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Keynote Address
Sleepless in Higher Education: New Roles, New Forms and New Urgency

Abstract

A Gallup survey released on October 15, 2013 revealed that many are hesitant and ambivalent about online learning as it compares to the traditional classroom. While technology forms got a few good marks for providing choices, they fared far worse in tailoring for individuals, quality instruction from quality instructors, and rigorous testing and grading.

While public enthusiasm for technology is muted, tax and tuition payers are demanding change. Even the President of the United States weighed in, “Families and taxpayers can’t just keep paying more and more and more into an undisciplined system where costs just keep on going up and up and up. We’ll never have enough loan money, we’ll never have enough grant money, to keep up with costs that are going up 5, 6, 7 percent a year. We’ve got to get more out of what we pay for,” Obama said. The same is true in China. The head of the China National Committee on Aging touted the efforts of the University of the Third Age as it strives to use technology to deliver learning services for lifelong learning.

There is pressure to spend less, do more, to MOOC and to flip. College trustees (I know, I am one) look to higher education and want it all. They seek change, improvement, efficiencies, excellence, and a strategy that leverages technology. They juggle desires to supplant old ways with tendencies to use technology to provide additive elements. Are the key players in higher education ready? How are university executives, professors and students responding to this new and urgent world? What is happening and what is on the horizon?