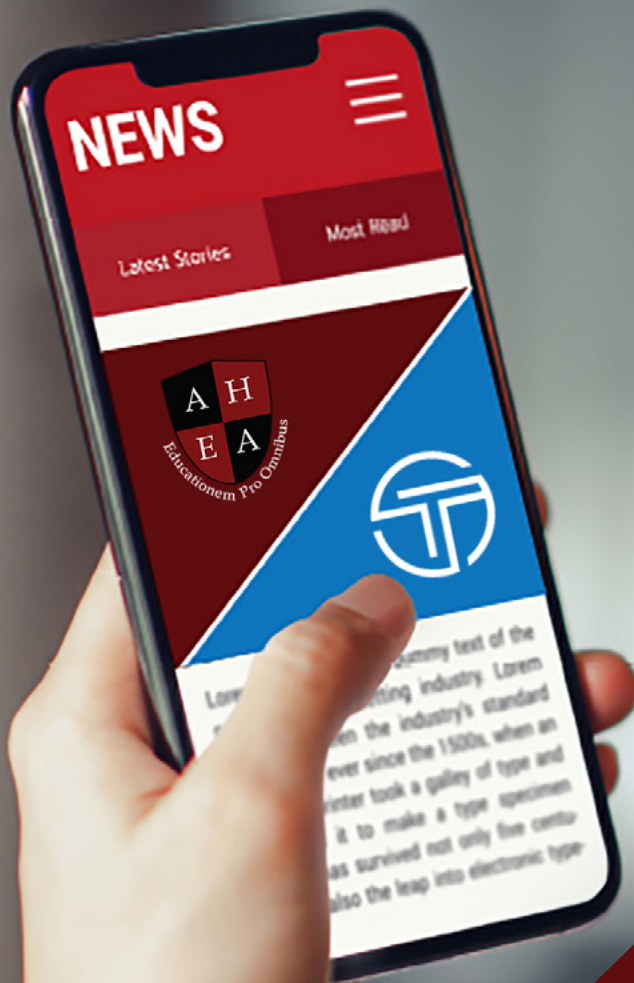




American Higher  
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# IN THE NEWS

News, Press Releases, and Articles | 2020

## Media coverage

received by AHEA and Tower Education Technologies will heighten our organizations' visibility and brand awareness. It will also increase our credibility and legitimacy within the higher education and technology industries.



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MarketWatch  
As seen on

## American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) Offers a New Global Pathway for Higher Education Through Innovative Technology

**By creating an integrated platform, American Higher Education Alliance aims to change the education landscape**

Boca Raton, Fla., June 30, 2020 – American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) was founded as a nonprofit in 2017. The founding principles are to develop innovative education technologies that emphasize institutional growth, faculty and curriculum development, and student engagement while lowering the cost of technology.

AHEA's InspirED™ platform natively integrates a student information system ConnectED™, a learning management system BlendED™, and a professional engagement system CollaboratED™. It also combines operational highlights, performance reports, CRM, and analytics.

InspirED is based on education theories and best practices, combined with current and innovative technologies. This fully integrated, single sign-on platform is designed to provide colleges and universities the tools to identify and assess their strengths, challenges, and efficiencies to further enhance their operational models and better serve and prepare new student populations for the rapidly-evolving world.

“Our sector faces the daunting challenge of balancing a budget without compromising academic integrity. We will have to answer this question: does higher education’s current model meet the needs of today’s constituents? We need to identify transformative options that would meet our needs and better serve our students, faculty, and staff,” said Benjamin Shank, CEO of AHEA.

American Higher Education Alliance is building a global network of partner institutions and organizations. Through its global network, member institutions will be able to collaborate on multiple academic activities such as faculty development, co-curricular development, and student exchange programs. The alliance network is to serve as a vehicle for the promotion of global understanding, social stability and acceptance, cultural appreciation, and scientific information exchange. Member institutions have the ability to grow beyond local and national borders and reach students who

value their institutional, academic, and cultural characteristics, either virtually or on-campus.

“The InspirED platform is free to our member institutions. Its data driven algorithms and predictive reporting highlights students’ needs and potential obstacles, as well as celebrates their individual achievements. Academic advisors, student services personnel, and departments across campus can focus less on technology, and more on helping every student,” said Shank. “We cherish our institutional and programmatic characteristics. We value our unique teaching and learning cultural environment, so let’s focus on that, these are the reasons we are here. The platform is simply a tool to help us reach the solution, how we define our values and the paths to implement our vision is the key.”

As seen in MarketWatch:

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/american-higher-education-alliance-ahed-of-fers-a-new-global-pathway-for-higher-education-through-innovative-technology-2020-07-01>  
(link no longer active)

#### About AHEA

American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) is a nonprofit educational organization that focuses on providing member institutions education theories and best practice-based technologies to support higher education institutions around the world. To learn more visit [www.ahealliance.org](http://www.ahealliance.org).

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As seen in  
**The Washington Post**

## Distance-Based Employment and Job Hunting And What It Means For You

Many companies have offered telecommuting – or partial telecommuting for decades. Higher education has offered distance instruction as an option as well – depending on the course, requirements, and location in which it is taught. Now that the pandemic of COVID-19 has reached every state in the U.S., many businesses – and colleges -- have suddenly shifted to a forced kind of distance—to keep working and teaching while everyone remains at least six feet apart to avoid spreading the virus.

That is raising tough questions for colleges and those that wish to teach at them: What is the best way to rapidly spin up online courses or deliver exams online? How can colleges ensure that all students have access to the technology needed for remote studies? What happens if the health crisis extends into the fall or if it returns as is predicted?

In this unprecedented moment, human resources teams, senior management, business leaders, and college leaders and professors are stepping up to jointly create resources online, share best practices, rapidly train faculty in a mode of remote teaching they may never have done, and adapt to a constantly changing environment. All with the goal of continuing their business in a new way, while helping students find jobs in areas they desire.

While overall college and job preparedness is top of mind during the pandemic, the possibility of remote learning or employment adds complexity for higher education institutions. Only 25 percent of students responding to a survey agree that they feel prepared for a remote freshman year of college, compared with 54 percent who believe they are prepared for an in-person first year. In addition, only 23 percent of students are confident they can get a quality education through remote classes, and just 19 percent are confident they can build relationships in a remote environment.

*“Though a majority of institutions have online teaching and learning tools, it was left to individual instructors as to whether they would teach online. Many traditional colleges and universities were surprisingly unprepared to adapt to an online-only instruction environment,”* says Benjamin

Shank, CEO of American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA). *“This health crisis has acted as a catalyst to this much needed change in the industry. Just as we see innovative businesses during this pandemic opting to have their employees work virtually and adopt processes that allow their employees to stay engaged, institutions must also develop innovative ways to engage their faculty, staff, and students virtually.”*

But even more concerning is the fact that an employee or students’ ability to succeed in a remote-environment may differ greatly by income levels. Less than half (40 percent) of students (including those working in internships, first jobs, and so forth) from lower-income households report being able to get the necessary equipment for things as simple as new glasses for remote learning compared with 72 percent of students from high-income households. Furthermore, only 56 percent of students from low-income households report having reliable internet access and 45 percent report that their home environment could support remote distance work or learning, compared with 77 percent and 64 percent of high-income students, respectively.

Schools will need to consider providing support for students to succeed in a remote learning environment, especially those who may not have the necessary equipment or reliable internet access. Institutions can offer stipends for internet access and laptop rentals or purchases, or they can directly procure and lend equipment for under-resourced students. In addition, schools can research options for, provide information to, and advocate for students, including working with state and local providers and agencies to request government support.

According to the Institute for International Education, there were more than 1 million international students studying in the U.S. in 2019, an all-time high. International students make up about 6% of the total higher education student population. While the Department of Homeland Security initially provided guidance that allowed international students to maintain their visa statuses, the department issued new guidance that warned that international students would be forced to leave the US or transfer to another institution if the institution they attend moves to online-only instruction. Higher education institutions and advocacy groups promptly denounced these new rules and filed several lawsuits against them. On July 14, the proposed policy was rescinded by federal officials.

The rules come as schools are preparing for substantial declines in international enrollment, a report from the NAFSA: Association of International Educators estimates that institutions will lose at least \$3 billion due international student enrollment declines in fall 2020. Additionally, most universities have shut down their study abroad programs and cancelled school-sanctioned trips; amidst a host of other issues like lawsuit loans because of unpaid tuition.

In the face of such disruption, a public-health crisis, and a global economic downturn, fall enrollment remains uncertain. But the higher education leaders keeping a pulse on students’ and parents’ concerns, perspectives, and thinking—and responding accordingly—will be the ones best positioned to serve them in meaningful ways come fall.

As seen in the Washington Post:

<https://nationaljobs.washingtonpost.com/article-details/573/distance-based-employment-and-job-hunting-and-what-it-means-for-you/>

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As seen on

## The Distinct Connection Between Higher Education And Workforce Readiness

July 24, 2020

There's a stark misalignment between the talents employers demand and the skills graduates have as they enter the U.S. workforce. There is a common disconnect where many higher education leaders fail to see it. While 96% of chief academic officers of colleges and universities believe that their institutions are very or somewhat effective at preparing students for the workforce, only 11% of business leaders strongly agree. Herein lies the misalignment; a gap that has critical implications for both businesses and institutions of higher learning. Companies in major industries report that they are unable to grow and compete because they struggle to identify properly skilled talent: 49% report unfilled job openings, and 37% can't take on a new project or major initiative.

It's not just businesses that recognize the disconnect between what companies need and what graduates know. Studies consistently show that a mere 35% of college students say they are prepared for a job, and over half of recent graduates are unemployed or underemployed. Among the general public, just 16% of Americans think that a four-year degree prepares students for a well-paying job in today's economy. And, in fact, a recent study by Gallup and Strada Education Network shows that 40% of bachelor's degree holders would study a different major if they could do it over again.

There are several data-driven arguments that question the actual, rather than the perceived, value of a college degree. First, meta-analytic reviews have long-established that the correlation between education level and job performance is weak. In fact, the research shows that intelligence scores are a much better indicator of job potential. If we were to pick between a candidate with a college degree and a candidate with a higher intelligence score, we could expect the latter to outperform the former in most jobs, particularly when those jobs require constant thinking and learning. Academic grades are indicative of how much a candidate has studied, but their performance on an intelligence test reflects their actual ability to learn, reason, and think logically.



