

## Conclusion

### *The Challenge of Weaving Principles with Practice*

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It is time now to gather these essays and section summaries into an ending. From this rich selection of material, we have extracted questions and challenges that especially caught our attention. These we have arranged into six sections: general impressions, defining flexibility, assessing institutional politics and change dynamics, designing and managing flexibility for students and teachers, false promises and false prophets, and interrogating our practice. Because we wished to preserve their voices, we have often quoted our contributors directly.

#### GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

First is the sheer numerical scale of opportunities for the informed development of flexible access policies, of learning and assessment designs, and of teaching methods. The basic educational challenges around context-sensitive quality teaching and learning remain, even when mediated by changing technologies, but the scope for educational remediation and the development of human skills is now huge. Allied to scale is our second impression—the sheer diversity of learner groups. Local culture and current barriers and opportunities do influence students' access to and success in higher education, as Victor Chen, Rose Liang, and Yu-mei Wang suggest. Colin Latchem and Insung Jung, and likewise Milly Daweti and Jean Mitchell, remind us, for example, that the market in educational content may not always be kind to learners in cultures remote from the culture of the country that produced the content.

Our third impression is the quality of analysis, the ethical stances, and the depth of experience that all the authors bring to this book. As Arthur Wilson notes, they are indeed “fully reflective, analytical, and insightful professionals.” We see their skill with narratives that illuminate the stressors that often accompany institutional rhetoric and new policy directives. Many authors question the discourses of defining flexibility and ask that we grapple with issues that lurk below the surfaces of everyday work.

Most important is their general injunction to treat the “F” word as a highly complex and often disputed term. Its meaning frequently reflects multi-layered responses to government and corporate economic agendas. Kathy Nicoll argues that the concept of flexibility is a fluid, not a static one, often connected to the “production” of the “multi-skilled, flexible worker, who is able to move from task to task, team-working, solving problems, and learning” and “has been promoted as paradigmatic of the economically successful organization.”

Also key, we learn, is our analytical duty to label the limits of flexibility in practice. Listen to David Harris, as just one example:

Clearly, flexible learning encompasses as many paradoxes and contradictions as conventional learning. It is important to avoid seeing flexible learning as some panacea and to view it instead as an ambiguous development, one that requires intervention to develop the “good” sides and avoid the “bad.” The provision of interactive technology alone will not solve the problems posed by the existing social, cultural, and professional barriers to participation on the part of both students and staff. The most passionate advocates of flexible learning do seem to recognize this, in a way.

Our thirty-three colleagues also bring with them a legacy of experience that enables them to recall the values that drove flexible practice earlier in the twentieth century, such as proof of increased access to higher education, managed quality of teaching materials and processes, and learner-relevant advice and tutoring services. Yoni Ryan is one such pioneer:

I prefer to revisit those typical early definitions of *flexibility*, the ones that emphasized learner-centredness, more choice over entry pathways, information on courses and services, and second- and third-chance

opportunities. There the student, not the technology, is the pedagogical driver. That's a principle worth our patience.

In opening this book, Frits Pannekoek calls for a return to the earlier foundational goal of distance education, one that did not centre around a for-profit business model that too often excludes the less well-off:

What remains clear is that “open universities” and the flexible-learning movement must seize the initiative again to ensure that flexible learning becomes the hallmark of the public movement to remove all barriers to learning—the barriers of time, geography, income, and ethnicity. The quest for equity should not become an opportunity for profit!

Mary Simpson and Bill Anderson (like others) value working within a recognized professional history, a condition of knowledge and principled support that we three have found to be immensely gratifying, as well as necessary. “History is important,” they write. “Knowledge of the field of open and flexible higher education and of developments that have brought us to the present must guide us toward quality provision.” They go on to point out that “distance education is not a recent development, nor is it a static field. . . . Each generation of distance educators has, or should have, taken from the previous one and built on it.”

Generally, our authors both illustrate and argue for taking the long view of educational practice. The successful adoption of changes in policy or even of procedures designed to ensure greater flexibility (however defined) requires enormous institutional energy. It takes time to summon up such energy: it is not merely a matter of accepting delivery of a new product or idea and expecting that it will then be widely adopted. Time is also used up in developing the changes expected from new teaching, management, or system surveillance technologies. As Yoni Ryan says, “it takes the university time to digest the technologies it ingests.” Andrew Higgins and Mark Northover explain, for example, that not all institutions give staff enough time and “space” for the inevitable mishaps or near-misses in quality control.

