Yale SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
Chief Executive Leadership Institute

Commerce & College: The Business of Higher Education

Executive Summary

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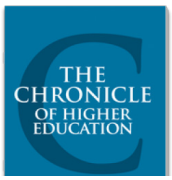

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Battling "Business-ification"?

Overview

Business leaders seem increasingly positive about the critical role of higher education in preparing the workforce of the future and are increasingly interested in partnering with higher education.

Context

Yale President Peter Salovey, who just returned from the World Economic Forum in Davos, shared observations from his interactions with business leaders about higher education.

Key Themes

Attitudes of business leaders toward higher education appear to be shifting.

Much has changed in the attitudes of business leaders toward higher education in a relatively short time. When Peter Salovey first attended the World Economic Forum six years ago there was a great deal of celebrating tech star college dropouts. There was significant distrust about higher education.

This year was different. Salovey heard the following:

- Business leaders understand that big data, analytics, and artificial intelligence will be critical to their business. They need help from colleges and universities to make sense of it all.
- There was a great deal of talk about the workforce of the future. Business leaders see a need for graduates who have a strong liberal arts education. Businesses want people who are flexible and who know how to learn.
- Corporate leaders believe universities can use their convening power to bring people together, across boundaries and barriers.
- Business leaders see opportunities to partner with universities to commercialize discoveries.
- Businesses want universities to prepare the next generation of leaders. This means encouraging students to engage in vigorous debate, articulate fresh ideas and viewpoints, and be able to develop actionable plans.

Peter Salovey, 23rd President, Yale University

Salovey noted that there remains distrust of higher education among some, but sees improvement in the Edelman Trust Barometer.

> "Overall, I'm encouraged. I heard positive themes. Business leaders see the need to turn to higher education institutions."

Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld, Senior Associate Dean, Yale School of Management

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Balancing the Books:
Student Markets, Faculty Markets, and Financial Markets

Overview

Higher education faces numerous challenges including market and demographic challenges, funding issues, and problems of inequity. Leaders are attempting to address these issues by engaging in fundraising, changing the business model, partnering, broadening their focus to new groups of students, and creating more diverse and inclusive climates.

Context

Higher education leaders discussed the many issues they are facing, particularly a shrinking market, declining funding, and challenges addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities. There are no easy solutions. Yet amid these difficulties there are abundant success stories and opportunities. Realizing these opportunities requires a willingness to change operating models.

Key Themes

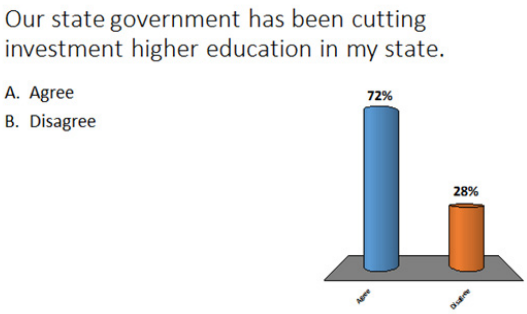
Higher education leaders are wrestling with multiple challenges and crises.

The list of major challenges confronting college and university leaders is long. Among the challenges discussed were:

- **Distrust of higher ed.** Even though Peter Salovey sensed more optimism about higher education among business leaders at the World Economic Forum, and even though there has been a slight uptick in the Edelman Trust Barometer, higher education is still experiencing a general trust problem. Populists on the right view higher education as elitist and ultraliberal, while populists on the left see higher education as too expensive. The public continues to question the value of education and is exposed to a stream of controversies on campus, driving skepticism.
- **Difficult market dynamics.** Small liberal arts schools face daunting headwinds. There are too many institutions and the market is declining. These are not research institutions and they are not engineering schools. Many have small endowments and limited philanthropy. These institutions have a fundamental business model problem. As a result, their only financial lever is to raise tuition, which is not sustainable.
- **Achievement gaps and inequities.** Minority students and low-income students experience significant achievement gaps. Eliminating these gaps is necessary to fill all of the open jobs requiring skilled workers. It is in the interests of institutions and the nation.

> "The U.S. has a problem with inequality, which is reflected in our schools. We have to solve this in the U.S. and in higher education."