Yet, while the value of a college degree has increasingly been called into question, college enrollment rates at public higher education institutions have fallen by less than 2% each year since 2013. Meanwhile, as of 2017, 44 million Americans carry \$1.3 trillion in student loan debt. In short, millions of students enroll in postsecondary education programs and, in some cases, take on considerable student loan debt without the guarantee that their investment will result in a viable career. This educational/work divide must be shortened in order for both types of organizations to continue to grow. How, then, do we set students up for success so that they can complete degree programs that lead to promising career pathways?

Universities and institutions of higher education could substantially increase the value of the college degree if they spent more time teaching their students critical soft skills. Recruiters and employers are unlikely to be impressed by candidates, unless they can demonstrate a certain degree of people-skills. This is perhaps one of the biggest differences between what universities and employers look for in applicants. While employers want candidates with higher levels of Emotional Intelligence (EQ), resilience, empathy, and integrity, those are rarely characteristics that universities nurture or select for in admissions. As the impact of AI and disruptive technology grows, candidates who can perform tasks that machines cannot are becoming more valuable — and that underscores the growing importance of soft skills, which are hard for machines to emulate.

*“I think the next step is for higher ed to meld more hands-on training into the curriculum as a whole, while getting back to soft skill basics — like teaming, communication skills and conflict resolution skills. This combined approach will really help prepare individuals for employment, fill in the readiness gaps that hiring managers see, and in turn, improve job fulfillment,” says Benjamin Shank, CEO of American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA). “Job training and fulfillment is a topic where I see both an improvement in higher education and yet there is still much more to do.”*

In their report *Learning to Work, Working to Learn*, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (US-CCF) highlights best practices of higher education institutions that are working to realign education with the workforce. These case studies reveal several common strategies for building partnerships between employers and educators to help students enter the workforce better equipped to establish careers.

**Work-based learning:** One successful strategy is to embed work-based learning into in-classroom and out-of-classroom experiences. In past research, Gallup has found that students who had internships where they could apply the knowledge and skills they were learning in the classroom are more likely to find full-time employment after college and to be engaged in their work. Work-based learning can happen on-campus as well, such as project-based or simulated experiences that take place on the school premises.

**Career services:** Education leaders ought not to think of the student as the only customer of their work. In some ways, employer partners are just as important in identifying ways in which postsecondary training can lead to a good job. Just last year, Gallup found that though about half of U.S.

college graduates report visiting the career services office at least once during their undergraduate experience, they are equally likely to say their experience was “not at all helpful” (16%) as they are to say it was “very helpful” (16%).

Better information: Gallup and Strada Education released a report showing that half of U.S. adults would change either their degree level, field of study or higher education institution. One implication is that students require better information about the outcomes of different education pathways. The Launch My Career website provides program-level outcomes data for first-time and full-time students, as well as working adults considering upskilling. Launch presents career awareness information as well as a practical exercise in which students can see for themselves how long it would take to achieve their lifestyle goals based on their program of study, purposefully tied to an ROI mindset.

In order to better align higher education and the workforce, businesses and education institutions must partner together more closely to ensure that graduates enter the workforce prepared with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

As seen on SmallBusinessSense:

<https://small-bizsense.com/the-distinct-connection-between-higher-education-and-workforce-readiness/>

#### About AHEA

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As seen on  
**THE PRICE OF BUSINESS SHOW**  
WITH KEVIN PRICE

# Why Mentoring In Higher Education Is Mission Critical For Everyone's Success

July 24, 2020

Mentoring, long considered an effective tool for developing relationships and transferring knowledge from a more experienced individual to a less experienced individual, is a concept that has expanded in definition in recent years to include non-traditional relationships beyond face-to-face mentoring. Mentoring programs are frequently supported by technology, can be reversed, external to an organization, or with peers.

Mentoring in higher education helps learners acclimate to a new academic topic, increases the likelihood of academic success, and reduces attrition. Learners rely on the expertise and experience of mentors to help them graduate in a timely manner and advance on to their career. As online and distance education becomes more pervasive, computer-mediated mentoring allows learners to connect with their mentors in new ways. Research about mentoring in higher education includes investigations into the efficacy of virtual or e-mentoring.

Mentoring students doesn't mean acting like their parents — or their best friends. One university dean, describes mentorship as a “professional” relationship, as opposed to a “personal” one. This framing, he thinks, can remind faculty and staff not to take it personally when a student they are mentoring chooses not to follow their advice, or acts in ways they disagree with. Students retain their autonomy. Benjamin Shank, CEO of American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) says, “Mentoring should be considered a critical element to student success.”

Increasing the number of college students who graduate prepared for participation in the workforce and civil society will require a redoubling of efforts to improve college-going and completion rates for students traditionally underrepresented by higher education — individuals from low-income backgrounds and young people of color, who currently earn degrees at much lower rates than other groups.

Given the urgent need to increase the success of underrepresented students in college, individuals from college access programs, youth development organizations, and advocacy groups, along with K–12 and higher education leaders, have an important role to play. Practitioners from college access programs and youth development organizations bring to bear a nuanced understanding of the academic and social supports that enable students at all levels to succeed in high school and college.

Mentoring is a valuable strategy to provide students with the emotional and instrumental support students need to achieve the goal of a college degree. By providing information, guidance, and encouragement, mentors can play an important role in nurturing students' college aspirations, helping them prepare for college and, advising them on how to make successful transitions from high school to their first year on campus. In addition, mentoring for students in college helps students to feel more connected and engaged on campus, which can ultimately improve student outcomes.

*“[S]tudents will need new skills to be competitive five years from now, yet mentoring ends when they graduate. Successful mentoring today requires a more personalized experience as well as the understanding that each student has potential to be a lifelong learner. Ideally, mentoring should be available throughout an individual's career,”* says Shank.

This is a common dilemma found in both professional and academic mentoring – degradation or dissolution of mentoring programs over time due to a lack of commitment to assessment and evaluation requirements. This situation occurs pretty evenly on the part of participants, program managers, and institutions; and the rate of occurrence is more frequent than desired. Inadequate consideration to the design, staffing, or available funds, all become factors in whether or not a program will render a positive process and outcome. Without these best practice elements, a mentoring program is on its way to being doomed before it even gets off the ground.

But mentoring programs continue to be a useful tool for enhancing the performance of employees and students, transferring knowledge from more experienced individuals to less experienced individuals and for the retention of employees and students. The benefits of mentoring programs, both formal and informal have been documented in countless studies during the past 30 years.

Mentoring has become a core strategy in leading and managing many organizations today even though the programs in organizations are changing. Mentoring programs in the 21st century are no longer thought of in just the traditional pairing such as the teacher and student, but now non-traditional relationships can be formed either electronically, with groups or peers, or a combination of several types. The programs now usually extend beyond face-to-face mentoring and are frequently supported by technology. While one-on-one mentoring is used in most programs, and is the model most people prefer, technology is creating opportunities for more individuals to be mentored and to be mentored internationally by a global mentor through expanding geographic boundaries.

As seen on The Price of Business Show:

<https://priceofbusiness.com/why-mentoring-in-higher-education-is-mission-critical-for-every-ones-success/>

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As seen on **MarketWatch**

# Press Release

## American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) and Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) Partner to Promote Global Collaboration

**AHEA and CONAHEC join forces to facilitate opportunities for members to engage and collaborate in curriculum co-development and programmatic internationalization through virtual exchange.**

July 29, 2020. Boca Raton, Florida. For Immediate Release. American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) and the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) today announced their partnership to facilitate opportunities for members of both organizations to engage and collaborate in curriculum co-development and programmatic internationalization through virtual exchange via AHEA's InspirED™ platform.

The partnership was established to address the needs of higher education as the world comes to grips with the impact of COVID-19. Colleges and universities are preparing for an extensive and rapid transition to online-only modes of academic interaction. The need to further develop pedagogical methods to ensure student engagement for virtual or hybrid delivery models needs to be addressed now. The disruption of international student mobility and academic exchange requires higher education to re-envision the future of international education.

*"Our member institutions were not fully prepared for the exodus of the international students they had on campus, nor for the sudden repatriation of many of the students they had sent abroad," said Santiago Castiello Gutiérrez, mobility coordinator for CONAHEC. He went on to say "Technological developments and their broadening adoption mean that acquisition of intercultural knowledge and skills is no longer as travel-dependent. Virtual academic mobility and technology mediated exchange hold great promise for much wider, more affordable access to international and intercultural experiences."*

Currently, faculties at AHEA's and CONAHEC's member institutions are collaborating on multiple academic activities such as faculty development, co-curricular development, virtual student exchange programs, and their assessment methods in an online or hybrid delivery environment. "The partnership between CONAHEC and AHEA will help faculty and students develop their intercultural competencies and institutions

to strengthen their partnerships with peers abroad,” said Sean Manley-Casimir, executive director of CO-NAHEC. “Through this symbiotic relationship, our member institutions will be able to work collaboratively with their peers in different countries to internationalize their curricula and to expose their students to new perspectives.”

*“Both organizations share the same core beliefs that it just made sense for us to join forces and address these challenges higher education is facing together”* said Benjamin Shank, CEO of AHEA. *“The pandemic has placed physical and economic limits on both institutions and students. Our partnership is to empower academic institutions and their missions, which ultimately benefits the students. We are working to establish a path for the future of higher education where global faculty collaboration results in innovative academic programs, and help higher education leaders anticipate change and prepare their students for success.”*

#### About AHEA

American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) is founded with the mission to support colleges and universities for their institutional effectiveness and growth, promote the collaboration of faculty and curriculum development, facilitate programmatic internationalization, and implement best-practice student engagement strategies.

AHEA recognizes the advancement of technologies can enhance its educational visions, partnered with tech industry and developed InspirED™ platform. The platform natively integrates a student information system ConnectED™, a learning management system BlendED™, and a professional engagement system CollaboratED™. It also combines operational highlights, performance reports, CRM, and analytics.

Free to its member institutions, the platform provide colleges and universities the tools to identify and assess their strengths, challenges, and efficiencies to further enhance their operational models to better serve and prepare new student populations for the rapidly-evolving world.

To learn more visit [www.ahealliance.org](http://www.ahealliance.org).

