Factors Affecting Higher Education

What are the most important forces shaping higher education today? Discuss those that are most likely to affect public institutions like Cal Poly. Can you anticipate any new forces that may come into play by 2030?

Demographic Trends

- Who will Cal Poly’s students be in 2030? Discuss how they will be the same (e.g., the brightest); and how they are likely to differ demographically from today.
- What are their expectations and interests likely to be? In particular, how will they learn and be prepared for higher education?

Global and Regional Issues

What are the top continuing and emerging issues that are likely to affect the global, national and regional economy by 2030? Discuss both large-scale and more regional issues that you think are likely to be important to Cal Poly.

Response Format: Group the factors you have selected according to how certain you are about each factor and its impact and whether the impact is likely to be positive (an opportunity) or a challenge for Cal Poly.

The responses to all three sets of factors and trends overlapped significantly, so the following highlights reflect all groups (twelve discussion tables).

Challenging Forces

Most of the items listed below were considered relatively certain to occur.

Demographic Factors and Trends – While the focus of one set of questions, all groups explored demographic factors as potential challenges.

- Increasing diversity among students
- More students from historically under-represented groups, first generation in college
- Shrinking pool of applicants, due to lower birth rates
- Concerns about quality and continuing unevenness of K-12 education for “home grown” California students and their college-readiness
- Out-migration of young adults due to higher cost of living in California
Costs and Funding
• Competition between services for aging population vs. services for youth (education)
• Continuing decline in public (state) support for higher education
• Student debt, especially as costs shifted to students

Technology
• Keeping up with rapidly changing technology
• Unfiltered access to information
• Distractions from digital devices

Environment
• Climate change
• Food, water
• Global health/disease

Higher Education
• Shift in role of professor away from traditional “instruction”
• Millennial (and subsequent generations) culture – implications for how students learn

Several Factors Noted with Less Certainty about Consequences:
• “Disruptive” challenges to traditional teaching/learning models in higher education
• Future role of residential campus
• Potential increase in enrollment of international students
• Political control over educational policy
• Community colleges offering 4-year degrees in California

Opportunities

Most of the items listed below were considered relatively certain to occur and/or have a positive impact.

Demographic Factors and Trends
• One of the groups stated the demographic trade-offs succinctly:
  “The changing demographics of students in California presents the challenge of educating a population of increasingly minority, lower income, native born children of immigrants, 1st generation college students; [but also] presents a strong opportunity to become a site for preparing them for the work force. It presents the increased opportunity for transfer and non-traditional student pipelines, 1st Gen services, and curriculum that connects to that population’s identity and harnesses their potential.”
• Appropriate services, including financial support for new student profile
• More women in STEM fields
• Recruitment of high-quality, diverse students from California
• Recruitment of students from elsewhere – domestic and international
• Marketing to older/non-traditional students; mid-career “re-education”

Programs and Curricula
• Preparation for careers that don’t exist today
• Environment – educational opportunities regarding innovative approaches to climate change, energy, resource management, sustainability
• Globalization – awareness, culture, language and experience abroad
• Health-related fields to serve aging population
• Technology – take advantage of students’ interest and ‘literacy’ as well as new technologies as they emerge
• Demand for highly educated work force, including more post-baccalaureate education

Cal Poly’s Advantage
• Low cost for value
• Residential campus
• Adaptability, readiness for change

Several Opportunities Noted with Less Certainty about Consequences:
• How to serve older generation
• “Common Core” in K-12 education
• Teacher-scholar model at Cal Poly
• Use of “big data” in education
• Adoption of new technologies in higher education – due to the rate of change in technology, this area reflected the highest degree of uncertainty during the discussions