



Empower student success with digital transformation

White Paper

Alcatel·Lucent 
Enterprise

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Connect students to their education

Conversations about digital transformation can very quickly become conversations about the enabling technologies. But digital transformation at colleges and universities isn't about adding new platforms, wireless technologies, or equipment. It's about campus transformation — using digital technologies to improve the way students learn, the way students and staff interact and collaborate, and the overall student experience.

The distinction is important. Focusing on student outcomes rather than technologies is the only way colleges and universities can address the challenges they face.

Students today are digital natives who grew up on TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and mobile devices. They expect a seamless, connected experience wherever they go with the information they need always, and quite literally, at their fingertips. Traditional approaches where each department within a school provides different learning options, communications mechanisms, and experiences don't fit with their learning styles or expectations. They find these siloed solutions confusing, complicated, and isolating, all of which diminish their potential for educational success.

There's simply no way to achieve true transformation when technology decisions are made by individual organisations within a college or university.





Effective learning must be social

A holistic, campus-wide approach to digital transformation aligns all technology decisions with the institution's overarching academic and administrative goals to eliminate the boundaries and barriers students encounter on today's campuses. It also allows schools to apply the benefits of social learning across the institution.

Social learning is based on a theory proposed by psychology professor Albert Bandura. Bandura's theory asserts that students learn by blending visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles to understand new concepts, retain knowledge, and apply them.¹ The collaborative aspect to learning engages students, encourages creativity, and helps them retain information to achieve higher educational success:

- In a 2020 survey, 76.9 percent of learners indicated they enjoyed working with social learning tools and 92.3 percent indicated the need to further include social learning tools as part of their formal education²
- Course completion increased to 85 percent on HBX, a Harvard Business School online education initiative, when it introduced social learning³
- Social learning approaches have a 75:1 return on investment (ROI) ratio compared to formal web-based training⁴

The days when students had to adapt their learning style and interactions to the way the school functions are over. With the right approach to digital transformation, higher learning institutions can achieve the ultimate objective: They can bring the school to students to put them at the centre of their education and make the journey from applicant to alumni as smooth, enjoyable, and rewarding as possible.

¹ [Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory](#), Simply Psychology, 2016.

² [Reflecting on Social Learning Tools to Enhance the Teaching-Learning Experience of Generation Z Learners](#), Frontiers in Education, January 2021.

³ [What Harvard Business School Has Learned About Online Collaboration From HBX](#), Harvard Business Review, April 2015.

⁴ [How to Use Social Learning in Elearning](#), Association for Talent Development, as reported by Gutenberg Technology (GT), September 2018.

Develop an end-to-end digital transformation strategy

To develop an end-to-end digital transformation strategy, schools must create a plan that considers the student experience before, during, and after their time at the school. Each aspect of the student experience must be considered as part of the school's core strategy, not as an afterthought. And all solutions must be designed around the needs of students and their education rather than those of institutions.

Six steps to a superior student experience

Step 1

Make recruiting initiatives more interactive and engaging

Recruiting tools, such as websites, provide a great opportunity to help potential applicants get a real sense of what it's like to attend classes, live on campus, interact with students and professors, and engage in activities at the school.

To meet these objectives, webpages must be easy to find, easy to navigate, and provide clear descriptions of university programs and life on campus. They must also be engaging, interactive, and enable personalised experiences. Adding technologies that support chat sessions, and that provide opportunities for voice, text, and email exchanges with recruiting staff, professors, and current students, can help. These experts can answer questions from prospective recruits and provide insights that help them better imagine life on campus.

Step 2

Look for opportunities to proactively improve student retention

Reducing dropout and failure rates among students is a priority for every college and university.

Data analytics technologies can help identify students who are struggling so they can be offered academic, emotional, psychological, and other support services before they reach the point of no return. To determine which students need help, the analytics software uses a baseline of successful students to pinpoint those who are experiencing difficulties. In cases where it makes sense, nudge technologies, such as personalised text reminders and chatbots, can then be used to encourage better academic performance from these students.

“We believe a step-by-step approach to developing a digital transformation strategy helps ensure each aspect of the student experience is fully reviewed and from there, the best options from a world of digital possibilities are selected,”

says Greg Kovich, Global Sales for Education, Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise.

Step 3 Create a true campus community

Technologies can be used to help students feel they're part of a supportive community.

A student-centric platform that supports social learning is a good way to build a campus-wide community. Students can use the platform to:

- Interact with one another and collaborate on class projects
- Exchange ideas and information with professors
- Get the latest departmental and school news
- Access information about campus resources, clubs, groups, and activities

The ability to connect, communicate, and collaborate through the channels available in the central platform helps to nurture students' sense of emotional safety and reduce feelings of isolation. For example, school communities, such as international students, can create channels to find other students from their country, who speak the same language, or who are experiencing similar challenges in a new country.

Additional applications can also be integrated into the community platform to broaden its capabilities. Students can also use the platform to:

- Chat during audio and video conferences
- Reserve resources, such as a study room or library book
- Explore on-campus dining options and menus
- Receive updates and personal assistance for help desk tickets they've opened

Step 4 Support different learning styles and locations

Every school must now ensure it can support students' preferred ways of learning.

Before the global pandemic, most college and university students attended in-person classes. Post-pandemic, many will want to return to in-person learning. However, some will want to continue learning from their apartment, their dorm room, a library, or another location, and have the flexibility to watch recorded lectures when it fits their schedule. Others will want to take advantage of hybrid in-person and remote learning.

The school's digital transformation strategy must support all these options and include technologies that allow the school to be as agile and responsive as possible to evolving student preferences as well as unexpected circumstances, such as severe weather events and on-campus emergencies.