As seen in MarketWatch:

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/american-higher-education-alliance-ahed-and-consortium-for-north-american-higher-education-collaboration-conahed-partner-to-promote-global-collaboration-2020-07-31>

(link no longer active)

## About CONAHEC

Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) is a non-profit organization that fosters international higher education collaboration in North America and with the rest of the world. With more than 150-member higher education institutions and organizations, CONAHEC is uniquely positioned to facilitate ongoing practical relationships among members through our student, faculty and staff mobility programs, and international conferences and events. CONAHEC has become a preeminent network supporting an integrated yet diverse higher education community and catalyzing collaboration to address our common challenges. Centrally important is improving technology-based support for international higher education engagement, the focus of CONAHEC's Virtual International Partnerships initiative. To learn more visit [www.CONAHEC.org](http://www.CONAHEC.org)

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As seen on

# The Benefits Of Online Learning In A COVID-19 World And Beyond

July 29, 2020

Right now, the Coronavirus pandemic is forcing global experimentation with remote teaching. There are many indicators that this crisis is going to transform many aspects of life. Education could be one of them if remote teaching proves to be a success. No doubt, the transition to on-line learning due to COVID-19 was sudden and hasty. But when done right, online learning comes with many benefits. Considering that universities may not be going back to in-person classes for at least a couple more months, with some experts estimating it would take up to a year before a coronavirus vaccine becomes commercially available, this should come as welcome news for all those planning to go to university in 2020.

## **It's flexible.**

Online education enables the teacher and the student to set their own learning pace, and there's the added flexibility of setting a schedule that fits everyone's agenda. As a result, using an online educational platform allows for a better balance of work and studies, so there's no need to give anything up. Studying online teaches you vital time management skills, which makes finding a good work-study balance easier. Having a common agenda between the student and teacher can also prompt both parties to accept new responsibilities and have more autonomy.

## **Online degrees are more affordable.**

You can save a lot of money when undertaking an online program. Not only are your housing and commute expenses eliminated, online programs are generally more affordable. One survey found that, "The most important factor for students choosing a school for their online program continues to be tuition and fees, specified by 34 percent of respondents. That has been the top-ranked choice for the past four years, according to the researchers."

### **It's accessible.**

Online education enables you to study or teach from anywhere in the world. This means there's no need to commute from one place to another or follow a rigid schedule. On top of that, not only do you save time, but you also save money, which can be spent on other priorities. The virtual classroom is also available anywhere there's an internet connection, and a good way to take advantage of this is to travel. For example, if you're studying abroad and want to get a job, online education is a great choice. There's no reason to give up on working or studying while exploring new and exotic places.

### **You develop important skills.**

Studying online requires certain skills such as self-discipline, self-motivation and communication. When you're an online learner, you'll find that you will quickly hone and develop these skills which are important for the workplace.

For example, you'll need to communicate – whether verbally or written – with your professors and peers regularly. This will sharpen your communication skills. You will also need to motivate yourself to complete an online course and turn in your online assignments as there is much less handholding in online courses compared to in-person ones. Unlike face-to-face setups, where it can be hard to offer critical comments, an online environment gives one more time to really study the modules and make considered comments.

### **It allows for a customized learning experience.**

Mentioned previously, flexibility can help you to set your own study pace. But online education is also flexible for each student's individual requirements and level of ability. Online classes tend to be smaller than conventional class size. Most of the time, online learning platforms only allow one student at a time, and in almost all cases, this allows for greater interaction and more feedback between you and your teacher.

There's often access to very diverse material such as videos, photos, and eBooks online as well, and teachers can also integrate other formats like forums or discussions to improve their lessons. And this extra content is available at any moment from anywhere, which will offer you a more dynamic and tailor-made education.

Online education is spreading. The coronavirus pandemic simply sped up the adoption of online learning by higher education institutions. In fact, just today the American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) and the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) announced a new partnership.

The press release said, *“The partnership was established to address the needs of higher education as the world comes to grips with the impact of COVID-19. Colleges and universities are preparing for an extensive and rapid transition to online-only modes of academic interaction. The need to further develop pedagogical methods to ensure student engagement for virtual or hybrid delivery models needs to be addressed now.”*

There are more reasons to choose an online education than just those presented here. Ninety percent of students today think that online learning is the same or better than the traditional classroom experience. Every student must assess their unique situation and decide according to their needs and goals, and while this alternative to traditional education is not for everyone, it’s still a convenient option with virtually end-less options for international students all over the world.

As seen in SmallBusinessSense:

<https://small-bizsense.com/the-benefits-of-online-learning-in-a-covid-19-world-and-beyond/>

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As seen on  
**ENTREPRENERD.NET**  
Entrepreneurs can be nerds too

# Diversity In Higher Education Demands A Global Footprint That Works

August 3, 2020

Over one million international students are currently studying in the United States. While their economic contributions to this country tend to be a primary focus, they also bring cultural, political, and historical perspectives that help build vibrant, diverse campus communities.

There is tremendous diversity within the international student population at American colleges and universities, with important differences in English language ability, family income, and educational goals. Nevertheless, they are all subject to the same legal and regulatory constraints. Uncertainty over the visa application process alone is a source of great anxiety, and foreign citizenship places important restrictions on eligibility for financial aid and access to work experience. Perhaps most important of all, statements by the current administration, have sent a strong message that the United States is no longer a welcoming environment for international students and scholars.

International student enrollment has steadily declined since 2016. This decline has led some institutions to invest more heavily in marketing and recruiting. Others are beginning to think more holistically about the entire international student experience, from initial contact through alumni status. While institutions cannot change the visa policies of the U.S. government—at least not by acting individually—there is much they can do to improve the quality of the international student experience on their own campuses.

## What is international education?

International education is about the mobility of students and scholars who go to another part of the world to study, research, or teach. It's not only about the mobility of students, both in and out of the US, but it's also about research scholars who come to the US to do research, faculty who go to other destinations to teach, and those who do community-based service learning. The primary goals of international education are furthering knowledge and cultural capital, learning about plac-

es and cultures, and gaining intercultural skills in the process.

International education has existed throughout time and, through that time, people have sought education elsewhere in order to better their lives, in order to contribute to their societies and communities, and in order to better equip themselves as citizens of their respective countries. It's not just the US that's been engaged in this activity; many nation states have participated in this kind of work.

### **What is the importance of international education, and who benefits from it?**

You can think about the benefits of international education on several levels. One is international education and the benefit to the individual in pursuit of education, research, or teaching. Another way to think about it is through the nation states engaged in international education: how and why might a government decide to provide scholarships or other mechanisms encouraging citizens to acquire an education overseas?

It may be trying to equip citizens with a level of education and knowledge so they can return and contribute to the economy or to in-demand fields in their country. International education may be a form of cultural diplomacy. Employers also have a stake in international education. Some employers incentivize their employees to go and acquire credentials elsewhere because, in this global economy, companies need a workforce with the capacity, skills, and talents to compete globally.

### **Why should students be encouraged to study abroad?**

International education, particularly in a global economy, is a very important part of a 21st century education. In the world that we live in, no one is an island to themselves, so we need to expose students to the world out there. There are opportunities to learn from all different parts of the world. And now more than ever, isolationists are not who we want to be.

For any student to have a nuanced understanding of their field, there is value studying abroad. One, studying abroad provides you with varying perspectives on a subject matter. And two, studying abroad contextualizes international relations so that you understand the global dimensions of your work. Through international education, students are exposed to different perspectives and important nuances.

### **How do you study internationally during COVID-19?**

The rush of colleges and universities to complete the current academic year online in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and possibly prepare hastily for the same delivery mode this coming fall, could well result in unprecedented turbulence for faculty, students and families. The unavoidable haste of implementation presents a highly uneven and potentially unsatisfying educational experience — threatening to further discredit distance learning as a viable educational platform.

The challenge then is to identify how to deliver high-quality learning at a distance — especially if these

necessary yet on-the-fly efforts run into challenges from students and their families. What type of digital learning platform will emerge from this crisis that might assuage faculty members' lingering doubts about the medium and students' motivational challenges with online learning?

Just today, a partnership between the American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) and the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) was announced. The partnership was established to address the needs of higher education as the world comes to grips with the impact of COVID-19. Colleges and universities are preparing for an extensive and rapid transition to online-only modes of academic interaction. The need to further develop pedagogical methods to ensure student engagement for virtual or hybrid delivery models needs to be addressed now. The disruption of international student mobility and academic exchange requires higher education to re-envision the future of international education.

*“Both organizations share the same core beliefs that it just made sense for us to join forces and address these challenges higher education is facing together”* said Benjamin Shank, CEO of AHEA. *“The pandemic has placed physical and economic limits on both institutions and students. Our partnership is to empower academic institutions and their missions, which ultimately benefits the students. We are working to establish a path for the future of higher education where global faculty collaboration results in innovative academic programs and help higher education leaders anticipate change and prepare their students for success.”*

For institutions that want to strengthen their approach to international students, this means addressing the entire international student experience, from first contact through alumni status. It also means that institutions should develop their goals for international students in parallel with the development of their goals for the curriculum, co-curriculum, international partnerships, and faculty development.

As seen on Entrepreneurd.net:

<https://www.entrepreneurd.net/diversity-in-higher-education-demands-a-global-footprint-that-works/>

#### About AHEA

American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) is a nonprofit educational organization that focuses on providing member institutions education theories and best practice-based technologies to support higher education institutions around the world. To learn more visit [www.ahealliance.org](http://www.ahealliance.org).

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# AHEA & CONAHEC to Virtually Collaborate

Callan Quinn | August 10, 2020

American Higher Education Alliance and the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration have announced a partnership which will allow their members to virtually collaborate on “co-development and programmatic internationalisation”.

“The partnership between CONAHEC and AHEA will help faculty and students develop their intercultural competencies and institutions to strengthen their partnerships with peers abroad,” said Sean Manley-Casimir, executive director of CONAHEC, which has over 150 members and promotes international higher education collaboration between North America and the rest of the world.

## **“The partnership... will help faculty and students develop their intercultural competencies”**

“Through this symbiotic relationship, our member institutions will be able to work collaboratively with their peers in different countries to internationalise their curricula and to expose their students to new perspectives.”

The partnership also aims to support HEIs preparing to transition to online and hybrid learning, focusing on online pedagogy, curriculum development, virtual exchange programs and online or hybrid assessment methods.