- **Financial pressures.** Beyond liberal arts schools, most institutions—especially public universities—have financial pressures. In the aftermath of the Great Recession, funding for public education was cut and is not coming back, as governments are under pressure to spend on public health, welfare, and safety. State spending on higher education has been cut in more than two thirds of states.



A participant noted that financial stress scores have been calculated for 2,300 institutions, showing that many institutions are under significant financial stress. (African American students are overrepresented at stressed institutions.) The reality is that the market will naturally winnow and some of these stressed institutions won't survive.

- **Wasteful research.** One participant noted that a great deal of research is based on a faculty member's personal interest as opposed to a research agenda intended to benefit society. This results in a great deal of waste.
- **Making college affordable.** Nationally, tuition costs have continued to rise, putting a great deal of pressure on middle-class and low-income families. As a former legislative leader explained, the wealthy can afford to pay for college and there is financial aid for the poor. It is the middle class who get squeezed, as they don't qualify for aid and can't afford tuition. The leader resisted efforts to increase tuition in California, pushed the system to create greater efficiencies, and focused on better aligning spending with existing pots of money.

John A. Pérez, 68th Speaker, California Assembly; Regent of the University of California

An education leader from an urban community college that serves low-income students said that even if tuition is covered, educating low-income students is still extremely difficult. Many are working multiple jobs and must decide between spending money on subway fare or lunch. These students need additional support to stay enrolled and complete their education.

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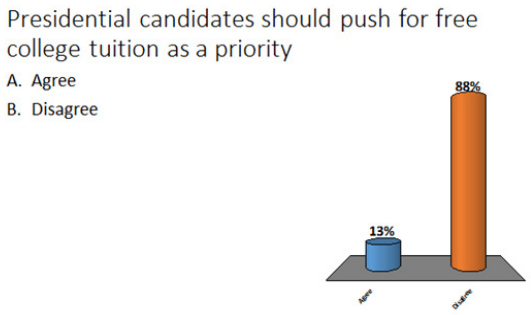
Despite the need to make college more affordable, the vast majority of participants do not support making free college tuition a national priority. Most support more targeted policies to help those in need, as opposed to a blanket policy making tuition free.



- **Student debt.** Nationally there is more than $1.5 trillion in student debt, which is a national crisis. Some blame this crisis on higher education, which has consistently raised tuition. However, no Summit attendees see colleges and universities as the source of this crisis.
- **Short time horizons.** One education leader noted that politicians and external stakeholders impose pressure on higher ed leaders to deliver short-term results. This leader advocated for elected officials and trustees to have a longer time horizon.
- **Difficulty measuring outcomes.** A trustee expressed frustration about lack of efforts within higher education to measure outcomes. Data is needed to show that graduates secure jobs that they otherwise wouldn't have gotten. Such outcomes data will show the value of investing in higher education. This individual believes greater emphasis is needed to measure outcomes and disseminate the results.

In confronting these challenges higher education leaders offered solutions and success stories.

While the challenges facing higher education are significant, Summit participants shared ideas and solutions. They encouraged thinking broadly and creatively to identify new opportunities.

- **Use data to understand your market position.** One participant noted that there is a great deal of data available to educational leaders and trustees about an institution's health. He encouraged leaders to access this data, understand the institution's position in the market, and then act accordingly. He bemoaned what he views as too little use of available evidence.

  One president described having a dashboard that displays key metrics about her own institution and about other institutions she wants to follow. A participant mentioned a big data solution that allows educational leaders to understand their institution's research performance and compare their institution to competitors.

Christine M. Riordan, 10th President, Adelphi University

- **Differentiate.** Too many schools look alike. In a crowded market those institutions that survive will be able to differentiate themselves. Institutions are adding nursing schools, engineering programs, and data science degrees. One religious institution in a conservative region is unique because it is more liberal. A small liberal arts college in a rural area has completely redefined itself and is playing a different game, offering new programs and degrees that are unique to its region.

> "Each institution is different. All need to have a point of distinction."

- **Partner.** As discussed more in session 3, long-term success requires a range of collaborations and partnerships—with other institutions to form an educational continuum and with businesses and the community.
- **Create a more diverse, inclusive climate.** Institutional leaders are aware of the data on achievement gaps, inequities, and underrepresentation of minorities on campuses. And, they are working to address these issues. The priority is to create a campus climate where all individuals, especially minority students, are welcomed, comfortable, and safe.