Our fourth and final impression is the key lesson that strategic intent toward flexibility (however defined) does not necessarily translate into

sustained change toward improved flexibility: see, for example, Cathy Gunn's chapter. Mary Simpson and Bill Anderson ask, "Why does high-quality open and flexible higher education remain so elusive and seemingly so hard to achieve?" We need to better understand why: not merely identify which factors are operative, but find out how many of these are covert and depend on the channels of subterranean power. Many restraining factors are discussed throughout the chapters, but among the key ones are these: institutional inertia, too-brief responses to rapid change, universities that value research monies and results over teaching excellence, what Mary Simpson and Bill Anderson describe as "unhelpful systemic rigidities" encountered as institutions mature, competing agendas within and across institutions, and accompanying external political and economic pressures and discourses, whether covert or overt. Kay McKeogh and Seamus Fox put it this way: "Certainly, if we (personally) were to design the truly flexible and adaptive university, we wouldn't start with traditional universities." Ultimately, however, strategic intent toward greater flexibility succeeds in producing clear and generally understood (if not always easily accepted) action when its proponents possess a sophisticated understanding of institutional politics. Especially important here, as the chapters by Hardy, Higgins and Northover and by Scantlebury and Needham illustrate, are the attitudes and perceptions held by senior administrators but rarely signaled as they manoeuvre to advance their own agendas. As Arthur Wilson reminds us, "Money and interested parties can often be counted on to conflict."

#### DEFINING FLEXIBILITY: DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE

Julie Willems notes that a wide variety of definitions of *flexibility* exist:

The interlinked terms *flexible learning* and *flexible delivery*, in both skills-based and knowledge-based post-secondary contexts, have been conceptualized in a vast number of ways and according to the perspective of the various stakeholders involved. These stakeholders have been identified as the politicians, managers, administrators, marketers,

program and product developers, teachers, support staff, and students involved in any flexible-learning program.

In the introduction to this book, Liz Burge refers to Ted Nunan's advice to his readers to wax critical. As she points out, Nunan (2000, 50) argues that it is up to practitioners to decide "whether to support or resist the changes that parade under the banner of flexibility," in spite of the intellectual challenges posed by the "multiple meanings" and "contested terms and concepts" that cluster around the notion of flexibility. Terry Evans and Peter Smith refer to these multiple meanings as the "fogginess of the terminology," which in turn helps to generate the "fog of flexibility." And Yoni Ryan reminds us that the "early conceptions of flexibility, in the 1980s, encompassed a more holistic notion of how education systems and practices must change to encourage more students to consider 'learning for life' and to accommodate difference and diversity in our societies."

Communications scholar David K. Berlo (1966) argues that meanings are in people, not in words. As the scholars in this book have noted, the term *flexibility* has many dimensions and means different things to different people within the context of an institution, a faculty, an administration, a student body, and employers. Within those contexts, the applied definition of *flexibility* may vary considerably among individual faculty members, students, administrators, and so on. Colin Latchem and Insung Jung use the metaphor of the blind men and the elephant to help us understand the quandary of trying to define *flexibility* while each of us has a hold of a different part of the whole.

As Chère Gibson and Terry Gibson note earlier in this book, "the biggest challenge is to define *flexibility* in the context of your own institution and specific set of circumstances and then to use that definition to frame policies, procedures, and costing models that can be widely communicated, whether these pertain to students, faculty, or the institution itself. Arriving at the situational definition of *flexibility* should be a collaborative process, one that involves students, faculty, administrators, and funding agencies."

Flexibility may, in the current wave of massification (moving from an elite to a mass public-sector higher-education system), be championed as the solution for cost-effective education for the masses (see Yoni Ryan's

chapter, as well as the chapter by Daweti and Mitchell). As Frits Pannekoek observes in his foreword, “those countries that can sort out the cultural, political, economic and institutional realities of flexible learning will be the leaders in the new knowledge economies.”

The challenge is to get it all sorted out: to get *flexibility* defined in situational terms while being cautious about using flexibility as a slogan for higher education.

#### ASSESSING INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS AND CHANGE DYNAMICS

As Arthur Wilson reminds us, “flexibility does not come free or without burdens, costs, challenges and constraints. Everyone knows that. But actually understanding your context—that is, understanding your organizational setting well enough to create possibilities of/for flexibility—is another matter altogether.” The question is, where to start?

