



**OBTC 2017 at Providence College
June 14th – 17th, 2017**

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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Submission Template for the 2017 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

Title: Choppy Waters Ahead: Exploring the Changing Currents in Higher Education

Abstract:

Higher education is fighting a number of changing currents including, financial and competitive challenges; dramatic changes in college student demographics; increased accountability from the public, alumni, and accreditation agencies, and even changes in the perceptions of the purpose of higher education. This session will provide an overview of these changing currents followed by a collaborate dialogue using a World Café format to explore where these currents may take us, how these currents may change what we do as educators, and what we can do to prepare our institutions and ourselves to navigate these currents successfully.

Key Words: Higher Education Changes, Change

2) Teaching Implications:

What is the contribution of your session to pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

Aligning with the theme of this year's conference, Navigating the Changing Currents, this session has the learning goals of having participants better understand the changes occurring in higher education, evaluate how these changes may affect them and their institutions, and develop actionable strategies to navigate the changing environment of higher education.

Although higher education has been around for centuries, and in the US, our system of higher education can trace its roots to the founding of the country, there is much uncertainty around the future of higher education and the sustainability of our current system of higher education (Selingo, 2013; Moodys, 2015). Higher education is fighting a number of changing currents including, financial and competitive challenges, dramatic changes in college student demographics; increased accountability from the public, alumni, and accreditation agencies, and questions as to the purpose of higher education.

The proposed session seeks to explore these currents and what faculty and administrators can do to navigate successfully the changing currents ahead. The session will include an overview of the current status of major areas (currents) of change in higher education, followed by a collaborate dialogue using a World Café format to engage participants in exploring how these currents may change what we do as educators and how we can influence and help our institutions in navigating these changes.

The following is a brief summary of each of the currents that we will discuss in the proposed session:

Currents from Financial and Competitive Challenges

In the United States, there are approximately 4,700 higher education institutions and the number of colleges and universities has grown by nine percent since 2007, while the overall enrollment in US institutions has fallen from its peak in 2010 and the number of global higher education institutions has dramatically increased (Selingo, 2016; US Department of Education). A recent Parthenon-EY study (2016) found that the size of the student market cannot support the number of institutions operating today and identified more than 800 campuses in the US that are at financial risk of closing. High debt loads, deficit spending on facilities, and increased tuition dependency are among the top reasons cited for the financial struggles within the industry. Higher education institutions have raised tuition to offset rising costs with double-digit price increases for the past thirty-five years (Campos, 2015). More recently, due to the competitiveness of the market, college and universities have turned to discounting to compete for students. This has resulted in keeping net tuition rates flat since 2000, which helps students but causes financial strain on institutions. The revenue issue has been further hampered with declining federal and state funding available for higher education. To overcome these trends, institutions have turned to recruiting international students, who pay full tuition rates, to make up revenue shortfalls. One country, China, accounts for nearly 60% of the international student growth at US colleges and universities (Parthenon-EY, 2016), **making this strategy particularly risky with the uncertainty of China's economy** and large growth of Chinese higher education institutions. In what ways do institutions need to change how they spend their resources in order to compete in an increasingly competitive global marketplace?

Current from Changing Student Demographics

While total undergraduate enrollment in colleges and universities in the US increased by 37 percent between 2000 and 2010, and is projected to increase 14 percent from 17.3 million to 19.8 million students between 2014 and 2025, what these students look like however, has and will continue to change (US Department of Education, 2015). A National Center for Education Statistics report (Hussar & Bailey, 2013) projected the white student population, which has traditionally been the majority of undergraduate students will increase by only 4 percent, while African-American student enrollment is projected to increase by 25 percent and Hispanic student enrollment is projected to

increase by 42 percent during the next ten years. One of many challenges with these changing demographics is that minority children are three times more likely to live in poverty than white children are and these students are more likely to be first generation college students. First generation college students are significantly more likely to drop out than students who have a parent with a college degree (DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor & Tran, 2011). In addition to race, the rise in enrollment of students 25 and older is expected to be nearly double that of traditional college aged students through 2020 (US Department of Education, 2010). Similar to minority students, non-traditional students are more than twice as likely to be low-income as traditional students are and therefore are more likely not to be as prepared for college (US Department of Education, 2010). Many of these non-traditional, first generation, and racially diverse students also need remedial education in order to be successful in college, at a significant cost to students and institutions (Douglas-Gabriel, 2016). In addition, a recent study (Nguyen Barry & Dannenberg, 2016) found that full-time undergraduate students who take such courses their first year are 74 percent more likely to drop out of college. How do programs, advising, and support services need to change to adequately prepare this new generation of students to be successful in college?

Currents from Accountability and Accreditation

In 2006, the US Department of Education released the Spelling Commission Report on the future of higher education noting that over the past decade, literacy among college graduates has actually declined. Unacceptable numbers of college graduates were entering the workforce without the skills employers say they needed. These results are consistent with a study by Arum and Roska (2013) who found 45 percent of the students in their study demonstrated no significant improvement in key skills, including critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing, during their first two years of college. In exploring public perceptions of the value and quality of higher education, a 2011 Pew study reported that a majority of Americans (57%) say higher education institutions fail to provide good value for the money. These findings, in part fueled by the increasing cost of college, have helped ignite calls for standardized testing of college student outcomes **similar to those required by 2001's No Child Left Behind federal education law** due to the lack of clear, reliable information about the quality of postsecondary institutions, including the absence of accountability mechanisms to ensure that colleges succeed in educating students (Perez-Pena, 2012).