John B. King Jr., 10th U.S. Secretary of Education; President & CEO, The Education Trust; Robert A. Brown, 10th President, Boston University; and Roslyn Clark Artis, 14th President, Benedict College

Leaders recognize there is still a long way to go. Participants discussed the need to act intentionally to change the climate. They need to hire more minority faculty and shared examples of specific programs and initiatives where students are encouraged to engage in open dialog with other students from different backgrounds.

One participant mentioned formation of a diversity committee as part of the board of trustees. This committee pulls together all data related to diversity and ensures the board is closely tracking diversity.

- **Think early about merging.** Not all institutions will survive. And, while merging is not always the solution, it can work in some situations. But mergers do not occur overnight. A participant described how the trustees at one small institution acted years before a crisis in orchestrating a successful merger.
- **Target unserved populations.** In contrast to those who see shrinking demographics for higher education, others see a new era of opportunities. Among the opportunities discussed were:
  - *Non-completers.* There are approximately 30 million people who have begun but have not completed their degree. Institutions can target these individuals to help achieve completion.
  - *Veterans.* At Syracuse, veterans comprise about 5% of the student body, compared to less than 2% of students at most schools. Veterans are mature, committed, and add a great deal to the campus community.

Kent D. Syverud, 12th Chancellor & President, Syracuse University

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- *Non-traditional students.* Currently about 40% of students at traditional institutions are non-traditional students. Many are members of the workforce who are in need of reskilling. By only focusing on traditional students institutions are missing a huge opportunity.
- *"Long life" learning.* There are more than 75 million baby boomers reaching retirement age. Many of these individuals will live at least 30 more years. These individuals have time and want to be active. One participant argued that institutions should see these individuals as an enormous opportunity and that preparing Americans for this next life stage should be an obligation of public universities.
- *International students.* Public institutions are focused on out-of-state students because they pay higher tuition and all institutions are working to attract international students. Another opportunity that many institutions are pursuing is setting up international campuses. In many instances even private institutions can get significant support from international governments when locating there and educating local students.

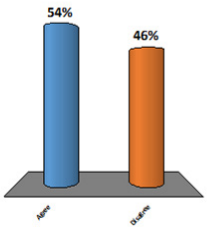
- **Cut costs.** Institutions are making efforts to operate more efficiently and take out costs.
- **Engage in proactive fundraising.** As one president said, "No small college closes because it is too rich." Education leaders must heed this call to be proactive in raising significant funds. Institutions are advised to raise money well in advance, well before a crisis. A leader whose institution has just embarked on a major campaign listened carefully to alumni and has created an emotional appeal about preparing future leaders.

John D. Simon, 14th President, Lehigh University

In raising funds, a slight majority of educational leaders (54%) would welcome the active engagement of business entrepreneurs as mega-donors. The others would be receptive to a large donation but are not enthusiastic about an entrepreneur's active mission engagement.

I welcome the active mission engagement of business entrepreneurs as mega-donors.

A. Agree
B. Disagree



Bennett College provided a real-time case study and a cautionary tale.

At the time of this Summit, Bennett College had to raise $5 million by the end of the week to stay open. Bennett, located in Greensboro, North Carolina, is one of two historically black colleges for women in America.

Some participants believe it is too late for Bennett and view Bennett as a cautionary tale. Participants observed that catastrophic collapses don't happen overnight and noted that Bennett has been in peril for years. Other participants faulted Bennett's board for allowing the institution to get to this state.

When asked to provide advice to Bennett's president, participants suggested that short term she engage in furious fundraising, consider merging, and seek support from larger institutions, especially those where Bennett students go for graduate school. Longer term, Bennett must restructure, change its operating model, form partnerships, and make other changes based on understanding the market.

Bennett College President Phyllis Worthy Dawkins, who joined via video conference, said the groundswell of support from the African American community, the higher education community, and the faith-based community has been tremendous. She said that after raising the necessary funds Bennett College will maintain its mission, but will in fact restructure and will change its business model.