Benjamin Shank, CEO of AHEA said that they were working to “establish a path for the future of higher education where global faculty collaboration results in innovative academic programs, and help higher education leaders anticipate change and prepare their students for success.”

Santiago Castiello Gutiérrez, mobility coordinator for CONAHEC, further added that technology has made the “broadening adoption mean that acquisition of intercultural knowledge and skills is no longer as travel-dependent.”

“Virtual academic mobility and technology-mediated exchange hold great promise for much wider, more affordable access to international and intercultural experiences,” he said.

## **The project promotes the use of technology in intercultural and academic exchange.**

As seen in The Pie:

<https://thepienews.com/news/ahea-conahec-partnership/#.XzGBIAIVOEI.twitter>

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As seen on  
**Cordoba Musings**  
Thoughts on Finance, Business, Travel and Education

## How An International Relationship Is Changing The Way We Educate

September 3, 2020

In 2018, the International Association of Universities (IAU) conducted a global survey of 907 higher education institutions from 126 countries, identifying the importance of internationalization to academic leadership. The survey revealed that around 83% of respondents rated internationalization as highly important, namely in Africa and the Middle East.

At the time when many countries, for political reasons, are becoming more nationalist, protectionist and isolationist, international relations couldn't be more important. Through internationalization, academics from many different countries can cooperate on research projects, advancing every field together instead of redundantly conducting the same research. It is the future of education.

Through internationalization, universities can also exchange academic staff and students, sharing experiences as well as the latest trends in curriculum and teaching methodologies. No university can be world ranked without internationalization efforts.

Just recently, the American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) and the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) announced their partnership to facilitate opportunities for members of both organizations to engage and collaborate in curriculum co-development and programmatic internationalization through virtual exchange via AHEA's InspirED™ platform.

"The partnership between CONAHEC and AHEA will help faculty and students develop their intercultural competencies and institutions to strengthen their partnerships with peers abroad," said Sean Manley-Casimir, executive director of CONAHEC. "Through this symbiotic relationship, our member institutions will be able to work collaboratively with their peers in different countries to internationalize their curricula and to expose their students to new perspectives."

Various stakeholders can benefit from the internationalization of higher education, including inter-

national and domestic students, higher education institutions (HEIs), companies, home and host countries.

### Students

Studying abroad is a way for students to gain international experience and to develop both personally as well as professionally, for instance, by getting to know different cultures, improving language skills and developing a more cosmopolitan identity. In addition, it can be a strategy to improve one's career prospects, especially if the required knowledge and skills cannot be obtained in the student's home country. International classrooms lead to improved learning outcomes, foster intercultural skills and create international networks preparing both international and domestic students for living and working in a globalized world.

### Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions can benefit from the internationalization of higher education both financially and academically. In the context of declining financial contributions of governments, international students are an additional funding opportunity. Moreover, internationalization can improve HEI's reputation and the quality of education programs because of increased international competition for the best students and academics. In addition, attracting international students is vital for many HEIs to survive, especially in countries where the population of young adults is expected to decline drastically in the coming decades.

### Host Countries

Host countries can benefit from the internationalization of higher education economically. In the short term, international students bring additional revenue through general living expenses. In the long term, international students can add to the domestic pool of highly skilled workers and thereby help strengthen the domestic knowledge economy. This is especially important for countries that experience demographic change, negative population developments and growing skills shortages. International students who do not remain living in the host countries can become ambassadors for HEIs and the industry of the country in which they studied which can contribute to international cooperation and trade.

In the period 2010–2020, not only has the number of international students doubled to 5 million, but there's also been an increase in franchise operations, articulation programs, branch campuses, and online delivery of higher education. There is fierce competition for talented international students and scholars, and immigration policies have shifted from low-skill to high-skill immigration. National excellence programs have increased differentiation in higher education with more attention for a small number of international world-class universities and national flagship institutions that compete for these talents, for positions in the global rankings, for access to high impact journals, and for funding, at the cost of other institutions.

The internationalization of higher education requires a significant shift in the operation of higher education systems, as well as of individual higher education institutions. Operating in a most com-

plex world, policy makers at the national level of higher education, as well as leaders of universities and other higher education institutions have to handle concurrently contrasting trends, and define their missions and operational strategies accordingly. The increased focus on international collaborative ventures, the growing link between internationalization, research and employability require the rethinking of the roles and responsibilities of higher education institutions within national borders and beyond.

As seen on Cordoba Musings:

<https://cordoba.world.edu/2020/09/03/how-an-international-relationship-is-changing-the-way-we-educate/>

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As seen on  
**BRIEFMOBILE**

## The Benefits of Online Learning and a True Education “Reset”

September 3, 2020

In the world of college instruction, online education is on everyone’s minds these days—and rightly so. Professors and students have had to make a sudden and unexpected switch to new methods of teaching and learning, and the broader higher education community is wondering what this will mean for the future of both online and in-person education.

The college campus ethos is changing, and the current pandemic has certainly brought more attention to updating traditional models in recent news. In reality, the status quo of dorm rooms, frat parties, dining halls, and the stereotypical college experience in general, have been evolving for some time.

As a point of fact, nontraditional students are the fastest-growing demographic for college attendance. Working adults, veterans, students with disabilities, and parents are all now students of higher education. These working professionals lead busy daily lives, making traditional college options nearly impossible. As such, accredited online colleges and universities have stepped in to fill their needs.

“I really see this pandemic as an opportunity for higher education to do a “reset”. There is no reason institutions cannot hold on to their core beliefs while transitioning to a virtual setting. We know this will not be easy but institutions willing to make the transition now will be set up for success in the future,” says Benjamin Shank, CEO of the American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA).

The current challenges facing traditional colleges and universities — including higher tuition, budget cuts, and course shortages — cause many students to search for alternatives. With nearly three million students currently enrolled in fully online programs and six million taking at least one online course as part of their degree, online education has clearly become one of the most popular

higher education alternatives. The continually improving reputation of online learning helped fuel its expansion, as initial skepticism faltered in the face of evidence showing that online learning can be just as effective as face-to-face education.

### **1. It offers convenience and flexibility.**

Online education enables the teacher and the student to set their own learning pace, and there's the added flexibility of setting a schedule that fits everyone's agenda. As a result, using an online educational platform allows for a better balance of work and studies, so there's no need to give anything up. Studying online teaches you vital time management skills, which makes finding a good work-study balance easier. Having a common agenda between the student and teacher can also prompt both parties to accept new responsibilities and have more autonomy.

### **2. It offers a wide selection of programs.**

In a space as vast and wide as the internet, there are infinite skills and subjects to teach and learn. A growing number of universities and higher education schools are offering online versions of their programs for various levels and disciplines. From music composition to quantum physics, there are options for every type of student. Studying your program online is also a great option for getting an official certificate, diploma, or degree without physically setting foot on a university campus.

### **3. It's accessible.**

Online education enables you to study or teach from anywhere in the world. This means there's no need to commute from one place to another or follow a rigid schedule. On top of that, not only do you save time, but you also save money, which can be spent on other priorities. The virtual classroom is also available anywhere there's an internet connection, and a good way to take advantage of this is to travel. For example, if you're studying abroad and want to get a job, online education is a great choice. There's no reason to give up on working or studying while exploring new and exotic places.

### **4. It offers a variety of programs and courses.**

From traditional four-year universities to completely online career colleges, higher education today offers a variety of options for students. This means that no matter what students study, from nursing to neuroscience, they can find the courses or programs they need online. Students can also earn every academic degree online, from a career certificate to a doctorate.

### **5. It's more cost-effective than traditional education.**

Unlike in-person education methods, online education tends to be more affordable. There's also often a wide range of payment options let you pay in installments or per class. This allows for better

budget management. Many of you may also be subject to discounts or scholarships, so the price is rarely high. You can also save money from the commute and class materials, which are often available for free. In other words, the monetary investment is less, but the results can be better than other options.

These are only a few reasons to choose an online education, and why 90 percent of students today think that online learning is the same or better than the traditional classroom experience. Every student must assess their unique situation and decide according to their needs and goals, and while this alternative to traditional education is not for everyone, it's still a convenient option with virtually endless options for international students all over the world.

As seen on BriefMobile:

<https://www.briefmobile.com/the-benefits-of-online-learning-and-a-true-education-reset/>

#### About AHEA

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As seen on

Class for Zoom

# 6 Ways to Improve Your Zoom Virtual Classroom

October 15, 2020

As teachers around the country work to engage students remotely, they're continually on the lookout for ways to improve the online experience. It's a learning process for many, but fortunately, some instructors have been engaging students online for some time and have tips and advice to share to help teachers improve their Zoom virtual classroom experiences. Here we take a look at "6 Ways to Improve Your Zoom Virtual Classroom."

## 1. Make it Personal

Even when teachers and students are in different places, it's possible—and highly advised—to make personal connections. Lisa McGrath, a national board certified teacher with Teacher to Teacher says that, at the outset, it is important to make meaningful connections to build relationships with students. Initially, that might involve introducing yourself and sharing some personal information like your favorite books, movies, your pets, etc. It's important, she says, to be personable—and work to keep things fun.

Because online connections are, by their very nature, less "personal," everything you can do to build more personality into your online interactions can help improve the experience for students.

Dennis Yim, director of live, online courses, for Kaplan recommends getting to your virtual class about 15 minutes before it's scheduled to start and using the time to chat casually with students. "What room are you learning in?" is a great icebreaker, he says. *"Put up a slide or a poll. You'll gather useful insights about your students' prior knowledge and engagement level."*

Make sure that students are prepared to engage as well. Establish guidelines up front requiring students, for instance, to have their video cameras on. Consider whether it's necessary to establish criteria, or guidelines, for attire and the type of personal space it's appropriate to share with the classroom.

## **2. Avoid Trying to Make a 1:1 Shift from In Class to Online**

While online learning can certainly offer significant benefit to both students and instructors, it requires thinking differently about how to deliver information and engage students.

McGrath advises against simply trying to convert classes from in-person to remote with the exact same material, processes and interactions. *“Do not expect to replicate your face-to-face instructional program online,” she cautions. Instead, she says, “concentrate your unit designs on your core standards.”* Think about how your course objectives can best be met in the online environment.

“Think outside the box and be creative,” McGrath recommends. Use your interests and talents to engage students.”