All too often, we experience the problem of hierarchy, which inherently privileges the knowledge of senior administrators. Failure often begins early, particularly in the context of flexible learning, when administrators neglect to consult with those who hold the most direct, experienced-based knowledge. Cathy Gunn notes that “devising strategy at the top of an organization and driving it downwards is excellent in many respects” but goes on to discuss the pitfalls of this approach:

Where it often falls short in the context of flexible learning . . . is in its failure to foster grassroots involvement from the outset. This behaviour overlooks the value of drawing on the experience of those already familiar with developing flexible-learning programs through a process of experimentation, evaluation, and changed practice. Without this grounding, risky forecasts, sales pitches, and personal or political agendas may become the significant drivers.

How do we start to create possibilities of/for flexibility? First, we must assess power interests across the organization. “As change managers know,” write Andrew Higgins and Mark Northover, “the strategic success

of any substantial innovation will be determined by the politics of the process rather than by the inherent value of the innovation itself.” Second, it is critical to focus on capacity development, with an eye to seeing all possible roadblocks. As Cathy Gunn observes, “faculty and organizational development through action learning are key enabling methods, with the core aim being to identify and remove barriers to the achievement of strategic goals. The examination of different perspectives is important because the impact of strategic plans varies according to individual roles, priorities, and experience.” Third, to ensure sustained strategic success, we need to attend diligently to how staff interact at various levels of administration and how professional trust may be cultivated inside those interactions. Darcy Hardy advocates breaking through “the barrier of mistrust” through “the establishment of strong relationships,” noting that “when some of those relationships are with influential administrators, they can open doors across an entire campus—or a system, for that matter.”

We must expect to identify a wide range of institutional challenges to flexing institutional policies and procedures. The major challenges are, according to our authors, lack of consultation across the academy, lack of a shared and personal vision of flexibility in higher education, time-strapped faculty, protective staff when it comes to course design and intellectual property, conservative teaching methods, perceived lower esteem placed on teaching in comparison to research, concerns regarding lack of funding and its impact on the quality of teaching, rapid arrival and departure of technologies for teaching, perpetual “politicking” and boundary disputes, and an overall frustration with the slow pace of institutional change. Sadly, the findings of Kay McKeogh and Seamus Fox may be more universal than one might hope, as their contextual analysis revealed “widespread support for the rhetoric of flexibility and accessibility, combined with a deep-seated attachment to the traditional model of students sitting in classrooms listening to lectures.” We need to understand the challenges and constraints if we are to move beyond them!

Perhaps our greatest challenge is to create a learning organization. Arthur Wilson quotes Peter Senge, a management change expert with a focus on these kinds of organizations, and his colleagues, who argue that “it is not enough to change strategies, structures and systems, unless

the thinking that produced those strategies, structures and systems also changes” (Senge et al. 1999, 15). Speaking of technology’s role in widening access, Arthur Wilson urges us to “see these multiply mediated mechanisms of interaction as fundamentally shaping human cognition and interaction, as well as being shaped by them,” pointing out that “just as a book shapes the way we think and how we think shapes the formation of the book, so too such reciprocal shaping occurs in the digital age.”

Therefore, the on-the-ground lesson here for increasing operational flexibility is cognitive flexibility, but this is not an easy accomplishment. Thinking about new technologies, experimenting with new paradigms of teaching and learning, and moving beyond one’s disciplinary focus may be asking a lot of our faculty colleagues, and changing the policies and structures that emerged from traditions of another time seems daunting. How do we support them across these activities? As Wilson warns, unless we grapple with understanding “how fundamentally human cognition and interaction are changing,” we may yet “fall short of meeting the goal of enhanced access and ever more genuine flexibility.”

#### DESIGNING AND MANAGING FLEXIBILITY FOR FACULTY, STAFF, AND LEARNERS

While we design for flexibility, broadly defined, we must support for success. That said, will there be enough time to refine existing teaching models inside the whirl of new technology opportunities and information transfer? “Traditional frameworks for the development of academic knowledge do not sit comfortably with the speed of information sharing and information production that the Internet supports,” notes Denise Kirkpatrick. “An absence of new pedagogic models creates uncertainty for students and staff, and this is a challenge that we must tackle with great urgency.”