Phyllis Worthy Dawkins, President, Bennett College, joining via video conference

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Partnering Across Community Pillars:
Building Bridges Across Sectors

Overview

A main theme from this Summit was that no single institution can do everything on its own. For institutions to survive and thrive requires intentional strategic partnerships on multiple dimensions. This includes effective partnerships with the private sector, partnerships with state and local governments, partnerships with local communities, and partnerships with other institutions, including public and private institutions as well as community colleges. It is through partnerships that institutions can focus on a differentiated offering while building an educational continuum.

Context

Participants discussed the importance of partnerships and the different types of partnerships that are needed for higher education institutions to succeed.

Key Themes

Institutions need leaders who can form strong, diverse partnerships.

Newly elected Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont—who at the time of this Summit had been in office just two weeks—summarized some of the challenges in Connecticut. While the state has an educated workforce it ranks last in job creation and entrepreneurship, and is facing enormous budget issues.

Business leaders have told Lamont that the role of the University of Connecticut, the state's leading public university, is to create an ecosystem to jump start the state's economy.

Ned Lamont Jr., Governor, State of Connecticut

Mark Ojakian, the President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system, agreed. He said it is necessary for Connecticut's state institutions to become more entrepreneurial, form partnerships, change and reengineer their operating model, and provide taxpayers a good return on their tax dollars.

The president of a private institution in Connecticut said that public and private institutions are often in opposition and competition. She believes it is important for the state government and public institutions to change their attitude toward partnerships. Ojakian is optimistic that Lamont will be a strong champion of public-private partnerships in the state and will appoint a new leader at UConn who will make partnerships a priority.

Joanne Berger-Sweeney, 22nd President, Trinity College

Higher education must form meaningful ongoing partnerships with the private sector, which is easier said than done.

Summit participants were in agreement that meaningful partnerships involving higher education and businesses are extremely important. But multiple education leaders recounted failed partnership efforts. Comments included:

- Most partnerships aren't really partnerships. There is a relationship, but it falls far short of a true partnership.
- Educational leaders perceive that businesses often come to the table stating, "Here's what we need." This is not a partnership. Educators want business partners who will help build.

Judy D. Olian, 9th President, Quinnipiac University

- At times public institutions are pushed to attract businesses to the state by forming partnerships. But these supposed partnerships are actually unfunded mandates. The state puts responsibility on the public institution to execute the partnerships and provides no funding. This makes public universities reluctant to enter into partnerships.
- A leader who has facilitated many successful business/higher education partnerships observed the many partnerships do not work. Often participants view the relationship as a short-term transaction as opposed to a long-term strategic relationship. In addition, the partners tend to operate in silos instead of becoming integrated.

When partnerships between higher education and businesses are successful:

- Both the institution and the businesses are deeply committed and invested.
- The partnership is not a one-off transaction. It is an ongoing relationship.

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- There are common goals. For example, the Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF) works with multiple businesses and higher education institutions in a specific geography to develop the highest-value talent for that area, such as data scientists or cybersecurity professionals. The parties agree on the curriculum. The institutions develop an educational program. The businesses help fund this program. The businesses then provide internships, mentoring, and jobs. Such partnerships help the businesses fill talent needs; help the institutions provide relevant, cutting-edge programs; help the students find good jobs; and help the local community.

Robert M. Zemsky, Professor, University of Pennsylvania

An example was shared of a university with an engineering school that partnered with a nearby engineering company. The company already had labs. This provided a real-world learning environment for students, which didn't require capital investment by the university. Further, this company had experienced engineers who found satisfaction in teaching and sharing their knowledge with students, who could then become interns and employees. This partnership was a win/win for the university, the company, and students.

Often overlooked is the need to partner with the local community.

Multiple presidents stressed that partnerships must not be limited to commercialization and economic development. Institutions of higher education have a responsibility for civic development and for working closely with their local communities.

Lawrence Schovanec, 17th President, Texas Tech University

Presidents noted that while such partnerships are critical to the university, they are often difficult to form. One reason: unlike research partnerships or commercialization partnerships, forming partnerships with the local community doesn't go on a faculty resume, making it difficult to get faculty buy-in. Nonetheless, presidents must prioritize community partnerships.

Also essential is the need to partnership across the educational continuum.

Presidents were in agreement that no institution exists in isolation. Institutions must collaborate and partner to achieve broader educational goals, instead of operating in isolation or as competitors. Institutions can thrive by leveraging their unique strengths in partnership with other institutions that have complementary strengths.