## **3. Think Like a Movie Producer**

Teachers using a Zoom virtual classroom can boost engagement—and learning outcomes—by thinking of themselves as film producers, suggests Deanna Hurn, founder and executive director of Miracle Math Academic Coaching Center. *“Rather than just presenting coursework, teachers need to put on a production,”* she says. Hurn coaches tutors in doing just that—training them on lighting, camera angles, voice inflection, facial expressions, etc. Her techniques lead to real results—the achievement levels of her students rose 10%, per month, between the time tutoring went online in March until August 2020.

In preparing lesson plans think carefully about the flow of the lesson. Seek to find a good balance between lecture, individual and small group interaction, supplementary materials like video clips, etc. Expecting students to sit for long periods of time just listening to a lecture doesn’t work well in the classroom, or online.

## **4. Break Things Up in Your Zoom Virtual Classroom**

James Boatwright, is CEO of Code Galaxy, an online provider of coding classes and camps for kids ages 7–14. “One of the best tips for teachers who are having to teach remotely is to encourage students to learn independently. You don’t need to sit with them all day. Offer some guidance for an assignment, then give them a certain amount of time to go work on it on their own. This works better for older kids, but for any age it is a good idea to get a break from the screen – for the teacher as well!

## **5. Think of Ways to Gamify the Classroom Experience**

Nicole Hamilton is head of mathematics at Dwight Global Online School. She recommends gamifying the online education experience. *“A little friendly competition helps students bond with each other and with their teachers, even in virtual classes,” she says. “I like to tap into people’s competitive spirit in fun, fresh ways.”* She suggests activities like themed trivia, bingo, board games—“anything to get students invested enough that they don’t get distracted by the internet and, instead, engage with their peers and with the content I’m teaching,” While Hamilton teaches at the K–12 level, gamification can be applied in higher education as well.

## **6. Use the Zoom Classroom Features Available to You!**

Zoom and Class for Zoom offer a wide range of features that can enhance the online learning experience.



Benjamin Shank, CEO of the American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) recommends that instructors take full advantage of the Zoom classroom features available to them. *“By using video, whiteboards, discussion boards, polling questions and general Q&A, you meet a variety of learning styles and interaction styles, helping to keep your students better engaged,”* he says.

Yim agrees: *“Ask students to respond early and often. Use every tech tool you have: chat, polls, raise hands, even literal thumbs up on camera. Ask frequently for responses and you’ll keep your students on their toes.”*

Online learning is likely to continue to be part of the learning experience for students at all levels for some time. Investing time in considering ways to make your Zoom virtual classroom as appealing as possible will pay off for your students, and for you.

As seen on Class for Zoom:

<https://www.class.com/6-ways-to-improve-your-zoom/>

#### About AHEA

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## Non-profits partner to address pandemic-related higher education needs

**American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) and Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) have joined forces to globalize higher education virtually and in-person.**

November 23, 2020.

Boca Raton, Florida. For Immediate Release.

As colleges and universities face the mounting challenges associated with COVID-19, American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) and the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) are working together to help their members internationalize their higher education curriculum and co-develop virtual programs.

The first onset of the pandemic left higher education institutions scrambling to transition their courses and institutional administration to online-only mode. It also caused significant disruption to international student mobility. The second wave has further compounded the challenges colleges and universities face as they continue to struggle to find balance between future enrollment and current budget decisions.

Earlier this year AHEA and CONAHEC partnered to provide their members the technology, guidance, and opportunity to collaborate with their peers around the globe. They have also forged a commitment to help colleges and universities identify ways to incorporate virtual courses and programs into the higher education system.

As part of this initiative, the organizations extended an open invitation to their membership to collaborate and develop international curriculum using AHEA's InspirED™ platform. The result is a diverse group of academic projects hosted by faculty fellows from higher education institutions in Italy, Taiwan, Borneo, China, Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

These participants will present their findings, best practices, and lessons learned in a panel discussion at the upcoming North American Higher Education Conference taking place December 1-5, 2020. "We are

excited to provide a centralized platform where academic professionals around the world can overcome those barriers brought on by the pandemic, and gain faculty and institutional perspective on virtual international partnerships,” said Benjamin Shank, CEO of AHEA.

North American Higher Education Conference will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year. This year’s theme, “Rebuilding the Global Village,” highlights the importance of collaboration among higher education institutions and their crucial role in building international relationships and prosperity. This is the first time the event will be held virtually and is expected to draw attendees from around the globe.

All faculty and academic professionals interested in collaboration opportunities with higher education institutions in Mexico, Canada, South America, Europe, the United States, and Asia are invited to attend the conference. “The need for the international higher education community to work together and share successes and opportunities is more acute than ever,” said Sean Manley-Casimir, executive director of CONAHEC. “Together we can purposefully rebuild our global village through mutual understanding and respect, solidarity and collaboration.”

For more information about the North American Higher Education Conference, visit <https://elnet.org/>.

#### About AHEA

American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) is founded with the mission to support colleges and universities for their institutional effectiveness and growth, promote the collaboration of faculty and curriculum development, facilitate programmatic internationalization, and implement best-practice student engagement strategies.

AHEA recognizes the advancement of technologies can enhance its educational visions, partnered with tech industry and developed InspirED™ platform. The platform natively integrates a student information system ConnectED™, a learning management system BlendED™, and a professional engagement system CollaboratED™. It also combines operational highlights, performance reports, CRM, and analytics.

Free to its member institutions, the platform provide colleges and universities the tools to identify and assess their strengths, challenges, and efficiencies to further enhance their operational models to better serve and prepare new student populations for the rapidly-evolving world.

To learn more visit [www.ahealliance.org](http://www.ahealliance.org).

#### About CONAHEC

Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) is a non-profit organization that fosters international higher education collaboration in North America and with the rest of the world. With more than 150-member higher education institutions and organizations, CONAHEC is uniquely positioned to facilitate ongoing practical relationships among members through our student, faculty and staff mobility programs, and international conferences and events. CONAHEC has become a preeminent network supporting an integrated yet diverse higher education community and catalyzing collaboration

to address our common challenges. Centrally important is improving technology-based support for international higher education engagement, the focus of CONAHEC's Virtual International Partnerships initiative. To learn more visit [www.CONAHEC.org](http://www.CONAHEC.org)

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## Karli Grant Appointed New President of American Higher Education Alliance

**AHEA's member initiative creates a global network through collaboration and learning experiences.**

March 17, 2021.

Boca Raton, Florida. For Immediate Release.

American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA), a nonprofit organization focused on promoting internationalization and equity in higher education, is pleased to announce the appointment of Karli Grant as their new President. She succeeds Benjamin Shank, who has stepped down to head Tower Education Technologies, Boca Raton's higher education technology startup.

With nearly 30 years of experience in higher education and education technology, Grant will continue to build upon AHEA's success, providing access to affordable higher education for all. The organization is building an international network connecting the global academic community through collaboration and learning best practices and experiences.

As AHEA's President, Grant will launch the Alliance's new membership initiative, one aspect of which empowers faculty worldwide to collaborate with their peers to develop and teach new courses and curricula. Additional initiative work focuses on internationalized education, lifelong learning, and universal credentialing.

Through this groundbreaking initiative, Grant will lead the creation of service offerings, technology strategies, and partnerships complementing and extending member institutions' academic and engagement capabilities. It also increases their international student and faculty populations, despite the travel limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. AHEA members will receive unlimited use of their educational resources and have the peace of mind knowing that all institutions in the network meet mutually accepted Quality Assurance Measures (QAMs).

“AHEA has been asking ‘What if we could change the course of higher education?’ and that’s an exciting and challenging mission to undertake,” said Grant. “I’m honored to be a part of an organization that is working with higher education institutions around the globe to break down barriers in collaboration, teaching and learning.”

Prior to joining AHEA, Grant planned market strategies and led the launching of new higher education software products at Campus Management Corp. (now Anthology) and Datatel, Inc. (now Ellucian). She also spent nearly a decade as a higher education administrator, having worked at three institutions in the areas of strategic enrollment management [SEM], student engagement and institutional advancement.

About AHEA American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) is founded with the mission to drive equity in higher education by connecting the global community through international collaboration and learning experiences. Through its partnerships with colleges and universities around the world, the nonprofit organization contributes to the development of future leaders worldwide through internationalized education, lifelong learning, and universal credentialing.

To learn more about AHEA’s membership initiative, visit <https://www.ahealliance.org/join-ahae/>.

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## American Higher Education Alliance Launches Membership Program for Post-Secondary Institutions

**Member benefits support global collaboration, faculty development, and academic quality assurance measures**

April 13, 2021

Boca Raton, Florida.

American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA), a nonprofit organization focused on promoting internationalization and equity in higher education, announced today the launch of its new membership and benefits program. Membership levels enable individual faculty and administrators, academic departments, and entire institutions to join a global network of post-secondary professionals.

AHEA's membership program supports the very purpose of an institution – effective teaching and learning. Through AHEA's unique offerings, members can collaborate on a global scale, partake of resources created to nurture faculty development and advancement, and utilize Quality Assurance Measures (QAM) designed by accreditation professionals to strengthen academic offerings, articulation agreements and credentialing.

“We see higher education through an international lens,” said Karli Grant, President of AHEA. “Our members will be able to collaborate on a variety of academic and student success-related projects including the co-development and co-teaching of curriculum to multinational virtual and physical classes. But it is not just about building a global classroom. Our members have access to professional resources including mentoring, a best practices library, and scholarship and grants to assist with faculty development.”

Highlights of the AHEA membership benefits include:

- Collaboration and Networking with project partner matching services, forums, and guided processes that ensure quality outcomes
- Benchmarking and Data Services including member PulsePolls and surveys, as well as peer institution analysis Professional Development Resources encompassing templates, sample documents, a multi-media best practices library, professional conferences and events, scholarships and grants funding
- Premium Services comprised of on-ground to online course conversion services, QAM accreditation preparation consulting, and our Global Engagement Dashboard

“In addition to all of these programs and services, AHEA members have exclusive use of a cloud-based solution which is designed to foster collaboration through a shared workspace and virtual classroom,” said Grant. “This platform eliminates geographic borders and technology barriers, and reduces dependency on high-priced yet disparate systems in use between collaborators. Providing technology as part of our membership benefits reflects our mission to drive equity in higher education, and we are excited to offer such a valuable service to our members.”