Yet Cathy Gunn argues that there is hope: “Experience shows that the pedagogical knowledge of capable teachers and/or learning designers in a supportive environment is the most effective driver of flexible learning at the level of practice.” One major barrier to the development of this pedagogical knowledge is the lack of structures, funding, and reward systems to support staff development and training. Our authors recount

many an effort that—in spite of managerial clout, rigorous research, monetary incentives, faculty support, student desires, and the passage of an inordinate amount of time—elicited neither faculty interest nor uptake. Andy Lane reminds us that “whatever the intended audience, it takes focused measures and much time to develop communities of practice that are durable.” But, for example, Kay McKeogh and Seamus Fox refer to two levels of resistance here—increased workload worries and conservative transmission models of teaching: “From interacting with colleagues, we know that there is little incentive for staff to take on the extra workload that would inevitably result from increased enrolments and the adoption of more innovative teaching and assessment methods,” they write. “However, even were adequate support and funding available, there is lingering skepticism about e-learning.” And this skepticism endures, even in the face of countless studies highlighting the outcomes of flexible teaching vis-à-vis the benefits of traditional higher education. Denise Kirkpatrick, among others, reminds us of the scale of the difficulties: “The introduction of flexible learning through information technologies is accompanied by serious challenges to the identity of academics, the construction of the notion of teaching and learning, and places strong demands on the culture and expectation of academic practice and higher education” (Kirkpatrick 2001, 175).

Perhaps as we reflect on supporting faculty and staff, our initial efforts should be directed at helping our colleagues re-examine their beliefs and practices related to teaching, learning, and pedagogy, as Adrian Kirkwood, Melody Thompson and Lorna Kearns, Alan Woodley, Denise Kirkpatrick, and others suggest. As Kirkwood observes, unless teachers engage in such re-examination, “technology will never do more than reproduce their existing approaches to learning and teaching, no matter how appropriate or inappropriate these might be.” But some might ask whether all our effort is perhaps misplaced. As David Harris suggests, tongue in cheek, “it might be more effective instead to put effort into diminishing the barriers to traditional education.” Then again, the growing range of technology-enhanced learning opportunities may also improve the flexibility for our on-campus students, as Kirkwood points out.

To the challenges of time, limited pedagogical knowledge, inherent skepticism, and the need to re-examine long-held pedagogical beliefs

and practices, Denise Kirkpatrick and Greville Rumble, among others, add yet another—keeping flexibility innovations cost effective within the increasingly competitive university budget processes. Added to that challenge is the peril of too much choice. As we encourage use of wikis, blogs, virtual learning environments, and other Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 tools, we confront faculty and students alike with the need not only to identify the range of tools available but also to select and use tools appropriately for the teaching-learning task—to say nothing of the challenge of evaluating learning. How do we provide reliable and informative help desk and support services for faculty and learners alike across the variety of teaching and learning tools in cost-effective ways?

Perhaps we need to return to Arthur Wilson's suggestion that we explore how fundamentally human cognition and interaction are changing and to Lane's suggestion of supporting faculty, staff, and learners through the development of communities of practice. To what extent are these changes in human cognition and interaction supportive of new models of teaching and learning, and of communities of practice and communities of support? What new models of support emerge for faculty, staff, and learners in this new environment of collaborative tools for teaching and learning? Which of these models enhance faculty and staff efficacy, satisfaction, and learner outcomes?

#### FALSE PROMISES AND FALSE PROPHETS

Some institutions have found it easy to seduce adults (and potential flexible-learning students) with false promises of easy enrolment, no requirements for prior knowledge, available financial aid and easy payment plans, easy-to-use technology, learning anywhere any time, 24/7 technical and academic support, a great wealth of resources via Web 2.0, and immediate employment in a high-paying position. Recent hearings in the United States Congress and articles in the *New York Times* testify to some of the unscrupulous tactics of non-profit and for-profit providers of "flexible" higher education. (See, for example, "Scrutiny Takes Toll on For-Profit College Company, 9 November 2010, [www.nytimes.com/2010/11/10/education/10kaplan.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/10/education/10kaplan.html?_r=1)). As Alan Woodley notes

in his chapter, “Plenty of Saps,” some flexible-learning institutions have made it easy for students to enroll, pay their tuition, and then fail to complete their studies. One “dirty little secret” is that some flexible-learning institutions keep their balance sheet positive only because a significant number of students don’t complete all their assignments. Tutors don’t have to be paid for assignments that aren’t completed.