This entails forming partnerships between public and private institutions as well as between community colleges and four-year institutions. A former president of an Ivy League institution noted that four-year institutions tend to be standoffish. When she led an Ivy she spoke about the importance of working with community colleges. She thought this was the right thing to do and would help improve her institution's image among detractors. She also took on this issue with other Ivy presidents, who were not terribly interested.

Ruth J. Simmons, 18th President, Brown University; 8th President, Prairie View A&M University; 9th President Smith College

The reality is that the public gets the importance of community colleges and of having an educational continuum. Legislators and businesses are also strong advocates for community colleges. Higher education leaders need to pay more attention to creating an educational continuum.

A prominent educational leader who has led multiple institutions believes it is possible to build an educational continuum. He believes a goal where one third of students in higher education come from community colleges is achievable.

Robert Berdahl, President Emeritus, Association of American Universities; 8th Chancellor, UC Berkeley

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Leadership Paradoxes of Purpose:
The Coddling of the American Mind

Overview

Professor Jonathan Haidt argued that the confluence of modern parenting and social media has produced a mental health catastrophe among American teens and college students.

Students have been emotionally coddled and have not learned to cope with difficulties. They don't know what it means to struggle, fail, think critically, and be exposed to new and differing perspectives. A result is a mental health crisis that extends to classrooms and campuses, causing faculty and other students to walk on eggshells about what to say or how to act.

This issue makes the already difficult job of university leaders even more difficult. Academic leaders must understand and deal with this emerging crisis, while preserving the fundamental purpose of higher education in seeking the truth.

Context

NYU Stern School Professor Jonathan Haidt, who recently co-authored *The Coddling of the American Mind*, provided an overview of the ideas from the book and responded to questions. Several participants shared relevant comments and perspectives.

Key Themes

A mental health crisis is occurring among college-age students.

In the past few years a visible change has occurred on college campuses, and that change is now supported by data. The change is linked to the introduction of the iPhone and the widespread adoption of social media. Related threads include:

- Political polarization, which began in the 1980s and 90s.
- Significant increases in rates of anxiety and depression among teens, particularly girls.
- A rise in "paranoid parenting." For example, a generation ago parents would let their children first walk a few blocks to a friend's house at age 5; now it is age 12.
- A decrease in free play. Parents are fearful of children playing outside. Children have parent-managed experiences, but not true adventures.
- A growth in bureaucracy.
- A rising passion for social justice.

Of particular concern are dramatic increases in the rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide for teens and even pre-teens. It is a generational change and is not linked to more stress. It is an inability to cope and deal with stress during critical formative years, brought about by changes in parenting and use of technology. These problems are beginning as young as age 10 and are increasing through high school. The problems blow up when kids get to a college campus.

> "This is not usual. It is a mental health catastrophe."

As one participant said, "This data undermines the assumption that when kids get to college they will be fine. It's not true. Students are at significant mental health risk."

Students' mental states are affecting the nature of debate and learning on college campuses.

One of the fundamental purposes of a college education is to engage in critical thinking and the pursuit of truth. This involves being exposed to differing perspectives and points of view. It means struggling and grappling.

But students who have been coddled throughout their lives and who feel anxious and depressed are threatened by different perspectives and ideas. Students who feel threatened are not comfortable being exposed to ideas and information that run counter to their existing views. Even a relatively small number of students can be disruptive in an academic environment. This social anxiety is apparent in classrooms and on campuses where students protest ideas being taught or speakers who are invited to campus. It is increasingly common for faculty or other students to feel that they are "walking on eggshells."

Jonathan Haidt, Professor of Ethical Leadership, NYU Stern School

> "It is not just a crisis of mental health. There are implications in the classroom and throughout the university."

Some students (and even some faculty and administrators) are advocating for "safe spaces." Professor Haidt believes there can be safe spaces on campus, but doesn't view the classroom as a safe space. The classroom should be a place for rigorous debate, evidence, and pursuit of the truth; not for safety.

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Haidt quoted Van Jones, who said, "I don't want you to be safe, ideologically. I don't want you to be safe, emotionally. I want you to be strong. That's different."

Academic leaders believe that students need to be given more agency.

Academic leaders face a challenge. They want to encourage students to speak up and show initiative. But they want students to speak respectfully and to be open minded when exposed to different ideas. One leader suggested that "students need to have more agency."

