



College
Innovation
Network

Navigating Uncertainty: Together We Know A Lot

If there's one thing the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us, it's that the only thing we can count on is uncertainty. Yet, while no one knows everything, **together we know a lot.**

It's in this spirit that 12 of the College Innovation Network (CIN) Members converged for our August Partnership in Practice (PiP) call where we reflected on lessons learned over the past year, aired our worries about the upcoming semester, and shared strategies to confront yet another uncertain school year ahead.

Throughout the conversation, the importance of agility – the willingness and ability to pivot – continued to surface, as did a number of common challenges faced by our institutions, including enrollment challenges, delivering curriculum and support services, managing pandemic safety protocols, and faculty support. Below we share what we have collectively learned about navigating uncertainty, together.

Tackling Enrollment Challenges



PROBLEM

Many institutions are facing a decline in enrollment, in large part due to competition with the workforce. Incentives like increased wages and signing bonuses are pulling students away from college and into the labor force. Institutions have noticed this is especially impacting some students, like underrepresented student populations and parenting students.



STRATEGIES

- Offer flexible curriculum modality options such as asynchronous online classes, evening classes, and blended learning.
- Identify and engage with dropped students directly to develop more effective retention strategies.
- Create student debt repayment plans for students.



CIN SPOTLIGHT

Cuyahoga Community College, Tri-C, developed a program to help students pay off their debt through the [Tri-C College Comeback program](#).

Delivering Curriculum & Support Services



PROBLEM

With the quick and unexpected shift to remote learning in 2020, and the full or partial return to in-person instruction, many institutions are struggling to identify what students actually need and want when it comes to curriculum and student support service delivery.



STRATEGIES

- Develop diverse course delivery modalities, such as hybrid, online, and face-to-face options.
- Continue to offer students remote support service options beyond the pandemic.
- Use each semester as a data point to help guide course and support service delivery in the years ahead to ensure alignment with student needs.



CIN SPOTLIGHT

To stay aligned with students' dynamic needs, **Bennett College** advocates for colleges to directly ask students what they need, using text messaging to conduct regular "pulse checks" throughout the semester.

Managing Pandemic Safety Protocols



PROBLEM

As institutions continue to navigate the complexities of the pandemic, managing risk to students, faculty, and staff is of paramount importance. Additionally, institutions are having to navigate changing – and sometimes unaligned – safety protocols among their staff and students.



STRATEGIES

- Partner with community organizations to host vaccine clinics on campus to ensure the safety of the campus population.
- Offer incentives for vaccination, such as gift cards to desired retailers and funds on student accounts that can be spent on campus.
- Facilitate listening sessions where students, staff and faculty can share their vaccine concerns, discuss policy changes, and have difficult conversations in a safe setting.



CIN SPOTLIGHT

In an effort to encourage students to get vaccinated, **Northern Virginia Community College** offered a **\$250 Vaccine Incentive** to be deposited to students' NOVACard with proof of vaccination.

Supporting Faculty



PROBLEM

Shifting to fully online instruction, and navigating a new hybrid teaching and learning environment, has been difficult for faculty. Institutions are facing a challenge to provide the right training and staffing of technologies needed to support both faculty and students in new online learning environments.



STRATEGIES

- Ensure that senior staff and new staff alike are trained to use and support new online learning technologies.
- Incentivise faculty upskilling and online teaching training programs to provide faculty with the support they need to adapt to new environments.
- Be mindful of the volume of meetings scheduled for faculty and staff, and be intentional about who really needs to be in attendance at meetings. Consider consolidating standing meetings or shortening the length of meetings.



CIN SPOTLIGHT

To better understand the needs of faculty who are teaching in online, edtech-driven environments, CIN will be surveying faculty across the Network in Fall 2021. We will then share actionable insights to our Network and beyond based on the insights we uncover from faculty members.

Stay tuned for more information!

ABOUT THE COLLEGE INNOVATION NETWORK

Our goal is to transform the EdTech adoption process for institutions, and create a marketplace and community in which innovation can thrive. Learn more about CIN by visiting wgulabs.org/cin