The competitive environment—advertisements via television, radio, Google, Facebook, YouTube, newspapers, air travel magazines, pop culture magazines, and so on—gives prospective learners a wide array of choices, many of which make claims about the ease of learning and the degree of flexibility that is offered to the student. Missing from the marketing hype is any discussion on helping learners learn how to learn in a flexible-learning environment. Darien Rossiter notes that Cranfield University in the UK faces this issue of promise versus performance: “The vast majority of our learners are mature-age students, and while distance and online learning offers them greater flexibility in the workplace and in their lifestyles, many are not well equipped to be confident and successful independent learners.” Reflecting on the development of flexible-learning systems for the “real world,” Julie Willems further observes that “not all flexible-learning scenarios deliver the required skills sets in a scaffolded manner. I have already touched on the issue of how mature students are sometimes disadvantaged by relatively weak computer skills, a barrier they must work to overcome. Some students feel that they are plunged too early into complex content and left alone to cope—a sink-or-swim mentality.”

Effective flexible programs, as Michael Moore (2006, viii) describes them, offer “greater flexibility, less structure, greater opportunity for dialogue between teachers and learners, and [give] more control of the teaching-learning process to the student.” But we must all ask: Are all learners willing or able to assume this greater flexibility with less structure, more dialogue, and more control over their learning? Will they need time and support to grow into greater skills for flexible approaches? More time means more institutional resources for guidance. To what extent is increased student control seen as culturally appropriate? Richard Edwards and Julia Clarke (2002, 156) argue that flexible learning offers students a kind of competitive individualism, “a supermarket for self-managing individual lifelong learners to pass through, collecting the resources they

need to develop themselves in a society of control.” But they also note that this kind of individualism can be stressful and unwanted, offering a kind of limbo that can positively deter a hesitating student. Referring to their study of adult students contemplating entering further education, Edwards and Clarke suggest that some boundaries may bring some comfort: “Place, closure and constraint would therefore seem to have a positive value for many of the interviewees” (164).

Rapidly changing technologies add an additional dimension to complexity. As Yoni Ryan notes, we must deal with the “false prophets” who promise that the latest technology will bring about a revolution in education. They are plentiful and are keen to promote their hope and their hype. But being the first to adopt any new technology comes with challenges: sometimes the leading edge becomes the bleeding edge, as when later potential adopters refuse to accept expensive new technologies for various good reasons based on their own workplace culture. Institutions need to closely examine the “flash” versus the longer-term impacts and substance of new tools. What is here today may be gone tomorrow. The learning curve for managing such volatilities may be steep for institutions, faculty members, and students.

As Andy Lane points out, open educational resources have brought to some learners a delight of new learning opportunities and, to others, a dizzying array of options. Choice may become a burden when students are confronted by today’s information “forests.” Non Scantlebury and Gill Needham ask us how prepared we are “to see anarchy reign” in our garden of learning and whether we will “get involved in helping learners navigate its delights.”

#### INTERROGATING PRACTICE

The framing of paradoxes (Harris’s chapter), the use of provocative language such as “sap-production strategies” (Woodley’s chapter), and the asking of penetrating questions are notable in this book. We present here a representative selection of questions that made us pause, or grin in agreement, or think up a subsequent question (in italics). These questions, which prompt us into alternative avenues of analysis, may be useful

for both university-degree studies and professional-development activities in higher education around the world.

Like Andy Lane, Yoni Ryan, and Arthur Wilson, we are concerned about technology-driven thinking that encompasses, for the most part, only the latest products or theories. “But I am left troubled by the questions raised by Lane and Ryan,” says Wilson. “Is flexibility contributing to an ever more inequitable world, and is the technology itself (in its ever-evolving guises) supplanting pedagogy? I must say that in my own area of higher education, and with my earlier disclaimer still in play, I find these proclivities persistent and perhaps even pernicious”. It may be useful to recall a famous design principle still valued today: Leonardo da Vinci believed that simplicity is the ultimate sophistication, and the great German-American architect, Mies van der Rohe, believed that “less is more.” In other words, think with elegant but rigorous simplicity. Cathy Gunn’s plea echoes these principles: “The seemingly simple but penetrating questions remain: What are the missing links between policy and practice; why have they proved so persistent, and what can be done to address them?”