Examples were shared of student initiatives to improve the climate on campus.

- At one institution students came up with a new extracurricular activity called, "Ask me anything." This activity entails panel discussions involving students. One panel was of African American students, with another panel composed of Muslim students. All students were encouraged to attend the panels and to ask any questions to these panelists about their views or experiences. This dialog helps improve understanding.

Charlene Drew Jarvis, Trustee, Oberlin College and University of the District of Columbia

- Another institution created a way for students to speak to each other where one student could respond to another by saying, "Do you know how I hear that?" For example, an African American student was told by a white student, "You are very articulate." The white student meant the comment as a compliment, but the African American student found the statement insulting. By responding, "Do you know how I hear that," the students better understood each other.

Both of these examples are student-initiated efforts to improve the dialog and relationships on campus. Another participant suggested that faculty use pedagogy to instruct students on how to engage in positive, open-minded, collaborative dialog.

Participants offered comments both agreeing with and challenging Haidt.

Comments included:

- A general view that the issues identified here are issues not just for students but for society. (Professor Haidt replied that they are generational.)
- An argument that there is more diversity of thought now than 100 years ago, despite the supposed fragility of some students today.

G. Gabrielle Starr, 10th President, Pomona College

- Criticism about mismatched data. For example, further exploration of the data about anxiety and depression would likely show a greater problem among Asian American women. Also, there are fewer reported incidents in pockets like South Central Los Angeles, where there is greater trauma but less access to assistance, and more incidents in more affluent areas where all teens have smart phones.
- A question about "who is doing the coddling?" For example, few inner city kids are believed to be coddled. Also, kids in sports and art have been exposed to struggle, failure, and public judgment. (Professor Haidt said that coddling is more linked to class than race; he believes perhaps the top 50% to 60% of society coddles their children. He agreed about the value of sports and art. He also believes veterans are resilient because they have experienced conflict and struggle.
- An aversion to classes about resilience or overcoming failure. This is not something learned in a classroom; it is learned by wrestling, grappling, struggling, and failing.
- Social media has hyper-connected society, changing how people interact. Professor Haidt thinks that most of the ramifications are bad.
- A view that the experience on campus of low-income and minority students is different and most leaders miss this.
- An anecdote by a participant whose son lives in a dorm at Columbia University where a student committed suicide. Ten kids on the same floor said they couldn't cope, were unable to continue to live on this floor, and had to move out. Haidt said the reaction of the kids at Columbia proves his point: kids today run away from difficult situations instead of confronting them. He recounted a similar incident from his freshman year, a generation ago, where no students asked to move. Haidt said the way to get over phobia is to be exposed to it.

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Educators as CEOs:

How Are You Different from Industrialists, Financiers, Journalists, Clergy, Diplomats, Statespersons, NGOs, and Everyone Else?

Overview

Make no mistake, being a college or university president is extremely hard. There is intense pressure, multiple demanding constituencies, no days off, and constant crises. Yet educational leaders feel a calling to be in the education sector. Despite the challenges, a career in education provides the opportunity to do good and make a difference in people's lives. While it may be difficult to realize in the heat of battle, the good far outweighs the bad.

Context

Educational leaders discussed their roles managing the business of higher education, and shared frustrations, challenges, and feelings of satisfaction.

Key Themes

Education leaders understand the importance of business skills in leading higher ed institutions.

A majority of Summit participants believe that most college presidents lack necessary business training for the job. And, while some participants are troubled by the increasing use of business language, tools, and values in higher education, the majority are receptive to incorporating business tools and practices.

Survey Question	% Agree	% Disagree
I think most college presidents lack necessary business training for the job.	69%	31%
I worry about the increasing use of business language, tools, and values in higher education.	42%	58%

Source: Real-time poll of CELI attendees

Leading an academic institution is both incredibly challenging and rewarding.

Throughout this Summit, university presidents described the many difficulties and challenges that are faced each day. One compared this situation to being alone in a small rowboat with different constituencies all screaming through megaphones. Leaders in higher education must deal with trustees, politicians, faculty, students, the media, and a host of other stakeholders. University presidents essentially run a holding company with multiple subsidiaries. It can be a difficult, lonely position.

