard Higher Education

Bill Graves, senior vice president, academic strategy, provides guidance for SunGard Higher Education's ongoing initiatives to support teaching and learning. Working closely with other members of the executive team, Graves's unique perspective and experience help position SunGard Higher Education as an education partner able to contribute to the realization of institutional goals and initiatives.

Graves is a professor emeritus of mathematics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). He writes a periodic academic technology column for *Campus Technology* and publishes papers in the *EDUCAUSE Review* and other periodicals. He serves as a co-founding board member on the boards of both the National Center for Academic Transformation and the Alliance for Higher Education Competitiveness. He also has served on the boards of a number of other higher education associations.

Graves earned a mathematics Ph.D. from Indiana University before joining the faculty at UNC, where he also served as dean for general education, interim vice chancellor for academic affairs, senior information technology officer under various titles, and founder and director of the Institute for Academic Technology (a UNC/IBM alliance). At SunGard Higher Education, he continues to advocate for the transformative role of technology in systemically and measurably improving and accounting for institutional performance in higher education. You can learn more about his ideas at Graves's blog http://institutionalperformance.typepad.com/.

Preface

By Jacqueline Powers Doud, Marylouise Fennell, Scott D. Miller

The story is told of the 19th century Micronesian islanders who had never before seen a sailboat. When early colonists excitedly pointed to ships just offshore, the islanders could not see them—the experience was just too far outside their perception. Likewise, many of us in higher education could not envision the ways in which technology would transform our operations and marketing for better or worse, helping to level the playing field for small and mid-sized colleges with limited endowments, while challenging us in ways that we could not even imagine a decade ago.

> **As one technology builds upon another, we continue to be inspired by the immense promise and infinite possibilities.**

As one technology builds upon another, we continue to be inspired by the immense promise and infinite possibilities. The conversation first began in 2004. John McAllister of SunGard Higher Education—a loyal friend and strong supporter of the Council of Independent Colleges New Presidents Program—began to encourage us to do this work before we even understood the need. The result: the first volume of *President to President: Views on Technology in Higher Education* the following year. The response was overwhelmingly positive and soon a Spanish version was printed and distributed throughout Central and South America.

This book is designed as a follow up to volume I and addresses the new technological awareness. We dedicate this project to our many friends and colleagues in independent higher education who provide outstanding leadership while making critical decisions concerning technology that will impact services provided to current and future generations.

We are especially indebted to:

Dr. Richard Ekman, president of the Council of Independent Colleges, a dear friend and colleague to the three of us, who continues to advocate for independent higher education, encourage dialogue, engage in reform, and stimulate progressive national programs and initiatives, while providing stellar support to member presidents in every aspect of their professional lives.

We are grateful to all the people at SunGard Higher Education, especially to Laura Kvinge, Sandra DeCastro, and William Graves. Together with The Council of Independent Colleges, they have provided support to this needed and worthwhile project.

Our gratitude also goes to Martha Gaffney, Stephanie Kappel, and Lucille Villegas, our indefatigable editors, who daily read our minds.

And we thank Annie Miller, Scott's wife of 26 years, a dedicated supporter of education, who has loyally served as "First Lady" of three colleges.

About the Authors

Jacqueline Powers Doud
President, Mount St. Mary's College

Jacqueline Powers Doud became the 11th president of Mount St. Mary's College, Los Angeles in 2000. The first lay president of the College, she served as provost and vice president for academic affairs before becoming president. She has more than 35 years of experience in senior administration, following nine years of teaching experience in French, humanities, and education. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in French from Mundelein College in Chicago; a Master of Arts in French literature from the University of California, Berkeley; and a Ph.D. in higher education from Claremont Graduate University.

President Doud has been a consultant for several colleges and universities, chaired numerous accreditation teams, and serves on several professional association boards. She holds an honorary doctorate from Hebrew Union College.

Marylouise Fennell, RSM

Marylouise Fennell is senior counsel for the Washington, D.C.-based Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), for which she also coordinates the New Presidents Program. She served as president of Carlow University, and her background includes both teaching and administrative positions at Saint Joseph College (CT), the University of Hartford and Boston University.

President Fennell holds a Bachelor of Arts from Diocesan Sisters College, a Master of Education and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study from the University of Hartford, and a doctoral degree from Boston University. She has also published widely.

