Welcome to today’s WCET Webcast

*September 15*

The webcast will begin shortly.

There is no audio being broadcast at this time.

An archive of this webcast will be available on the WCET website next week.
Narrowing the Digital Divide: Pragmatic and Student-Centered Approaches

September 15
Welcome!

Use the question box for questions and information exchange.

Archive, PowerPoint, and Resources will be available next week.

PowerPoint can be downloaded via the link in chat.

Follow the Twitter feed: #WCETWebcast.

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Live Captioning Provided by Our Sponsor
Questions from the Audience

If you have a question during the presentation, please add your questions to the question box.

We will monitor the question box and have time for Q&A at the end of the webcast.
Moderator

Sharon Leu
Senior Policy Advisor, Higher Education Innovation
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#WCETWebcast
Speakers

Mordecai Brownlee  
Vice President for Student Success  
St. Philip’s College

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Senior Advisor, Policy and Government Relations  
EDUCAUSE

Robin DeRosa  
Director, Open Learning & Teaching Collaborative  
Plymouth State University

Nate Southerland  
Provost and Chief Academic Officer  
Coconino Community College
Jarret Cummings
Senior Advisor, Policy and Government Relations
EDUCAUSE
The Digital Divide Comes to (All) of Higher Ed

• Many institutions have felt the Divide directly/persistently, but for most, campus networks and computer labs limited the impact.
• Beneath the surface, though...
  • 2018 study: 20% of students surveyed “had difficulty maintaining access to technology (e.g., broken hardware, data limits, connectivity problems, etc.).”
  • Microsoft, 2019: Nearly 163M Americans not at broadband speeds.
• Then, COVID-19...
  • No access to campus labs or networks (except from the parking lot).
  • Students without (good) personal devices returning to unserved/underserved areas, homes without (good) devices or with only one for all.
  • No library access, no Starbucks WiFi, maybe data-capped mobile access.
• Campuses shipping computers, WiFi hotspots; ISP donations/deferrals.
Fed. Policy: Options Now, Solutions Later?

Near-term: Address student device/broadband access in relief funding (EDUCAUSE & 29 associations comments to Congress)

- Pass the *Supporting Connectivity for Higher Education Students in Need Act*: $1B fund for institutional grants to support student devices/access.
- Add Pell Grant eligibility to Lifeline criteria; ensure that schools/libraries work with higher ed to promote any new community access via E-Rate.

Long-term: Include broadband in national infrastructure plan

- Fund broadband to unserved/underserved areas (urban and rural) and ensure affordable service once the connection gets there.
- Don’t forget research and education (R&E) networks.

In the meantime: Well, my new friends have some suggestions...
Mordecai Brownlee

Vice President for Student Success

St. Philip's College - Alamo Colleges
Closing the Gap on the Digital Divide


- Digital divide is a term used to describe the gap present in society between those who have access to the internet and technology and those who don’t.

- COVID-19 has exacerbated a societal issue that has been present for years, especially in our rural and low-wealth communities.

- It is imperative that institutions develop intentional strategies to ensure that students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, students of color, students with disabilities, active military, and veterans can make progress on their academic pathways toward economic and social mobility.

- Now is the time for institutions to innovate their approaches to access, engagement, and responsiveness.
Tips on How to Close the Digital Divide

• Know your students – Dive into the data.
• Know the voice of your students – Create opportunities to receive student feedback and incorporate your students into process improvements.
• Know the challenges of your students – Pivot according to student needs.
• Make no assumptions – Institutions should be prepared to offer an array of student services and supports through the duration of the student's career.
• Clear the pathway for student success – Credential attainment is the gateway towards the elimination of poverty and social/economic mobility.
• Career and Technical Education (CTE) must innovate as well – It is time to revolutionize what we consider to be "hands on" education.
• Community Colleges Have Long Powered the Economy. To Sustain That Role, They Must Innovate.
Robin DeRosa

Director,
Open Learning &
Teaching Collaborative

Plymouth State
University
"Ed" vs "Tech": How to Drive Decisions

- Frictionless solutions can create problems for the long run.
- Who should develop, build, own educational infrastructure?
- What is the role of institutional mission in crisis management?
- Unmet learner need is an opportunity for innovation.
- Alignment enables scale.
ACE Framework: colab.plymouthcreate.net/ace
Nate Southerland

Provost and
Chief Academic Officer

Coconino Community College
Lessons Learned:

(1) Know your students.

- Coconino County: 18,661 sq. miles | pop. 145,000 | 1/3 tribal land | tourism #1.
- CCC Students:
  - 60% first generation college students.
  - Most in need of remedial math & English.
  - Many have never learned online before.
  - Significant levels of housing & food insecurity.
  - Many live in areas with little infrastructure – roads, water, electricity, cell service.
  - Those with access to infrastructure are often competing with others in their households or communities for limited bandwidth.

- IMPLICATIONS: Design and deliver with the audience in mind – “low tech” or low-bandwidth solutions might work best, and teach students how to learn remotely in their context.
Lessons Learned:

(2) Know your faculty.
- By instinct, faculty tend to teach how they were taught. There’s a steep learning curve that can’t be ignored.
- Faculty often extrapolate from their own experience – “if it works for me, it will work for the students.”
- Faculty live in the same community with the same limitations as students.
  - Limited infrastructure
  - Competing for limited bandwidth with other household members
- IMPLICATIONS: Focus on teaching and learning, train on tools and strategies.

(3) Know your partners.
- Other local entities (K-12 schools, gov’t agencies, businesses) serving the same residents with the same challenges.
- Partner with economic development efforts (gov’t agencies, private business) on infrastructure projects and advocacy efforts.
- IMPLICATIONS – Share resources and work together!
Questions from the Audience
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Access to the resources discussed during this webcast, including the archive, will be available next week.

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