One participant with 30 years of experience as a university president said that everyone has an agenda and it is difficult to connect with peers. Another referenced a recent article in *The Atlantic*, "Who Wants to Be a College President? Probably not many qualified candidates."

Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, 15th President, The George Washington University

Former George Washington University President Stephen Joel Trachtenberg discussed his most recent book, Leading Colleges and Universities: Lessons from Higher Education Leaders. This book on lessons and success stories followed his previous book on leadership failures, Presidencies Derailed: Why University Leaders Fail and How to Prevent It. The lessons in this book are collected from university leaders who shared their personal experiences. Among Trachtenberg's own lessons: He should have left his position earlier, a view that was shared by others.

But amid the lamenting about the difficulties experienced by leaders in higher education, a retired president stated, "These are the greatest jobs in the world, because we can do huge amounts of positive good."

He acknowledged, "Yes, there is rain sometimes." But in dealing with occasional rainy days and inevitable criticism he suggested keeping things in proportion and heeding Hillary Clinton's advice to "grow thicker rhino hide." In his view the good that a president can accomplish far outweighs the frustrations and difficulties. Others agreed.

Joel Seligman, 10th President, University of Rochester

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Legend in Leadership Award

Ruth J. Simmons, 8th President, Prairie View A&M University; 18th President, Brown University; 9th President, Smith College

Presented by

Richard H. Brodhead, President Emeritus, Duke University

John B. King Jr., 10th U.S. Secretary of Education; President and CEO, The Education Trust

What Ruth Simmons has done will never be replicated, said Richard Brodhead. She first led a women's liberal arts college, then an Ivy League research institution with a health system, and now an HBCU. No one will ever follow a similar path. And, at each of these institutions she has been a tremendous leader and commanded enormous respect. She used these good feelings to deal adeptly with major challenges.

Secretary King celebrated President Simmons' leadership and called her an inspiration. He termed President Simmons a leader who has opened doors and created opportunities for the most vulnerable.

In reflecting on her journey, President Simmons characterized it as a simple story. She was the youngest of 12 children born in a poor, dangerous part of Houston. But she lived near a library where she borrowed books and learned to love learning.

At elementary school her teachers wrapped their arms around her and loved her. Her high school teachers did the same and helped secure a scholarship at Dillard University. These teachers provided clothes out of their closets and helped pack her suitcase to send her off.

President Simmons was so moved by what others had done for her that she imagined the same opportunities for every child. She committed herself to education and to the idea that every day educators have a chance to help make life a little better for kids and communities. This has been her guiding light and motivation throughout her career.

Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld, Senior Associate Dean, Yale School of Management; John B. King Jr., 10th U.S. Secretary of Education, President & CEO, The Education Trust; Legend in Leadership Award recipient Ruth J. Simmons, 8th President, Prairie View A&M University, 18th President, Brown University, and 9th President, Smith College; and Richard H. Brodhead, President Emeritus, Duke University

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Participants

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David Bach, Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs, Yale School of Management

Kimberly W. Benston, President, Haverford College

Robert Berdahl, President Emeritus, Association of American Universities; 8th Chancellor, UC Berkeley

Joanne Berger-Sweeney, 22nd President, Trinity College

Richard H. Brodhead, President Emeritus, Duke University

Robert A. Brown, 10th President, Boston University

Kai Bynum, 109th Head of School, Hopkins School

Kimberly R. Cline, 10th President, Long Island University

John Comerford, 21st President, Otterbein University

James W. Dean Jr., 20th President, University of New Hampshire

Richard Doherty, President, Association of Independent Colleges & Universities in Massachusetts

Patricia Finkelman, Chair, Board of Trustees, Grinnell College

James P. Firman, President & CEO, National Council on Aging

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Lori Dickerson Fouché, Trustee, Princeton University; CEO of Retail & Institutional Financial Services, TIAA

Stephen J. Friedman, President Emeritus, Pace University

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Kimberly M. Goff-Crews, Secretary & Vice President for Student Life, Yale University

Jonathan Haidt, Professor of Ethical Leadership, NYU Stern School ; Author, *The Coddling of the American Mind*

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Jake B. Schrum, 21st President, Emory & Henry College

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Joel Seligman, 10th President, University of Rochester

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John D. Simon, 14th President, Lehigh University

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Michael K. Thomas, President & CEO, New England Board of Higher Education

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