Step 5 Ensure student safety and security

Technologies can be used to keep students physically safe and their information digitally secure. In this case, it's important to evaluate technologies that increase collective safety and security as well as those focused on protecting individuals.

Technologies that contribute to collective safety include emergency mass notification systems that instantly alert students and staff to major events using voice and data channels. These kinds of events could include a fire, flooding, or a gas leak in a campus building, an approaching storm, or a threat to human safety.

Schools must also assess technologies that allow key staff members to communicate and coordinate with first responders during emergencies, so they always understand the precise threat level and potential consequences for those on campus. And they must choose extremely resilient technologies that ensure online

learning and critical campus services remain available during and after unexpected events and emergencies.

When evaluating the best ways to protect individuals on campus, technologies such as panic buttons, safety hotlines, and alarms monitored through a campus-wide safety dashboard are good options. These technologies can be implemented indoors and outdoors, so everyone on campus always has fast and easy access to at least one alert mechanism.

From a cybersecurity perspective, it's important to develop a multi-dimensional plan that protects networks and data from cyberattacks. A good cybersecurity plan has four aspects to it:

- Authentication
- Authorisation
- Auditing
- Administration

The network must also be designed to safeguard personally identifiable information in a way that meets privacy regulations, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) in the U.S., or the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union.

Step 6 Stay connected with alumni

The final step is to determine how technologies can be used to help students stay connected with the school, and with each other, after they've graduated.

Staying connected with alumni is a great way to help ensure former students remain ambassadors for the school and its programs, long-term. Helping alumni stay in touch with one another allows former students to benefit from networking opportunities and friendships for years to come. It also extends and strengthens their view of the value the school played in their life.

Academic and financial benefits

The digital transformation strategy and opportunities described in the previous section are key to revitalising campuses and ensuring every technology decision contributes to a more student-centric success model. These initiatives are no longer nice-to-haves — they're must-haves.

When students are successful, schools are successful. Campus-wide digital transformation becomes a force multiplier and a self-fulfilling model for the school's success. Students achieve better results, enjoy their time on campus, and share their positive experiences with others to create a virtuous circle of ongoing benefits for future students and the school.

Leading educational technology organisations concur. Organisations, such as EDUCAUSE, are strong advocates for digital transformation in higher education, describing it as “a series of deep and coordinated culture, workforce, and technology shifts that enable new educational and operating models and transform an institution's operations, strategic directions, and value proposition.”⁵ To support schools' digital transformation, EDUCAUSE provides numerous resources that help schools better understand requirements, technologies, and processes.

“The world's experience with the pandemic over the past couple of years has confirmed that digital transformation is essential for academic and business continuity. Now is the time to bring all relevant parties within a school together to align on a common vision for student-centric services campus-wide,” says Kovich.

⁵ [Dx: Digital Transformation of Higher Education](#), EDUCAUSE.

Benefit from our experience and expertise

Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise has the experience to help you digitally transform your campus to empower student success. Leading educational institutions around the world rely on us to take their operations into the future, including:

- [Abilene Christian University](#)
- [California State University](#)
- [City College of San Francisco](#)
- [Criswell College](#)
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- [Loughborough University](#)
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- [University of Sriwijaya](#)
- [University of Technology Sydney](#)
- [West Liberty University](#)
- [Westchester Community College](#)

In a student-centric world

Students are more successful

From a student perspective, digital transformation delivers benefits during and after their time at the school.

While they're at the school, digital solutions help students enjoy a sense of belonging, emotional support, and personal safety, all of which contribute to better mental health. Every student has equal access to digital services and experiences, no matter which school population they're part of. That means there's no chance they'll be disadvantaged or left behind compared to other students due to their program choices. They also benefit from strong connections to their fellow students, professors, and the institution itself while they're at the school and after they leave.

Together, these benefits make it more likely students will complete their studies and obtain their degree to realise a good return on a very significant financial investment and enjoy a fulfilling and rewarding career.

Schools are more successful

Digital transformation allows schools to align IT technologies with their overall mission and to align their budget with the digital technologies that are most important for student and institutional success. As a result, schools can create a competitive advantage over other schools at each stage of the student relationship, including:

- Better communications from the applicant stage to the alumni stage to attract and recruit students and keep them engaged with the institution
- Higher student retention improving the school's reputation as a student-centric institution and contribute to a stronger financial outlook
- An active and engaged alumni community to help drive future growth and school success

Together, these benefits help schools improve their brand recognition as a leader in delivering exceptional educational experiences. They also help schools take advantage of more resilient, yet agile and cost-effective IT operations so they're better prepared to withstand economic downturns, unexpected crises, and cyberthreats.



Simplify the journey with the right partner

Working with an experienced partner that brings deep knowledge of campus-wide digital transformation strategies and technologies is essential to ensure transformation initiatives deliver the capabilities colleges and universities need today and tomorrow.

The first step is to develop the digital transformation strategy that informs technology requirements. Once the strategy is defined, the next step is to build a smart campus foundation that underpins all transformation initiatives. This robust, secure, and flexible communications infrastructure is essential to become a more nimble and responsive institution that serves its digital natives.

The smart campus foundation supports the student-centric platforms, technologies, and applications that put the school's resources into the students' hands. Each solution is easy to install, use, and manage. New solutions can be added when needed. And robust cybersecurity measures ensure end-to-end resiliency.

“The right partner understands the challenges schools face today and the path to delivering a truly student-centric learning experience in all aspects of campus life. This is the only way they can provide the learning resources, and technologies colleges and universities need to get from where they are today to where they need to go,” says Kovich.

White Paper

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Learn more

To learn more about how we can help your school take advantage of digital transformation check out our website or, contact us today to discuss your specific needs.

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