#### About AHEA

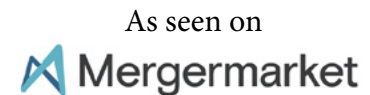
American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) is founded with the mission to drive equity in higher education by connecting the global community through international collaboration and learning experiences. Through its partnerships with colleges and universities around the world, the nonprofit organization contributes to the development of future leaders worldwide through internationalized education, lifelong learning, and universal credentialing.

To learn more about AHEA’s membership initiative, visit <https://www.ahealliance.org/join-ahae/>.





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As seen on

Mergermarket

# Mergermarket Interviews Debra Siler

By James Ward | August 25, 2020

Tower Education Technologies, a higher-education tech platform, is having active discussions with investors and considering options that include its first capital raise, said Debra Siler, co-founder and CEO.

After onboarding its first customers in the spring, the Boca Raton, Florida-based company is in “growth mode”, Siler said, adding that growth and investor interest is accelerating with increased demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I think we’re probably going to see adoption of less niche solutions and more comprehensive platforms that also include the analytics because of the cost and resource benefits,” Siler said. “Institutions are really going to be looking at that return on investment.”

According to a Mergermarket report published 20 August, COVID-19 has led investors to edtech. Fourteen companies in the space have raised more than USD 569m so far in 2020, up from the USD 480m raised by 15 companies in all of 2019.

Ongoing conversations with potential investors concerning the amount of funding it could seek are “fluid” and will be determined by what level of growth it pursues, she said. The CEO, who called the higher education market “underserved,” said Tower is looking for investors who believe education leads to choices, empowerment and lifelong learning.

Tower has at least one year of runway remaining, Siler said, declining to disclose financials. It has raised USD 6m to date from angel investors. Its valuation, based on its share sales to investors, is approximately USD 17m, Siler added.

The COVID-19 crisis paused onboarding in the spring, but the business otherwise has been largely unhindered by the novel coronavirus, she said.

Tower's platform, designed to support the "critical mission" and goals of higher education, allows faculty and researchers across the world to collaborate and develop proprietary content, from co-creating courses and curricula to conducting peer reviews and co-authoring articles. That feature is in high demand because of COVID-19, Siler said. Its platform provides reporting analytics, a student information system, a learning management system and a customer relationship management system, Siler said. It also connects with alumni to promote lifelong learning, "a value-add that hasn't been there" with other edtech companies, she noted.

The company has 16 global colleges and universities whose enrollments range from 1,000 to 250,000 students, the result of a membership partnership with the nonprofit American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA). Siler said the ability to work with large and small institutions gives it a unique competitive advantage. "The way we built the platform is it scales quickly. It's very customizable," she added.

In the next 12 months, despite a potential capital raise, Tower plans to add more customers organically, mainly by word-of-mouth through its AHEA partnership. It aims to connect with colleges and universities around the world, although the CEO declined to offer a geographic focus.

Within the next year, Tower is looking to increase its staff by more than 50% of its current 22 people, all of whom worked remotely prior to the pandemic, Siler said. The company also plans to release three software updates to its platform, the first of which will occur this week.

Its largest indirect competitor is Platinum Equity Partners-backed Blackboard, though Siler noted that Tower has no direct competitors because of its comprehensive features.

As seen in Mergermarket: <https://www.mergermarket.com/intelligence/view/intelcms-r7jqgs>



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# Enterprise Radio Interviews

## Debra Siler

August 6, 2020

Podcast Transcript:

**Eric Dye (ED):** We're speaking with Debra Siler, the CEO and co-founder of Tower Education Technologies. Tower is a global EdTech company that helps colleges and universities of all types and sizes break down barriers to virtualize and globalize higher education. Debra, thanks for joining us here today on Enterprise Radio.

**Debra Siler (DS):** Thanks for having me Eric. I appreciate it.

**ED:** If you would, tell us about yourself and the company you are leading to kick things off today.

**DS:** Tower Education Technologies was born out of a desire to empower people who really transform their lives through education. We were founded in 2017. We're headquartered in Boca Raton, FL. With a team across the US, the Caribbean, and South America. We can be found online at [www.TowerEdTech.com](http://www.TowerEdTech.com).

We're getting ready for release one in mid-August too, so we've got some exciting things coming up, Eric.

**ED:** It's certainly timely to be ready for the new school year. Now, what is the one thing that led you to develop the InspirED™ platform and who do you see benefiting the most from this platform?

**DS:** We were inspired to build it because we're looking at globalization of education, and really the internationalization of it. Not just in higher ed, or traditional and non-traditional, or online, in class with an instructor or distance learning. What we're trying to do is build out a platform for lifelong learning.

Who benefits from this? Quite honestly is everybody. It's a unified platform that first benefits higher edu-

cation institutions in really being able to provide great services not only to their faculty and students but also to alumni and communities.

What InspirED does is it enables institutions and their faculty to expand the horizons beyond the current paradigm. COVID has brought forth a lot of challenges and opportunities. The first thing I want to talk about in the InspirED platform – think of InspirED as holding all the reporting and the security. That's the overarching layer.

Underneath that is CollaboratED™ which is our professional engagement solution. This take like-minded faculty members and gives them a place where they can really collaborate; co-creating courses, curricula, participating in peer reviews, stuff like that. There's nothing like that on the market right now.

In ConnectED™, our students are better equipped to brandish skills in the world and be better world citizens. ConnectED, which is our student information system, manages the student lifecycle from recruitment. Basically, you're not out of high school yet? Through admissions you've applied, and the institution is evaluating your selection to course registration, whether the course is available, and you've met the pre-requisites. We also have BlendED™ which is our learning management system. Now this is where the classes are delivered, they have discussion groups, quizzes can be taken there, and papers can be uploaded for grading. Now BlendED may seem like the hot thing right now with COVID and all that but it runs deeper than that. Faculty can see their rosters and grade books. They can engage with their students on their assignments and discussions.

InspirED is also great for administrators because they're going to have actionable intelligence so they can make those imperative decisions with really good data at their fingertips.

**ED:** That's quite a resource. Thanks for breaking that down for us. What are the challenges that your platform, InspirED, addresses and how is your solution different from others in your space?

**DS:** The challenges that were presented pre-COVID and will evolve because of COVID, a couple stand out for me. The first one being institutional effectiveness. This is really an institution's ability to deliver to their students and faculty efficiently and effectively. Are we getting the outcomes that we said we'd get? These outcomes can be around recruitment, retention, growth, and graduation rates. Are the students engaged? And that leads me to my second one.

Student engagement. Do the students feel like they have a personal experience with the institution? Are they actively participating? Are they learning with passion? Those types of things. These seem to be the qualitative side of learning.

What's historically happened in technology has been a one size fits all. You have a program for this and that's all that it's for. And you have a program for that, and another for another outcome to be measured. Very much like education, InspirED isn't a one size fits all.

I think we realized that when we started doing research and development a couple of years ago we built In-spirED to be fully customizable so we key in on things like actionable intelligence for deans and administrators so that they can holistically plan those programs and operations in real time.

The benefits from that really come from our partnership with AHEA. AHEA is the American Higher Education Alliance and they can be found at [ahealliance.org](http://ahealliance.org). What they've done is distilled years in the higher education field and developed resources and templates that we house in the platform around those best practices in student engagement and online learning.

If you think about it, taking some of the hard sciences and putting it online is probably more challenging than some of your typical lecture classes. So, that partnership is really paying off and that's really how it's different. We've partnered with an organization that has developed these wonderful resources in our platform. Great questions. Thank you.

**ED:** Certainly sounds like you have a lot of awesome things going on there at Tower Education Technologies. Today we're joined by Debra Siler, the CEO and co-founder of Tower Education Technologies; a global Ed-Tech company that helps colleges and universities of all types and sizes break down barriers to virtualize and globalize higher education and she's joined us here today on Enterprise Radio, part of the Enterprise Podcast Network.

Now continuing on looking at COVID-19, what's the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your company, Tower Education Technologies, and also on the EdTech industry as a whole?

**DS:** For Tower, one of the things we had to do because we kind of had a roadmap for how we wanted to release the technology. We had our benchmarks and the kinds of activities we were going to do and fortunately we were planning multiple releases at the same time, so we didn't necessarily use a waterfall approach. Meaning release one is this and release two is that. It was here are all the functions and features we want in the platform and it was really just re-prioritizing those things because we had originally planned for release one to be for study abroad.

As everyone can agree COVID brought study abroad to a screeching halt or stay in place at the very least. So, we had to shift a little bit into a more collaborative focus kind of developing the original content that these institutions can certainly deliver into 2021.

As far as EdTech goes, there was a July 20th TechCrunch profile around how EdTech is no longer optional. I couldn't agree more. COVID really brought remote learning to the forefront. So, when I think about CIOs, they had a challenge and an opportunity in front of them. They may not have had a totality event included in their planning but also an opportunity in that they can assess their delivery posture moving forward.

What we had done, is we had planned for all learning types in our platform, whether it's online, distance, traditional, or non-traditional. Fortunately, we were agile enough to make that shift based on the pandemic and

the fact that we had already planned for certain things. It was just moving some pieces around. We were very fortunate.

**ED:** Just on the news today I saw that they made mention of the education field being the most hit and impacted in the history of education by the COVID-19 pandemic and you guys are really making it happen and shifting the gears and putting things in place that folks can tap into and I think it's quite, quite awesome on your part at Tower Education Technologies.

What can we expect looking ahead from Tower in the future?

**DS:** Quite a bit, actually. We've already begun working on release two. Like I said we had all of our functions and features laid out and we've already started working on release two without release one being out there yet. Release two is going to include those things we had to realign, of course due to COVID.

Release two is going to be broader and deeper and we're going to be working on expanding those solutions and gaining even more efficiencies for the faculty and students. One of the great things is the simplicity. When I say broader and deeper I don't want you to think heavier and cumbersome. I want you to think of things that are very easy from a user experience perspective. Making sure that those success metrics really bubble up for the institutions, faculty, and students. Getting those further developed and prevalent, as well. Those metrics like recruitment and retention, and graduation rates, and alumni cultivation.