### *The Questions*

Melody Thompson and Lorna Kearns pose a series of questions to call for more rigorous analyses of flexibility in action, especially for long-term action after the consultants have left:

Is the flexibility manifested in the production of flexible employees, thus benefiting employers? Is it the hope of institutions looking for flexible alternatives to brick-and-mortar expansion? Is it access to an education no longer in-flexibly bound by age norms, standardized levels, and traditional formats, thus benefiting learners who missed out “the first time around”? Does flexibility consist in allowing instructors to teach in ways that express their own goals and needs as professionals? Flexible education can be all of these things, but it cannot serve all stakeholders equally in each context.

*Who, ultimately, may benefit the most publicly from institutional changes toward flexibility? And whose less-visible expectations ultimately carry the most power?*

“From where we stand ‘here,’ the pathway to ‘there’ is strewn with many barriers, detours and dead ends. So to what extent is it possible to actually get ‘there’ from ‘here?’” We extend Kay MacKeogh and Seamus Fox’s thinking to ask: *Are you sure that you have mapped “here” well enough? That you have included the dynamics of the clash between the forces of tradition and the forces of institutional marketing rhetoric?*

Denise Kirkpatrick poses some questions that directly affect her job as a senior administrator at the UK Open University: “How can we provide flexibility without complexity and create minimal confusion for our students and staff? How much choice is too much? . . . How can we provide flexibility in cost-efficient ways? . . . How do we ensure that learners can use these new forms—do students and staff require new literacies?” *Is there any operational “room” in the institution for centrally managed quality control of learning materials and literacy development?*

Kirkpatrick goes on to ask:

As our students are accessing the vast and rapidly growing body of information on the Web, how do they and we assess the value and credibility of sources? In a world where academics can build their courses “on the fly”—in real time, incorporating late-breaking news—and where students can create and co-create content, how do we ensure the quality of the materials, assure the authority, and the address the requirement that all learners have an equivalent learning experience?

*How do we ensure prudence and respect for some time-honoured principles of innovation-adoption criteria (Rogers 2003), the classic four “Laws of Media” (McLuhan and McLuhan 1988), and technology’s unintended effects (Tenner 1997), as well as context-sensitive teaching and learning principles?*

Arthur Wilson agrees with Andy Lane on a key point about innovation impacts: where are the negative and unintended effects? “Lane asks two very important questions,” he notes. “Will flexibility really create access to new ways of knowing and learning, and/or will flexibility help to engender a new type of inequality?” Alan Woodley questions whether one of the icons of twentieth-century distance-education development, the UK Open University, truly has achieved better access to education.

Given the university's four "sap production" strategies for building or maintaining student enrolments, how does the grand goal of flexibility apply operationally? "Is the pursuit of flexible education merely a cynical attempt to reduce teaching costs?" he asks. "And what impact does flexibility have on our efforts to break open that iron triangle of accessibility, quality and cost?"

And here we bring in the argument made by Daniel, Kanwar, and Uvalić-Trumbić (2009) for changing traditional definitions of quality in higher education in order to ensure more flexibility for students, especially in developing countries. Earlier conceptions of quality were based on high tuition cost and low or reduced access (exclusivity). Essentially, the revised model would delink high-cost residential study and localized examinations and instead use high-quality, standardized tests to achieve greater portability and allow students to study for them in whichever contexts they prefer. Such flexibility would especially help economically developing countries because "the aims of wide access, high quality, and low cost are not achievable, even in principle, with traditional models of higher education based on classroom teaching in campus communities. . . . Although this type of system has a long history, contemporary technologies such as eLearning and open educational resources promise to make it even more cost-effective today" (Daniel, Kanwar, and Uvalić-Trumbić 2009).

*One question, therefore, is this: if universities anywhere want to flex into new market opportunities with meaningful flexibility for students, what are the optimum ways of handling the vectors of cost, quality, and access?*

Signing off . . .

Our authors refer back to earlier valued principles of flexibility in higher education (in weaving terms, the warp). You have also read of all the cross currents and contextual complexities in the discussions (the weft) that illustrate varying views of the operationalization of flexibility. We leave you now with the opportunity to consider how the warp and weft in your own institution might weave the conditions for at least *some* greater, and sustained, flexibility.

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