

# Making Waves in Higher Ed

By Chris Jurek, Joe Sciulli, and Barbara Chance

The Society for Campus and University Planning (SCUP) met in Pittsburgh in July for its annual international conference. The most prestigious SCUP award was given to Donald Norris, one of the authors of “Transforming in an Age of Disruptive Change.”

This report focuses on the dramatic changes in higher education; what those changes mean for members of campus communities as well as for parents and students; and how institutions can move forward to make the most of these changes.

SCUP noted that the authors indicate that three “disruptive waves” are changing college and university life. They are:

- A crisis in funding (rising costs and salaries, expensive buildings, lower or no government subsidies, pressure on tuition increases).
- A revolution in technology that affects the business model (online learning, video lectures, free courses, less need to be on campus).
- The expectation that higher ed institutions will educate not only 18-22 year olds, but also train and retrain individuals throughout their careers.

If these are the “disruptive changes” affecting colleges and universities, what will they mean for parking and transportation organizations that serve these communities?

## “Show me the money!”

The crisis in funding has led higher education administrators to seek additional revenue wherever they could find it. Parking programs, whether or not run as auxiliaries, were one source of revenue that could be increased.

Monetization of parking facilities (sometimes known as Public-Private Partnerships) was a “game changer” at The Ohio State University, but after much consideration, no other universities have followed this example.

However, many universities are pressing parking programs to generate higher revenues to (a) cover unrelated costs in the General Fund; (b) cover more related costs, such as transportation, TDM programs or public safety; or (c) cover all construction costs so that no other college or university funds are needed to support construction or operations of parking facilities.

As financial problems persist, and institutional costs rise, will parking departments be asked to raise additional funds? How controversial will it be to fund non-parking services with money primarily generated from members of the campus community (“that is money out of my pocket!”)? What cuts in services or operations may result if parking revenues are diverted for other purposes?

## “Technology is just a tool ...” ~Bill Gates

Much has been said about the potential for technology to reshape the higher education landscape, but it seems likely that it will affect campus parking and transportation needs in one of two ways.

First, it’s quite possible that technology could lead to reduced demand for transportation and parking by enabling online classes, video lectures and other methods of learning. By allowing learning to take place off-campus, fewer students and faculty would have a need to be on-campus on a full-time basis, thus reducing the number of trips taken to campus and the number of parking spaces needed for personal vehicles.

Continued on Page 12



# Making Waves in Higher Ed

from Page 10

Alternately, by allowing all or parts of classes to occur online, technology may open up the market to a wider array of students who were previously unable to participate due to time and distance constraints. Technology could help expand the higher education marketplace to new audiences that may come to campus only occasionally, but would still represent additional demands for parking and transportation services.

Technological changes in instruction and transfer of information are sure to continue to disrupt both higher education and campus parking and transportation. In this case, two contradictory results could come from this technological disruption. The question remains, though, how can campuses prepare for either scenario now?

## Nights and weekends may be the new 'days'

Let's assume for the moment that institutions of higher education will take on the role of lifelong career retraining centers, as asserted in the report by Norris et al. What are the implications for parking and transportation?

First, additional evening and weekend demand for parking and transportation services may be expected from non-traditional, second- and third-career students.

Second, the evening "cross-over" period may become more congested, as exiting employees and entering students may strain present roadway networks and intersection service levels.

Third, circulation patterns and wayfinding within surface lots and garages will become more crucial for maximizing throughput and minimizing safety hazards.

And fourth, vehicular and pedestrian traffic for evening special events may need to be either shifted to other off-peak times, or accommodated through improved traffic control, wayfinding and peripheral parking (for evening students and/or event patrons), increasing the demand for inter- and intra-campus transportation.

The above multifaceted scenario would likely generate additional costs for parking, transit and public safety units in terms of staffing and technology and resource allocation.

## "There is nothing permanent except change." ~attributed to Heraclitus

In consideration of the anticipated or possible effects of changes in funding, technology and campus populations, here are some proposals for consideration.

- Encourage staff members to look beyond the day-to-day duties of their positions and keep a keen eye on what is happening in your institution as a whole. Lead by example, and schedule time to review information about population projections, online learning, recruiting of non-traditional students, master plans, and other changes on campus. Discuss what the implications may be for your programs.

- Review your budget and consider it as an "outsider" might. Create a "cheat sheet" of basic facts – operating cost per space for surface lots, operating cost per space for garages, percent increase in program operating costs over the past five years, percent increase in revenues over the past five years, amounts of parking dollars spent for non-parking programs or functions, extent of reserves and their anticipated use (write-down of costs for new facilities, lighting upgrades, PARCS replacement, new enforcement technology, etc.), projected changes in the budget over the next three to five years. Share this basic information with staff, so that they can give informed answers to questions they may receive in the field or in meetings. Consider how you might be able to increase revenues in ways other than raising rates, if you were required to do so.

- Take the time to build close, data-driven relationships with campus planning, admissions and human resource officials regarding the present and projected population levels and demographics of students, faculty and staff by campus. Then, by establishing existing

**"Disruption takes a left turn by literally uprooting and changing how we think, behave, do business, learn and go about our day-to-day."**

*Caroline Howard, Forbes staff writer, 3/27/2013*

driving ratios and presence factors by group, campus and major time periods, parking and transportation professionals will be able to better calibrate existing demand levels and thereby more accurately target future parking and transportation needs, as well as other vehicular and pedestrian access improvements. The report authors have found more often than not that the time needed to gather these highly related but infrequently associated data

elements is significant. So it's best to start now by building those key relationships and data sets to prepare for the campus of the future.

- Build and maintain your campus stakeholder groups. If there is little understanding on your campus about the roles of parking and transportation, the financial facts, the services offered and the extent of functions performed, you are not likely to have many folks in your corner if negative changes are suggested for your department. Take a new look at your website, newsletters, "tweets," Facebook pages, and articles in the campus newspapers. When is the last time someone from your department met with each of the faculty, staff and student representative groups on campus? What are you doing to receive and address campus concerns, and how are you letting people know you are interested in soliciting good ideas?

It's impossible to predict the extent to which funding, technology and changing populations will affect campuses, but it *is* possible to prepare for how to address these changes. And it's never too early to start.

**Chris Jurek, Joe Sciulli and Barbara Chance are from Chance Management Advisors. Contact them through the company website: [www.chancemanagement.com](http://www.chancemanagement.com).**

**PT**