Accreditation agencies usually keep accreditation reviews private. Higher education institutions have expressed apprehension in releasing the results of accreditation reviews and learning assessments citing that focusing on what are easily measured ignores that much of what students learn does not become evident until well after graduation (Perez-Pena, 2012). Despite the pleas of higher education institutions, the US Department of Education (2006) has suggested a transformation of accreditation processes to meet the growing public demand for increased accountability, quality, and transparency and accreditation agencies are increasingly requiring more accountability

for outcome claims. How do institutions measure value and increase transparency while avoiding the potential consequences associated with standardized testing?

Currents from Changing Perceptions in the Purpose of Higher Education

Conceptualizations of the purpose of higher education vary by constituency and have the potential to affect the long-term viability of institutions of higher learning (Pew Research Center, 2011). Where the majority of college presidents see the role of higher education to help students grow and mature, current public conceptualizations view employment as the primary purpose of colleges and universities (Berrett, 2015; Cunha & Miller, 2014; Farish, 2015; Final Rule: Gainful Employment, 2014) and consider credentials as the primary industry output (Cook & Pullaro, 2010; Leonhardt, 2014; "Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act," 1989). Promoted by researchers, promulgated through mass media, and perpetuated through public policy these conceptualizations have become the dominant narrative of education in America; influencing the expectations and demands of a wide variety of stakeholders. How do colleges and universities align these conflicting perceptions so that the purpose of higher education meets the needs of a technologically advanced, rapidly changing world?

Other Currents Affecting Higher Education

In addition to the above current, as with many industries, higher education has and will be subject to change due to rapidly changing technology and the graying of the workforce. These currents are of even more concern for higher education.

Technology has become central to the process of learning and teaching in higher education (University of Oxford, 2015). Tuition-based online and massive online open (MOOCs) courses, flipped classrooms, and blended learning have all become part of the lexicon of higher education because of advances in technology. The widespread use of mobile technology is also causing changes to how faculty members teach and how students learn. All of these offer new approaches to traditional campus-based teaching and require different skills for faculty and infrastructure investments by institutions. How we recruit, accept, and advise students has also changed because of changes in technology with increased reliance on big data and analysis. University research has also been subject to change as the result of technology, with open access publishing and online-only journals gaining increased acceptance.

Finally, who is teaching at colleges and universities is also in a sea of change. There is a graying of full-time faculty, with at least 25 percent of tenured or tenure-track professors over age 65 (Selingo, 2016). This trend is not expected to change anytime soon, as a recent TIAA-CREF survey of faculty over the age of 50, found 65 percent of older faculty noted they were reluctant to retire and planned to work past traditional retirement age (Yakoboski, 2015). To gain flexibility in the future, many institutions have increased the use of contingent (contract) instructors that do not have tenure protection, changing the role of faculty.

The waters ahead are indeed choppy not only for higher education institutions but for the faculty members who work at these institutions. Nevertheless, what will future water hold and what can we do about it? This is what this session will explore, using the format outlined below.

3) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how *well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.*

The following is a summary of the proposed session:

Activity	Time
Introduction of Facilitators and Session	5 Minutes
Brief overview of each "Current" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currents from Financial/Competitive Challenges - Currents from Changing Student Demographics - Currents from Accountability and Accreditation Agencies - Currents from Differences in the Purpose of Higher Education - Other Currents (technology, graying of the faculty, etc.). 	25 Minutes
Time of Discussion at roundtables in World Café format - 3 rounds of 15 minutes each	45 minutes
Harvesting of Ideas (debrief)	10 minutes
Wrap Up & Closing	5 minutes
Total Time	90 Minutes

The following is an overview of the activities that will occur throughout the session:

Introduction of facilitators and session

The session will begin with a brief introduction of the facilitators, each of whom has worked not only as a faculty member, but in leadership positions within their institutions, worked with accreditation bodies, or have done advocacy work in helping to shape responses at their institutions to the changing currents within higher education. The facilitators will also give a brief overview of the World Café format (www.theworldcafe.com) and goals of the World Café sessions.

Brief overview of each “Current”

The facilitators will give a brief overview of the current status of each of the areas (currents) noted in section two above to give participants facts and a common base of knowledge for discussion.

Discussion using World Café Conversation format

The goal of this part of the session is to foster collaborate dialogue, active engagement, and constructive possibilities for action. Each facilitator will lead a table aligned to each of the four currents and explore the following questions at each table:

What shape do we think this current will take? What opportunities and challenges do we anticipate from each of these currents?

What should we be doing to prepare our institutions and ourselves to navigate this current successfully?

What can we do to set or change the direction of where this current may take us?

We will conduct three café sessions of 15 minutes each, to allow participants to switch tables if they would like to contribute to the discussion of up to three of the currents. Consistent with the World Café design principles, we hope that having participants move between tables will allow for the connection of diverse perspectives, and shared listening to determine themes, patterns, and insights.

Harvesting of Ideas (Debrief and Wrap Up/Closing)

The final activity will be to share our themes, deeper questions, and actionable strategies with the larger group. We are hoping participants will gain a larger network to assist in navigating these changing currents within their own professional career as well as at their institutions.

4) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of **Navigating the Changing Currents?**

This session as built around the theme for this year’s conference, exploring the changing currents at a macro level: higher education as a whole. As these changes will affect most OBTC participants in some way, we feel the proposed session will be one that not only aligns well with the theme of the 2017 OBTC conference, Navigating the Changing Currents, but also will be a session that will be of great interest to many attendees.

5) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?

We have not presented this work before and this work is not under review with any other outlet. We believe that this session will be unique and well suited for the OBTS membership of engaged academics, as it explores the future of what we do as educators and the challenging currents facing higher education on a micro and macro level.

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