

#DisruptED2013: *How innovative forces are changing higher education*

The following is a compilation of delegate notes from the Nov 12, 2013 half-day conference on Disruptive Innovation in Higher Education.

Questions Posed to Delegates at the Start of the Day

What are some of the biggest issues facing higher education?

- enrolment and retention
- staying relevant
- increasing costs, decreasing funding
- What is the value of a degree? (pessimistic public about the value of a degree)
- basic literacy
- MOOCs
- increased demand for post grad studies but shortage of academic positions for graduates
- balance between teaching, research, community service
- content delivery, course work
- reading/research material
- faculty technology adoption
- information proliferation
- faculty hiring
- demographics
- students' expectations and study process
- applying new theories and practices to existing institutional structures
- balance between facilitated learning in classroom and flexible online options
- engaging high school graduates in first year "university style" courses (these students are new learners!)
- passive versus active learning
- increased pressure from students for their success
- constant distractions from technology
- tension between theoretical and practical
- level of education in K-12
- lack of dynamic thinking
- adjusting to rapid change
- accommodating and addressing the needs of communities and life-long learners
- learning and working with communities and learners at a distance
- evolution of young people away from sustained focus
- sufficient full-time faculty to support grad student programs
- local population decline

What technologies could have the largest impact on higher education?

- increased speed and access to the Internet
- access to Internet
- MOOCs
- computing and Internet in general
- cost of developing or purchasing software
- the increasing use of a variety of modes for communicating
- social media
- eText/course material
- smart phones (both positive and negative impact)
- Those will have the greatest impact that serve the content rather than dictating the content or trying to make it more appealing to their own interests than the interests of the education Gods
- open source apps.
- mobile technology
- online schools
- technology that generates greater access
- free multimedia creation tools accessible to students and professors
- Wikipedia and Google information sources
- credit for online learning
- increased pressure to use technology in classroom, without resources on how to use them effectively
- recording lectures for playback laboratories
- Google Glass
- YouTube
- Those that are adopted for sound pedagogical reasons rather than chasing fads/trends
- Who can predict this?
- any tool that can provide an inclusive learning environment in the most remote community in New Brunswick
- compatibility issues

What brought you here today?

- studying strategy and the UNB reaction to MOOCs
- an interest in how technology can improve our educational efforts
- an interest in how technology impacts higher education for those who have print and physical disabilities
- curiosity
- learning more about opportunities and directions for future growth
- broadening possibilities in education modalities
- networking with others on campus who are thinking about educational technology issues
- the potential impacts of disruptive technology on Academic Advising in practice
- class requirement
- hear what colleagues on campus are thinking about the topic
- learn about forces that will lead to paradigm shifts in higher education
- professional development
- hope to learn something to improve teaching and general effectiveness
- the keynote speaker
- interest in the latest buzz word in educational technology
- hope to see the institution invest in local resources instead of foreign corporations

Questions Posed to Delegates at the End of the Day

What was your biggest surprise today?

- information scarcity versus abundance
- the concept of a degree as a prophecy for being ready for work is failing
- need to focus more on people over 20.
- Peter Smith's focus on non-traditional students
- the emphasis on drawing in the non-traditional student community (e.g. adult learners)
- Felt that MOOCs are not a disruptive technology in that it raises more questions about delivery than it answers. Therefore not changing the status quo as a true disruptive technology.
- no discussion of the economics of MOOCs and online development
- that many more people are looking beyond MOOCs as the primary disruptive technology and folks are engaging in analysis of disruptive technologies and are concerned about pedagogical value/outcomes
- the shortness of the involvement of the featured speaker
- the number of high quality UNB faculty presentations
- wonderful to hear mention/acknowledgment of services from our libraries

- opportunities/applications for peer assessment/discussion
- perhaps the sense of open-mindedness about MOOCs
- how much is going on – need more sharing?
- the Twitter feed while the speaker was presenting – this was rude to the presenter and incredibly distracting to audience
- the concept that we should consider serving a completely different market
- how few senior academic administrators showed up
- the president leaving
- the impact of online education to Africa
- disappointed in the deterministic language being used
- the emphasis placed on the institution and faculty in the presentations as this is all existing information, tools and strategies
- no water in Saint John!
- the high turnout and campus interaction
- easy availability of peer assessment tools
- how Coursera works

A quote/take-away from one of the speakers?

- protect the people implementing change
- collapse of hierarchy- those that remain are of value
- technology needs to carefully and meaningfully integrated into our pedagogy
- “technology’s impact on society is substantial, not underestimated.”
- the average adult spends about 15 hours per week in informal learning
- “Lens of our own experience can’t cope with the magnitude and rapidity of change. Doing nothing is the riskiest option”
- “To change means admitting we can do better.”
- Power hierarchies are changing whether those in power want them to or not through the improved communication made possible by technology
- the democratization of communication
- “Great content is no longer a differentiator.”
- A degree as a guarantee to work is over. Danger: employers stop believing in higher education
- Is technology intensifying/supporting the commercialization of universities?
- when technology gets out of the way it becomes magical
- imagine a hospital that turns people away because they don’t meet a health standard
- “Asking core to re-invent itself, odds of failure go up. Ask core to inform itself, make own decisions, odds are better.”
- Adapt: standing still is not an option

- Prior Learning Assessment- accept that smart people will arrive
- “We have moved from information scarcity to information abundance”
- “not technology for own sake”
- “Change is inevitable – except from a vending machine.”
- Peter Smith’s emphasis on reflection, but if he says “standing still is not an option” how do we create space to reflect
- being prepared for success within the institution when the solution is coming from groups external to the institution.
- “I’m an early adopter but not someone who knows what she’s doing.” – Rosie Redfield
- make sense of your learning
- Don’t fear change
- Form a separate group with finding an administrative structure to explore.
- Need safe havens to experiment with new forms/models

Future speakers you’d like to hear?

- Rosie Redfield
- Someone to speak on: the merits of “in house” to create expertise within the institution versus using the “cloud” as a platform; the issue of proprietary/patented encumbered formats for materials, e.g. Microsoft Power Point versus open formats
- Ray Kurzweil
- experts in information access rather than teaching strategies using technology
- Eric Mazur
- more speakers from other universities
- Kevin Burton of Atlantic First Nation Help Desk
- Sir Kenneth Robinson
- Daniel Pink
- someone from university administration where MOOCs have been adopted to discuss the implications (financial, accreditation, etc.) of MOOCs versus onsite learning

In addition to the written comments, many of the delegates contributed thoughts throughout the conference using Twitter, and those have been captured in the following Storify link:

<http://storify.com/suehellman/unb-disrupted2013>