Also putting some of the power back to the students. One of the things that happened when I was in college a thousand years ago; I wanted to change my major and I felt like I had to keep chasing the answer because it was different depending on who you asked. This platform is really going to put the power back into the hands of the students in being able to determine their best path forward and what that looks like. So again, just empowering the faculty, the administrators, and the students to create a better world post COVID.

Link to broadcast: <https://epodcastnetwork.com/the-impact-of-technology-on-higher-education/>



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As seen on  
**MarketWatch**

## Tower Education Technologies Appoints Benjamin Shank Chief Executive Officer

**Industry expertise and technology enhance Tower's position at the forefront of higher education.**

February 23, 2021

Boca Raton, FL

Tower Education Technologies (Tower), Boca Raton's higher education technology startup, announced today that Benjamin Shank has been named Chief Executive Officer. Shank is also a co-founder of the company.

With two decades of experience in higher education and global engagement, Shank brings a solid commitment to developing groundbreaking, technology that transforms colleges and universities. Tower's solutions are specifically designed to facilitate educational opportunities and foster global academic partnerships.

As former CEO of nonprofit American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA), Shank is well-versed in the issues facing higher education, including internationalization, virtual learning, collaboration, student success, and lifelong learning. His expertise enabled the organization to focus on breaking down barriers and leveling the higher education playing field.

Under his leadership, Tower will develop innovative technologies to support the company's mission, while expanding and managing the business side of its partnership with AHEA. Together, these organizations will support institutions of higher education, so they can broaden their footprint, and make a greater impact in faculty development, and students' academic and career success. Tower has created the first EdTech platform of its kind, called InspirED™ to do this.

Developed in conjunction with AHEA, InspirED is the only higher education platform to natively integrate a student information system, ConnectED™, a learning management system BlendED™, and a professional engagement solution, CollaboratED™. It also combines operational highlights, performance

reports, CRM, and analytics.

“I am very excited to lead the Tower team,” said Shank. “I believe the company has a great business model and an entrepreneurial spirit that uniquely positions it to impact higher education institutions in a positive and powerful way.”

In the role of CEO, Shank also takes responsibility for building an organization focused on open communication, transparency, and integrity. This is especially critical for an EdTech company that fosters collaboration across several countries, languages, and cultures.

Over the past year, colleges and universities have faced mounting challenges associated with COVID-19. According to Shank, he will strive to make Tower nimbler and more flexible so as higher education’s needs change, so will Tower’s technological offerings.

#### About Tower Education Technologies

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In 2017 Tower formed a strategic partnership with American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA). Together these organizations support institutions of higher education so they can expand their footprint and make a greater impact in faculty development, and their students’ academic and career success. As a result, the InspirED platform has empowered students and institutional stakeholders at colleges and universities in Malaysia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, China, Latin America, and North America.

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As seen in  
**Forbes**

## The Digital Disruption Of Higher-Ed Is Inevitable: Alternative Models Will Challenge Status Quo

April 28, 2021

By David Armano

As seen in Forbes:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidarmano/2021/04/28/the-digital-disruption-of-higher-ed-is-inevitable-alternative-models-will-challenge-status-quo/?sh=48aa548a156a>

Disruption is often most noticeable in obvious spaces and industries such as travel, entertainment, transportation, retail, etc. Uber and Airbnb excel at meeting the most significant market need with the most efficiency while expanding their models to expand and flex into related spaces (Uber Eats). From apps to Amazon warehouse work as depicted in the Oscar-winning film, *Nomadland*, The last decade introduced us to the emergence of the gig economy, fractional employment, and rapidly evolving consumer behavior. If you're looking for what will change the most this decade, it might just be higher education. But It's not easy to make impactful changes to an entrenched industry. Amazon, J.P. Morgan, and Berkshire Hathaway attempted to disrupt healthcare costs with Haven, and it faltered. Like anything ripe for change, it starts with the problem and opportunity. In higher-ed, there are a few key areas:

### **Bubble Trouble: The Post Pandemic Economics of Higher Education**

The cost of a four-year degree has skyrocketed—the average tuition alone has increased 361 percent instructing, compared to 1963 and 69 percent of college students graduate with a mix of private and federal debt. Yet, it is still valued based on the opportunities it can unlock. However, the average American higher-ed student doesn't have much choice in disrupting the system. Taking on \$100,000 or more likely \$200,000 in student debt is seen as the cost of doing business to achieve career goals. Dan Rosenweig, CEO of Chegg, a student textbook company asks "is this the American dream or American nightmare?" and asserts that higher education is a bubble.

Tunisha Singleton, an adjunct faculty member of Fielding Graduate University with a PHD in philosophy and media psychology from her alma mater believes diversity on multiple levels poses challenges: "A big challenge for higher Ed continues to be the rather bullish attitude that fuels the hesitation to believe that there are

alternative models. Diversity has and continues to be a big problem as well and that is in multiple areas. Yes, the diversity of administration and faculty because representation certainly matters and that is something students can see as well. But also, diversity in approach.”

In addition to college campus shut-downs, the pandemic has also intensified the professional pivot. With so many people suddenly out of work, there needs to be alternative models. Google recently unveiled plans to provide multiple certificates in a variety of subjects to get people back to work or switch careers faster. This will not wholly circumvent the college or specialized degree, but it does present another option depending on the field someone wants to pursue.

## **Digital Disruption Is Inevitable**

When Google is thinking hard about this, you can bet the industry is taking notice. 3M, Walgreens, and CVS have all partnered with Carrus, a digital education leader, to create quick, high-quality healthcare training that makes a pipeline of qualified talent for their companies. This kind of direct partnership, in theory, creates a faster and direct pipeline of talent for a company, and they can also tailor the education to fit their objectives better. Having a certificate or education program backed by a company looking to hire off that specific expertise is vast and takes some of the uncertainty out of the education process for a job seeker. Minerva, a highly selective online-only university combines a digital-centric college without the campus experience with what feels like an Ivy league value proposition: “nurturing critical wisdom for the sake of the world.” Professors here hold virtual office hours and the digital university attracts global students who never have to leave their home country to attend and graduate.

Employers in some industries are also getting aggressive in recruiting. For example, Gearbox Entertainment president Randy Pitchford has embarked on a virtual speaking tour at top universities like Michigan State University, the University of Southern California, and more to share his insights directly with students considering a career in interactive entertainment. Pitchford recognizes the need for new ideas and perspectives to keep moving forward. The world’s best game developers ten years from now are probably people who aren’t even in the industry today.

Ben Shank, former CEO of The American Higher Education Alliance and current CEO at Tower Education Technologies views digital disruption differently when it comes to large vs. smaller institutions: “Larger, well known institutions, will likely continue with the on-campus model being their main generator of revenue. They also tend to offer some virtual experiences, but that has only amounted to a small portion of their income. Small-to-mid sized institutions, on the other hand, have a major decision to make. These colleges and universities could continue to struggle and may even be forced to close if they choose to continue to fully rely on on-campus students for their revenue.”

Ben also notes the shifting sands of degrees vs. credentials: “looking at it from a more consumer-based perspective, COVID-19 has opened the doors for traditional and non-traditional students alike to procure an

education that is personalized to meet their needs. Getting an education now is less about earning a degree, and more about receiving micro, and alternative credentials.”

## **Digital Education Integration Will Lead The Way**

Much of higher-ed’s future will go digital to some degree. The pandemic accelerated change but the change was always inevitable. This will not displace the need for in-person schooling, however. Digital education is still viewed as a way to supplement education, create flexibility when needed and allow students to become more proficient faster. It’s why Gartner estimates by 2025, 90 percent of U.S. public school districts will use a mix of in-person and digital remote learning.

Instructure, the maker of the online learning management tool Canvas, has over 30 million users. They have been working with at least 14 states to maximize their digital offerings and prepare for that future. They have also led an initiative with Zoom and other digital companies to help bridge the digital divide as we add more technology to education. Having digital education offerings prepares school systems for unforeseen future events like a pandemic and gives them more options in how they instruct, where they instruct, and when they instruct. Instructure even offers a quick tool to determine how much learning has been gained or lost during this pandemic so school systems can supplement knowledge where needed most. It also can help students progress faster in their education or get specific one-on-one help where it’s needed most. For some, it’s all about flexibility.

Nathalie Mainland, SVP and GM of Education Cloud at Salesforce envisions a future of learning flexibility: “We see more flexible learning options coming to the forefront which will include more flexible cost structures for students. The four-year degree will persist alongside growing opportunities for credentials, badges, certifications that will provide greater choice for all lifelong learners.” Part of this flexibility includes what she refers to as “stackable credentials”...she expands on this as “the ticket to a more diverse and equitable workforce especially for women, Black, and LatinX workers.”

Overall, while the traditional college campus experience is unlikely to vanish, we are becoming more conditioned around online education. Some students will use digital education to catch up in certain areas, while others can use it to get a head-start in pursuing a career aligned with what they learn. Much like the electric vehicle market, once you see everyone getting into the game, it’s hard to deny that the digital transformation of education will accelerate exponentially. We’re inevitably heading toward a less linear, more flexible, more credentialed and hybrid higher education system that adapts with, and ideally gets in front of change.

### **About Tower Education Technologies**

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As seen in  
**Forbes**

## Tower Education Technologies Transitions to Benefit Corporation Status

Status change focuses on vision and impact in higher education

Boca Raton, FL,  
May 11, 2021

Tower Education Technologies, Boca Raton's start-up higher education technology corporation, has evolved its status from a c-corp to a public benefit corporation (PBC). The change reflects the organization's vision of enabling education opportunities for all through innovative yet low-cost technology.

Though still a traditional for-profit business, a benefit corporation has a commitment to increased transparency, greater accountability to their mission, and a focus on principles of purpose, also known as social impact. The ultimate goal of a benefit corporation is to increase its value to all stakeholders, not just investors or shareholders.

"From the inception of Tower, we wanted to focus on what good we could do in the world. Serving higher education provides an obvious path to do so, as their mission directly impacts lives," said Benjamin Shank, Chief Executive Officer. "What we've come to realize, though, is that Tower's altruistic nature really is suited to the definition of a benefit corporation. We conduct ourselves with transparency and hold ourselves to a higher standard of accountability for the sake of our employees and customers."