An internationally recognized management consultant, she has worked in more than 20 countries, including a post as chief consultant for the Association for Private Universities of Central America (APRICA). Her awards include more than 40 honorary doctoral degrees, and she is presently a member and/or chair of three college boards of directors. In addition, Fennell serves as executive director of the Inter-American Consortium, a partnership of six American and 11 foreign higher educational institutions.

President Fennell also serves as a consultant to college and university presidents and boards and has written widely on higher education.

Scott D. Miller
President, Bethany College

Scott D. Miller is the president and M.M. Cochran Professor of Leadership Studies at Bethany College in West Virginia. President Miller earned his Bachelor of Arts from West Virginia Wesleyan College, Master of Arts from the University of Dayton, Ed.S. from Vanderbilt University and Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from The Union Institute & University.

Now in his 19th year as a college chief executive officer, President Miller served for 10 ½ years (1997-2007) as president of the College and DuPont Professor of Leadership Studies at Wesley College in Delaware. He has also served as president of Lincoln Memorial University (1991-97). Before being named president there, he served as executive vice president (1988-91) and vice president for development (1984-88). A native of Pennsylvania, President Miller is a former director of university relations and alumni affairs at the University of Rio Grande in Ohio and a former journalist. Well known nationally for his contributions to higher education, he was one of 17 presidents nationwide featured in a Kaufman Foundation-funded book entitled *The Entrepreneurial College President* (American Council on Education / Praeger Series on Higher Education, 2004). President Miller and the Wesley story were one of four "amazing transformational stories" featured in the book *The Small College Guide to Financial Health* (National Association of College & University Business Officers, 2002) and one of six featured in *The Small College Guide to Financial Health: Weathering Turbulent Times* (NACUBO, 2009). He was extensively interviewed in *The First 120 Days: What A New President Must Do* (Jerold Panas, 2008). He is a regular columnist for *College Planning and Management* and is the author of a widely distributed e-newsletter *The President's Letter*, which addresses a wide variety of higher education issues.

President Miller serves as a consultant to college and university presidents and boards and has written widely on higher education and leadership.

CHAPTER 1

Beyond the Board Book: Internet Communication with Trustees

By President Theodore E. Long, Elizabethtown College

It was a new trustee who first suggested it. "Let's post all this material electronically so I can work off my laptop instead of lugging this big book of paper around to every meeting. It should be pretty simple to do," she said, "and it will be a lot easier to do board work." Six years later, what began as a matter of trustee convenience and saving paper has become a new center for board communication. Our conversion from paper to electronic communication did save trees and made things easier. But what we discovered – and are still learning to exploit – is that internet communication enables our board to work differently, not just more conveniently. It has changed the way we do business at Elizabethtown. Using our experience as background, this chapter describes those new possibilities, reviews their advantages, and lays out some principles for exploiting this tool successfully.

> **What we discovered – and are still learning to exploit – is that internet communication enables our board to work differently, not just more conveniently.**

Web-Based Communications

Accessed via the College's web site, our board communications center is housed on our Blackboard utility, with password secure access for trustees and the College's senior leadership. That site contains a variety of documents, information and functions:

- ❑ A roster of members,
- ❑ Basic board documents (by-laws, policies, trustee expectations, strategic plan, etc.),
- ❑ College dashboard indicators,
- ❑ College and board calendars,
- ❑ Communication functions (announcements, email, discussion room, etc.),
- ❑ Committee document sites,
- ❑ Meeting materials, and
- ❑ Archives.

There are additional options and other platforms, and you don't have to do it yourself anymore, as we did. For example, as a trustee at Capital University, I use a system built on SharePoint, which also includes a survey function, workspaces, and pictorial libraries. And there are now several commercial vendors who will set this up for your board (see, for example, www.boardbooks.com). From these sites, virtually all board functions can be conducted, during or between meetings, and all board activities are driven through the site.

Initially, we used the web site primarily for meeting materials, and regular board meetings still lie at the heart of our communication system. Materials are posted continuously in the weeks preceding each board meeting, and members are notified when new items appear. The documents are organized in sets corresponding to the organization of the board meeting, just as a board book would be, so that members can navigate to pertinent documents quickly and easily. Until recently, we still supplied paper copies of key documents on site for late adopters, but as the system has caught on, we now only need to print very late-breaking documents.

As our system has evolved, we learned to capitalize on its possibilities between board meetings. We provide updates to committees on works in progress, we seek approval of changes in plans or new developments on matters that require board or committee action, we post new documents that follow up on board conversations or requests, and we consult with committees or board leaders on breaking issues. We can conduct self assessment and board assessment surveys, review the president's performance, and conduct virtual committee conferences via the web site. Timely and full communication in both directions between board and staff has increased substantially.

One possibility taking longer to exploit is the discussion function for trustee deliberation. Some board members tried it out initially, but it remains an underutilized resource. Members who have issues to raise usually do so directly with other individuals. Because much of the material about substantive board issues is generated through the senior staff, the flow of collective communication naturally focuses on exchanges between board and staff. Intra-board conversation using the discussion function needs to be prompted with a specific question that opens up an issue without seeking a conclusion, at least until boards develop the habit of initiating their own conversation between meetings.

The Internet Advantage

The operational advantages of web-based board communication are considerable, and they fall into two main categories: a) savings and b) process improvements. Primary savings include:

- ❑ Staff time once devoted to the production and distribution of the board book can be redirected more productively.

- ❑ The costs of duplication and mailing are eliminated.

- ❑ No paper is used, enhancing sustainability initiatives.

The major process improvements are as follows:

- ❑ The board is connected to board work at all times and from any place, so the board can function continuously.

- ❑ All board members have a common, readily accessible database of materials and documents.

- ❑ Decisions are made according to the readiness of the issue, not the fixed schedule of board meetings.

These operational advantages would justify the move to internet communication by themselves. But even more significant benefits can be realized from a web-based board operation, those that enhance the capacity of the board to govern. Properly deployed, an internet communication system can support a different way of doing board business. Here are five ways in which internet communication can nourish higher order governance capacities.

- ❑ Deeper Engagement – An ongoing flow of communications with the board engages them more often with college issues. Boards that are more engaged on a day-to-day basis can contribute much more to effective governance of the institution, not by micro managing but by supplying their expert counsel.

- ❑ Responsiveness to Changing Circumstances – With internet communication systems, boards now have the capacity to respond to changing circumstances as they develop, seizing opportunities in timely fashion or changing directions promptly.

- ❑ Integrative Partnership with the President – AGB *(The Leadership Imperative)* has called for "integral" leadership, in which the board and president forge a partnership on behalf of common institutional goals. Ongoing board communication via board web sites supports such a partnership.

- ❑ Intraboard Dialogue – Board members often talk to each other only at meetings, unless there is a major crisis. Internet communication creates the capacity to conduct ongoing conversations about major issues without a crisis or a board meeting, which establishes a much stronger foundation for decision-making than once and done reviews of policy issues.

- ❑ Generative Thinking – Working with limited time and limited dialogue, most boards stick to managing their fiduciary responsibilities. Some boards are able to govern more strategically. Rare is a board that has mastered "generative thinking" (Chait, Ryan and Taylor, *Governance as Leadership*), about the meaning and significance of things. Open-ended internet communication enables trustees to explore meaning and basic assumptions more easily in support of this important governance function.

Principles for Effective Web-Based Communication

My trustee was right about the benefits of electronic communication but wrong about how easy it would be. Even after five years, we are still not completely satisfied with our system. The process of implementation takes some time to build effectiveness and integrate this new tool with the board's work. There are several obvious obstacles to effectiveness: 1) some members don't have the appropriate technology; 2) members feel secure with the books and insecure with the web; 3) they forget, and we have to generate paper anyway; 4) members feel its too much work to learn a new system; and 5) they just print it themselves instead of saving paper. There are more, but those are some of the major ones.

Those headaches are real and can create frustrations in the transition to web-based communication, but their eventual resolution is mostly a matter of persistence and patience. I have not seen dramatic resistance to such change, and once the board decides to go this direction, the transition is usually readily accomplished as members become comfortable with new ways. The larger challenges arise from dilemmas that need thoughtful solutions for the board in question. We have found five main areas where good decisions, not just patience, are critical in making web-based communication effective: culture, architecture, coherence, coaching, and dialogue. For each, I offer a few comments framed around a central principle of effectiveness.

❑ The culture of the board always trumps concepts of the perfect system. It does not matter how elegant the conception of your system is; it only works if it fits with board culture. Consistent with our religious heritage (Church of the Brethren), Elizabethtown's board has a "culture of simplicity." A complex system will not work for us, even though it looks brilliant in design. Our board does not want immense amounts of information, so we have to give them only what is necessary and manageable for the work at hand. Other boards, like Capital's, expect to see more complexities, so Elizabethtown's system would frustrate them even though it works for us.

❑ The architecture of board work is more important than the architecture of the technology. It is comforting to suppose that the right software will ensure effectiveness, but the real key, whatever the software, is to design a system to fit the way your board works. For example, we changed the structure of our website when our board altered the structure of its meeting agenda so that the design matched our new pattern of work. Even if an outside vendor is engaged, it is critical that the institution itself design the site for maximum effectiveness, even if some of the features offered by the platform are not heavily used.

❑ Coherence is necessary to make convenience real. Just because board members can get speedy results does not make the system convenient for them. Securing fast access to the wrong documents or having to hunt for documents that are out

of order just frustrates board members and makes the system less convenient for them. Likewise, a haphazard posting of documents over time, which is quite convenient for the senior leadership team, is not convenient for board members because there is no consistent rhythm and timetable for using the web site. There has to be an orderly pattern to the arrangement of the documents that is effectively linked to the pattern of their use for board members to experience a real convenience.

❑ Coaching is vital to initial success and essential to sustained success. Even the first clause in this proposition is not always self-evident, as we discovered the hard way. Figuring that people would have little trouble, we just gave them passwords and invited them in. After dozens of calls about how to access the site and use it, we quickly created a coaching system to help people utilize the system most effectively. Then we discovered that board members often forget what they once knew after weeks between uses. We also learned that it is necessary to prompt members when it is time to review documents so that they can do so in synch with document postings. And coaching is especially necessary to capitalize on unfamiliar functions, like discussion boards. In short, coaching must be continuous.

❑ Dialogue is more powerful for good governance than delivery. The operational benefits of board internet communication are realized primarily by delivering material and messages in a new way. However useful, though, shifting to a new mode of delivery will not improve board governance itself. The power of internet communication to extend board effectiveness arises from its capacity to host board dialogue. For boards that are not used to the dialogue and debate inherent in higher board functions, this medium provides a way to open up discussion. For boards that are already functioning at higher levels, this new capacity can multiply their effectiveness. But the dialogue function must be intentionally nurtured; even good boards will not automatically exploit it without prompting.

Old habits don't die easily, and moving a board to full web-based communication always takes some time. But the time it takes to do so is a worthwhile investment for the board and the institution itself. It remains only a tool, but it is a tool that can change the conditions of board work in such a way that the boards will not only become more efficient, but also more effective.

About the Author
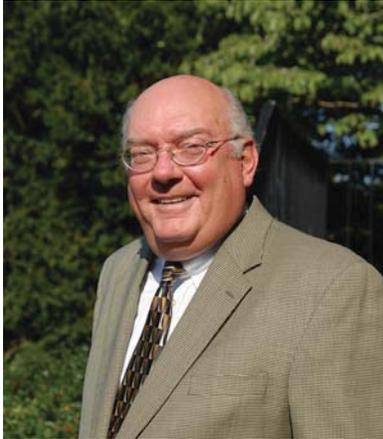
Theodore E. Long
President, Elizabethtown College

Theodore E. Long became the 13th president of Elizabethtown College in 1996. Previously he served as provost and vice president for academic affairs at Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts, and earlier he taught sociology at George Washington University, Hollins University and Washington and Jefferson College. A 1965 graduate of Capital University, President Long earned a master's degree in sociology from Duke University (1968) and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Virginia (1979).

During his tenure, Elizabethtown has grown significantly in size, academic stature and financial strength as it implemented a comprehensive strategic plan and master facilities plan. The college has built distinctive programs of study around four signature emphases: global education, purposeful life work, experiential education, and relationship-centered learning, which will highlight its strong position among comprehensive liberal arts colleges across the country.

As a scholar, President Long has studied and written on religious movements, religion and politics, religion and the economy, religious conversion, social change, socialization, and the training of physicians. He served as president of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in 1990-91, and has been active in many other scholarly and higher education associations. He is a trustee of Capital University, his alma mater, the largest Lutheran university in the country, has conducted numerous accrediting reviews as a visiting team leader, and is frequently engaged by colleges and other non-profits to lead strategic planning and board development processes.