



UNITE TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO ELEVATE THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

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Intense competition within and beyond the higher education industry is prompting institutions to design more effective student, faculty and research experiences. Preparing students for success, retaining talent and advancing research discoveries starts with transforming institutions' approach to service delivery.

Cloud-based systems for managing finance, human resources and other administrative services are becoming the higher education industry standard, not the exception. As institutions' cloud spending surpasses [\\$3 billion by 2022](#), leaders will position these investments as not simply technology upgrades, but as a foundation for optimizing workflows and organizational structures. Technology is one component of change. Higher education leaders' true opportunity sits at the intersection of pairing new tools with reorganized teams and processes to elevate how internal services are delivered.

“Institutions that evolve their workflows and culture alongside their technology environment can realize the most value from cloud investments and better prepare for future innovation.”

Reducing Administrative Burden in Higher Education

Fragmented legacy systems and support structures have added costs and complexity to higher education service delivery models.

Today, administrative tasks are often managed by generalists across a wide variety of units who may not have specialized expertise in a functional area, nor in using cloud technology systems. This can perpetuate nonstandard, cumbersome processes for submitting expense reimbursement forms, managing payroll, recruiting employees and other key activities. In turn, this detracts from time faculty members can devote

to mission-oriented work: teaching, conducting research and mentoring students.

Cloud technology alone cannot address these obstacles. Investments in the right systems, combined with a redesign of how the teams who use them act and collaborate, can have a greater impact.

Evolving Higher Education Technology and Service Models

Cloud systems by nature encourage organizations to create consistent, yet dynamic, approaches to service delivery through embedded analytics, regular upgrades and seamless mobile access. Institutions benefit when their internal service delivery models complement this infrastructure. Unlike on-premise technology, new functionality is pushed constantly to cloud systems rather than on a fixed upgrade schedule. Migrating to the cloud can be an impetus to build an organization that is responsive to this level of continuous improvement.

Institutions that align cloud planning and implementation with service delivery redesign have greater potential to:

- **Deliver services faster and at scale.** Cloud implementations demand an exercise in determining user permissions. This is a chance for administrative leaders to step back and assess not only who needs full access to the new system, but who has the authority and expertise to justify it. These conversations can illuminate redundant workflows and bring clarity to staff members' roles. With greater process and role definition, teams can respond more efficiently to student, faculty and staff needs. Setting a new baseline for service delivery also provides institutions with a measurable foundation that can be scaled to accommodate growth.
- **Facilitate more informed decision making.** Limiting system access to a strategic set of employees also helps enhance the integrity of institutions' data. Cloud-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems become a center of

gravity for an institution's data, making it easier for leaders to access, interpret and make decisions based on accurate information.

- **Strengthen career development.** Most university departments and schools have individual responsibility (and burden) to recruit and train administrative staff, with limited support from the core central units. Extrapolated across dozens of teams, this environment can limit staff mobility and professional development. With the best practices embedded in many cloud systems, institutions can better align these employees to centers of excellence for human resources, finance and other functions — providing employees with more access to leadership and training resources.

Advocating for Change

Orienting an entire institution around new technology and architecting new teams and processes to support it requires a unified vision, 360-degree support and a commitment to ongoing change management. Close leadership attention to the planning, design, communication and implementation of such ambitious initiatives is essential to making meaningful progress.

Institutions that successfully garner stakeholder support for a new approach to service delivery:

Establish a vision and case for change.

Many colleges and universities are embarking or acting on sweeping strategic plans to position their financial sustainability, talent and student experience for years to come. Leaders who clearly frame cloud adoption and organizational redesign in the broader context of these aspirations can incentivize faculty and staff to adapt.

Involve the right sponsors. Information technology (IT) is a key enabler of the shift to cloud systems, but not the driver of organizational change. Academic and administrative leaders should align and champion these efforts to optimize institutions' administrative capabilities while collaborating closely with IT teams and sponsors.

Visualize outcomes early. When rallying faculty and staff around major technical and team change, it's not enough to position the new way forward as "better" or "improved" — the results need to be tangible. Prototyping recommended processes in the new system early can ground stakeholders in a common vision and help everyone speak the same language when outlining the future state.

Communicate budget impacts. Adopting new technology and service delivery models will inevitably impact departments' budget allocations. Being upfront and explicit about how resources will align can prevent the internal conflict that has derailed similar higher education initiatives in the past. Discussing the nature of funding options from the start (including why alternatives may be necessary and what benefits they'll support), rather than announcing them as a nonnegotiable afterthought, fosters a sense of partnership among stakeholders.

Demonstrate empathy. Turning faculty and staff into advocates for change ensures that transformation efforts progress and endure. Effective leaders recognize that adopting new systems, learning unfamiliar processes and settling into new roles is difficult. Rather than mandate new behaviors, leaders should consider phased approaches to change and maintain open dialogue with employees — using their insights to refine initiatives over time.

Institutions that evolve their service delivery models can change the value of their interactions with staff, faculty and students. At a time when leaders face rising pressure to improve productivity, integrating technology adoption with organizational alignment allows for future investments in growth. Faster, simpler and more accessible administrative activities not only drive satisfaction, but also facilitate innovation.

In higher education, each person, process and system can play a pivotal role in supporting the institution's mission. By uniting people around new systems and a refreshed way of operating, academic and administrative leaders can develop a platform to advance their missions long term.

Key Takeaways

Higher education institutions have a unique opportunity to transform by successfully evolving and scaling their service delivery models. To do this:

Think differently.

Frame cloud adoption and service delivery redesign as a conduit to elevating the faculty, staff and student experience, not as a cost reduction mechanism.

Plan differently.

Commit to migrating IT systems, outlining new administrative processes and realigning teams in tandem, rather than in isolation.

Act differently.

Ground all stakeholders around a common future state and promote the benefits to the institution overall, rather than to individual units.



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