Having completed the legal requirements to change to a benefit corporation is the first step to a larger plan, according to Shank. He plans for the company to fulfill the requirements to earn the Certified B-Corp status, of which only 3,500 companies world-wide have done. "We understand the budget impact to institutions trying to decide between paying for software subscriptions or offering better programs or more services to educate their students," stated Shank. "We take the role of being a platform provider seriously," he continued. "Tower Education Technologies believes that we have a responsibility – and opportunity – to provide innovative technology at a much lower cost to colleges and universities around the globe. That's where we will make our impact."

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## David Meek Joins Board of Directors at Tower Education Technologies

### Education Technology Visionary Lends Expertise to Start Up

Boca Raton, FL. May 25, 2021

Tower Education Technologies announced today that David Meek has joined its board of directors. Mr. Meek has built his career pioneering enterprise and specialized technology solutions for the education sector. He has also spent many years consulting with EdTech companies regarding higher education's needs and opportunities.

In 1988, Meek founded Campus Management Corp. (now Anthology, Inc.) and served as its CEO for 20 years. The company originally developed a student information system for proprietary colleges and became the most dominate provider in that market. Under his leadership, Campus Management expanded its product portfolio to include finance, HR and fundraising software which served traditional two and four-year public and private institutions as well. Since then, he has led several other EdTech ventures including his most recent start-up, SilverLeaf Systems, where he launched ScholarshipMagic to the higher education market.

"We are thrilled to have David Meek join the board at Tower Education Technologies and benefit from his vast experience," said Founder and Chairman of the Board Zhanjun Niohuru. "David's depth of expertise is a great addition to the team. His passions for innovation and student success are what brought us to work together, and I am confident that we will solve real problems, like addressing the high cost of technology and providing access to quality teaching and learning in under-represented communities."

"Tower Education Technologies is not your average start up, and I'm excited to join the board to advise and help grow the company's footprint," said Meek. "Their platform model is unique, something I haven't seen yet in technology for higher education. Their focus on enabling faculty collaboration around the globe and internationalizing the student academic experience, while lowering the cost and improving effectiveness, are innovative and I believe it will change how we view EdTech."

"Additionally, Tower has chosen to become a public benefit corporation, and established a closely aligned partnership with American Higher Education Alliance, a non-profit organization which has assisted in identifying the needs of faculty and students in the global education market," he continued. "Tower's focus on so-

cial impact and education for all is truly inspiring, and I look forward to working with the leadership team and fellow board members to achieve the company's vision and mission.”

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As seen in

*The Washington Post*

## How Higher Education Impacts Career Paths

By Rebecca Smith

Obtaining higher education – specifically a degree – has long been considered the path to obtaining one's desired career. What we've learned though in the last decade especially, is that the job market is flooded with workers with degrees, and yet businesses are telling higher ed institutions that their students aren't prepared with necessary skills for entry level positions. So a chasm exists that we need to bridge, and the best way to do so is for colleges and universities to partner with businesses and industries to determine the required entry, mid- and senior-level skills necessary to obtain, advance and succeed in a given career field.

### **What changes need to be made in higher education to ensure that students are getting the best education for their career goals?**

To begin with, colleges and universities need to revisit their definition of a student. The average age of a student in America is now 26.4 years old, and that data alone suggests that students today need flexibility in order to accommodate home responsibilities, work life, and obtaining an education. Therefore, higher education should be shifting its resources to account for students who are looking to gain specific skills or knowledge blocks but who have limited schedules. Institutions should also be offering education in smaller units to support specific career attainment and advancement goals. Finally, shifting resources to staff career centers with additional counselors who can help students align courses to the necessary career skills will help them find the most cost and time effective education pathway possible.

### **Is technology enabling higher education and enabling a more sophisticated, career-minded education?**

Technology has made higher education more accessible to a global community but with it comes a hefty price tag. Education technology has become so expensive that institutions have had to choose between paying for software to manage their student academic records or investing that money in the education programs they offer. The best education for career-minded students is to provide real-time job market data with the necessary skills and knowledge attainment. That is, guide students to understand how their interests parlay into jobs and careers, but with an understanding of what it takes to advance and succeed in that field (based

upon labor statistics). Then, offer micro-credentials to assist students. While there is still a need for the traditional 120–126 credit hour program to earn a degree, career-minded students would be much better served through micro-credentialing. This allows students to get the most needed information on a subject in a shorter amount of time. It allows for the greatest amount of flexibility and when combined with other micro-credentials it becomes a personalized portfolio that can be applied to a student's career goals.

### **Lifelong learning -- How does that play a role in a career-minded education?**

While lifelong learning has played a small part in higher education for years, the development of technology and globalization has really pushed it to be one of the main drivers institutions should be looking to capitalize on. Ben Shank, former CEO of The American Higher Education Alliance and current CEO at Tower Education Technologies views digital disruption differently when it comes to large vs. smaller institutions: "Larger, well known institutions, will likely continue with the on-campus model being their main generator of revenue. They also tend to offer some virtual experiences, but that has only amounted to a small portion of their income. Small-to-mid sized institutions, on the other hand, have a major decision to make. These colleges and universities could continue to struggle and may even be forced to close if they choose to continue to fully rely on on-campus students for their revenue." Think of lifelong learning as Lego blocks, each new subject learned is another block to build your career on. It can be shaped to look like whatever the student wants. Lifelong learning is an opportunity for higher education to connect with the global business community and offer timely courses that prepare students to meet the current needs of our world. As needs shift so can the education to ensure a steady source of quality employees.

### **Things potential students should look for when it comes to selecting the right higher education program**

**Flexibility** – Today's student population is not composed solely of high school graduates. Many students are parents and working adults and each of them has their own reason for gaining an education. No matter where in the world they're located, students need to identify a program that fits within their already hectic schedules.

**Affordability** – Over the past decade tuition costs have skyrocketed forcing students to take on debt. Today's constituents are very cost-conscious and seek programs that directly support their education, life, and career goals.

**Career Support** – Students have not always been aware of what career they could pursue after earning a degree. As a result, many students have landed jobs earning salaries lower than the amount of their student debt. To put an end to this fiscal deficiency, institutions need to have a career support staff in place to help students make the most of their education.

**Transferability** – Students should look for programs that are easily transferable. They should ask themselves, "how does this transfer into my career objective overall?" They also need to consider approaching their education from different angles by considering, "should I build knowledge through micro-credentialing from multiple programs and institutions, or would one program fit my desired outcome?"

## **Where is higher education now in general and where it is headed with respect to best practices with a career-minded bent?**

Higher Education, while facing a huge challenge, has an opportunity to adapt to meet the needs of today's career-minded student. With advancements in technology and a more cost-conscious student, institutions would be wise to recognize that adapting their education offerings to focus on upskilling and re-skilling could result in a new revenue stream that could very well determine if it remains viable or is forced to close. There will always be a demand for the traditional on-campus experience, but more and more students are looking for a cost-effective and less time-consuming way to learn what is needed for a particular career path.

### About Tower Education Technologies

Tower Education Technologies (Tower) was founded with the mission to build innovative technology to impact higher education institutions in a positive and productive way. The company's flagship product, InspirED™, is the only higher education platform that natively integrates a student information system, ConnectED™, a learning management system, BlendED™, and a professional engagement solution, CollaboratED™. It also combines operational highlights, performance reports, CRM, and analytics.

In 2017 Tower formed a strategic partnership with American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA). Together these organizations support institutions of higher education so they can expand their footprint and make a greater impact in faculty development, and their students' academic and career success. As a result, the InspirED platform has empowered students and institutional stakeholders at colleges and universities in Malaysia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, China, Latin America, and North America.

Connect with Tower Education Technologies at <http://www.TowerEdTech.com> or on LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter.



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## Tower Education Technologies Launches InspirED™ Platform

### Open source solution drives down technology costs for colleges and universities around the world

**Boca Raton, FL. July 13, 2021**

Tower Education Technologies, a south Florida start-up and public benefit corporation, today announced its delivery of the InspirED™ platform for higher education. The cloud-based open source solution equips faculty, administrators and students with a state-of-the-art solution for program development, academic delivery and engagement.

InspirED contains the CollaboratED™ faculty development and BlendED™ learning management solutions, which are designed to foster innovative teaching and learning on a global scale. InspirED overcomes campus technology barriers and collaborator differences in time zones and languages, and makes it easy for faculty to create courses, curriculum, certificate programs, and more by identifying their own professional interests and specialties, and supporting global faculty matching of project partners with similar goals and interests. The platform is available to individuals, academic departments and institutions that are members of American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA), a strategic partner of Tower.

“Education technology costs have skyrocketed in the last decade, and the budgetary impact means institutions have literally had to choose between maintaining software versus investing in academic programs and services for better student outcomes,” said Benjamin Shank, CEO at Tower. “We sought to break that cycle and offer colleges and universities an innovative solution that is not only cost-effective, but enables creative course development and student education on a global scale. This combination is what makes InspirED so unique.”

“The strategic partnership with Tower is solving multiple problems for our member institutions,” stated Karli Grant, President at AHEA. “With a growing demand for credentialing and global learning even as study abroad and international travel are in the early stages of reemerging, AHEA is empowering international collaboration and overcoming disparate systems and tools, to eliminate so many barriers in this space. Working together, our members can focus on creating and delivering quality content and programs that engage students for learning success.”

In preparation for the launch of InspirED, Tower and AHEA piloted the solution with faculty, academic administrators, global studies and study abroad leaders. They tested features, created courses and provided feedback which was directly incorporated into this inaugural release of the platform.

“The input we gained through the AHEA Faculty Fellows pilot program provided insight as to their needs, as well as validation of the platform we built and will continue to expand,” shared Mr. Shank. “As a public benefit corporation that is working with a non-profit organization, our strategic partnership serves as a vehicle to deliver high value for low cost to higher education.”

To date, AHEA has 25 member institutions from nine countries. In recognition of Tower’s launch of the InspirED platform, AHEA is offering a year-long free membership to individual faculty and administrators who apply between June 1 and September 1, 2021. To apply for membership to AHEA, go to <https://www.ahealliance.org/join-ahea/>.

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### **About AHEA**

American Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) is founded with the mission to drive equity in higher education by connecting the global community through international collaboration and learning experiences. Through its partnerships with colleges and universities around the world, the nonprofit organization contributes to the development of future leaders worldwide through internationalized education, lifelong learning, and universal credentialing. Connect with AHEA at <https://www.ahealliance.org> or on LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter.