

Insights Into Higher Education Innovation

How
Community
Colleges
Organize
and Prioritize
to Cultivate
Innovation

by Marcy Drummond and Mindy Feldbaum



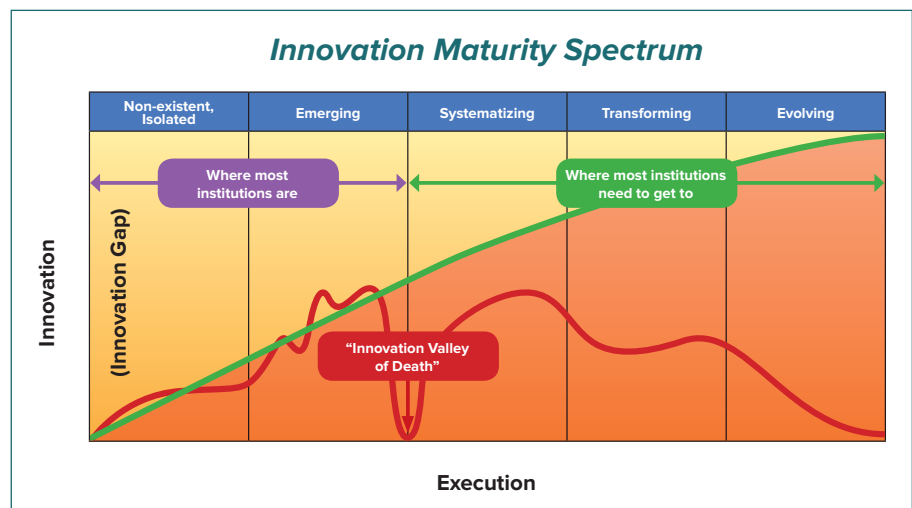
Today’s financial, political, and higher education environment poses unprecedented challenges. Public financial support and trust in quality, productivity, and value is eroding. Changing student demographics necessitate different models and solutions that new, burgeoning investments in learning technologies and alternative providers are delivering. Moreover, the 4th Industrial Revolution—an era of digitalization and the connected enterprise—is fundamentally changing what and how we learn and work.

This predicament leaves higher education leaders and practitioners having to figure out how to manage their own destinies, achieve future goals through new funding strategies, and change the way they do business by providing enhanced services and innovative solutions while improving student outcomes and eliminating achievement gaps. And, given the rapid pace of changing technologies, regional and state economies, market and workplace conditions, and learner characteristics and preferences, colleges and universities need to be agile and adept at continually evolving their programs, services, and business models. In essence, institutions and practitioners need to develop the capacity to be innovative – spurring change that creates a new dimension of performance; adds significant and meaningful value at scale; and holistically, measurably, and equitably impacts institutional and student success.

Because of the increasing importance of institutional innovation, there is keen interest in: (a) knowing how community colleges are being organized to spur and increase innovation and (b) learning from those who are becoming more innovation-focused. Toward that aim, a brief survey was developed by The Collaboratory (Collaboratory) and the League for Innovation in the Community College (League) and distributed to League institution members.

BACKGROUND: INNOVATION MATURITY SPECTRUM

The Innovation Maturity Spectrum (Spectrum) provided the framework for survey development and analysis. The Spectrum was developed utilizing results from the Transformative Change Initiative’s field study conducted by the Collaboratory. The Spectrum illustrates five phases of innovation maturity at colleges and universities within four institutional domains critical to innovation: Strategy,



Leadership/Governance, Architecture/Discipline, and Culture. The Spectrum also includes primary drivers of innovation and examples of institutional attributes that characterize each phase of maturity.

The Spectrum is undergirded by the recognition that significant and lasting transformation comes not from practitioners/institutions implementing innovative solutions but from practitioners/institutions learning to manage and mature innovation. The result is agile institutions that strategically and artfully implement multiple types of innovation (e.g., program/service, process, business model innovations) in a coordinated fashion at macro and micro levels, and continuously over time. Higher education institutions fall within a broad spectrum of innovation maturity ranging from nonexistent to evolving, with a majority falling somewhere between emerging and transforming. We believe it is challenging for institutions to mature innovation beyond the emerging point, which we refer to as the “innovation valley of death,” because they are either unaware of the importance of or unable to systematize innovation management and execution.

The Spectrum illustrates that innovation can be matured and even accelerated. There’s an opportunity to capitalize on institutional priorities, including increasing student success, developing scalable tools/resources, and rethinking practitioner and institutional competency/capacity building to close the gap between innovation aspiration and execution. Doing so allows higher education institutions to reach their greatest innovation potential and impact.

KEY FINDINGS

The Insights Into Higher Education Innovation survey revealed some key findings within four institutional domains critical to innovation as follows.

Strategy

- Innovation is very much a priority at 7 in 10 colleges and has been a priority for 6 years or more at 4 in 10 colleges.
- Improving student academic success is a primary driver of innovation. However, at colleges where innovation is a high priority, the changing landscape of higher education and the need to do things differently to achieve greater success are also drivers of innovation. At institutions where innovation is not a high priority, increasing enrollment and responding to financial pressures are compelling drivers. While innovation drivers at both types of institutions reflect a sense of urgency to respond to changing higher education conditions, the primary aim or strategy differs at each type of

institution. For high-priority institutions, innovation drivers reflect a “thriving” strategy while at other institutions innovation drivers reflect a “surviving” strategy.

- One-half of colleges do not have a documented and widely agreed upon definition of innovation, which is essential for strategizing, developing metrics for evaluating innovation results, getting everyone on the same page, aiming at impactful outcomes, and more.
- Strategy is one of the least mature institutional domains critical for innovation.

Leadership

- Presidents, vice presidents, and senior executives (or equivalent) are most often assigned the primary responsibility for managing innovation in addition to other responsibilities most commonly assigned to these positions.
- Eighteen percent of colleges have a position solely dedicated to managing innovation.

Architecture/Discipline

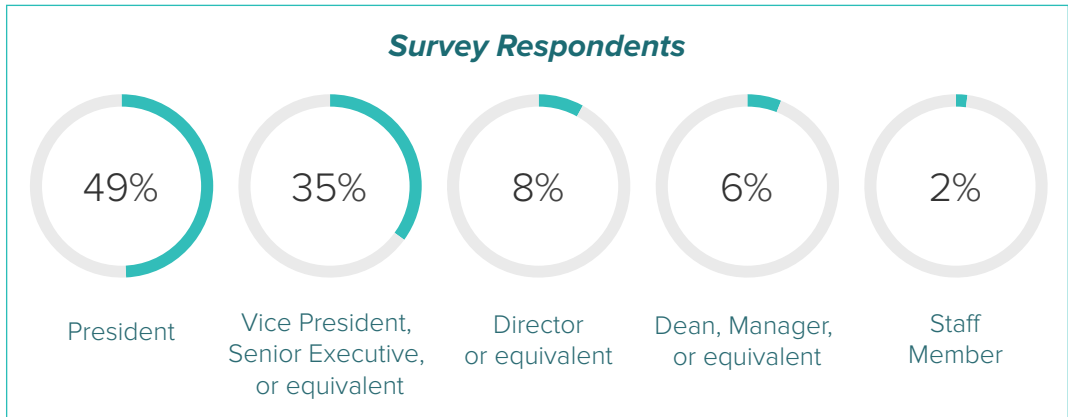
- Institutional alignment exists when institutional priorities; the organizational structure; positions that lead, facilitate, and manage innovation; practices; resources; and key activities align to nurture and mature innovation. There appears to be a lack of alignment between who is primarily responsible for innovation, the functional area to which innovation is assigned, and dedicated structures and resources to support innovation. Lack of institutional alignment minimizes innovation sustainability, scale, and impact.
- Partnerships (both internal and external) and networks of innovators are the most common resources colleges have available to support innovation.
- One-fourth of colleges have dedicated positions, dedicated functional areas, and systems and processes to manage innovation. Less than one-half have innovation metrics and assessment processes. Similarly, Architecture/Discipline is one of the least mature institutional domains critical for innovation.

Culture

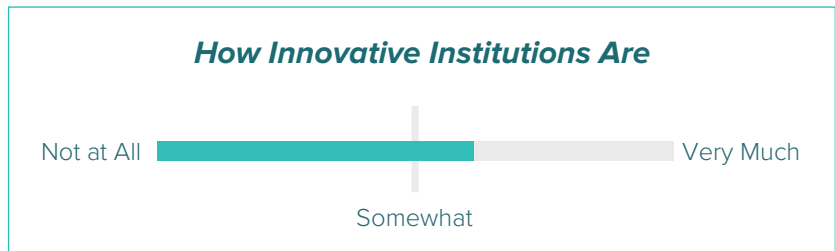
- Culture is the most mature of the four institutional domains critical for innovation.
- Nearly all colleges—at least to some extent—have entrepreneurship, foresight/insight, empowerment, openness, inclusion, and continual learning as core values and desired qualities and behaviors.
- Most colleges—at least to some extent—view risk-taking as a necessary condition for innovation.

SURVEY RESULTS

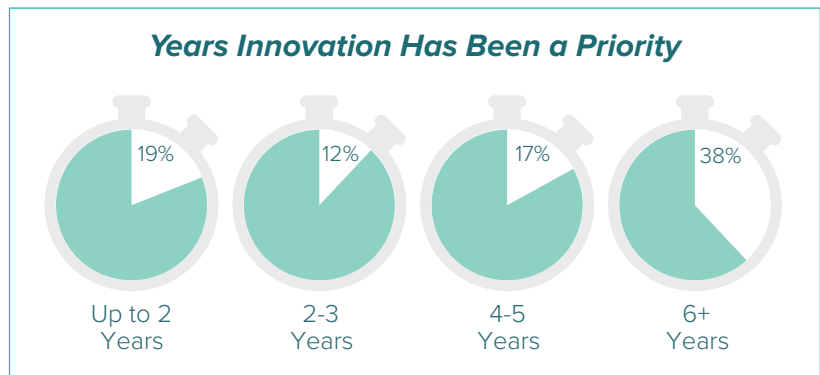
Sixty-five (65) institutions participated in the survey. Most survey respondents (84%) are senior executives at their institution: nearly one-half (49%) are presidents and another 35% are vice presidents or equivalent. The remaining respondents are directors or equivalent (8%); deans, managers, or equivalent (6%); or staff members (2%).



Survey findings reveal that innovation is very much a priority at 70% of respondents' colleges. For another 23%, innovation is somewhat a priority and for the remaining 7%, innovation is not at all a priority. When respondents were asked how innovative their institutions were on a scale of 0 to 100, the median response was 63.5. Many institutions (43%) are currently undertaking between 3 and 4 innovation-related initiatives or major activities; approximately one-fourth (24%) are working on 6 or more. Most respondents (82%) indicated that employees at all levels and across the institution are encouraged to contribute to innovation efforts.



Of respondents who indicated that innovation is very much a priority at their college, 4 in 10 noted that innovation has been a priority for 6 or more years. Results of the survey provided insights into the most pressing drivers of innovation at these colleges. The top three drivers are (in priority order): improving student academic success; recognizing the need to do things differently to achieve goals and greater success; and the changing landscape/future of higher education. Respondents

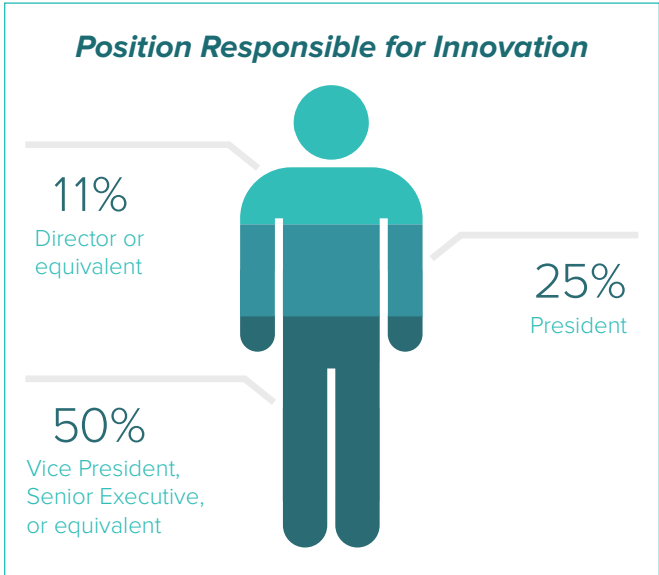


who indicated that innovation is not a priority were asked what drivers they think would be compelling to drive innovation at their college. The top three are increasing enrollment, improving academic success, and addressing financial pressures.

| DRIVERS OF INNOVATION | |
|---|--|
| Institutions Where Innovation Is a High Priority | Institutions Where Innovation Is Not a High Priority |
| Improving student academic success | Increasing enrollment |
| Recognizing the need to do things differently to achieve goals, greater success | Improving student academic success |
| Changing landscape/future of higher education | Addressing financial pressures |

Survey findings revealed that 50% of colleges do not have a documented or widely agreed upon definition of innovation and only one-third (34%) indicate that their institution has a definition that is widely agreed upon. When respondents were asked which words are or should be included in a definition of innovation (from a list provided), the most common responses were: excellence (47%), strategic (45%), student (42%), learning (40%), success (37%), agility (32%), and transformation (30%). Equity was most often provided as an additional suggestion for words to include in a definition of innovation.

Most institutions (54%) have not identified an individual or position as being primarily responsible for managing innovation and 14% of respondents indicated that more than one or many individuals (including everyone at the institution) are responsible for innovation. The position most likely to be assigned primary responsibility for managing innovation is a vice president (50%), including vice presidents of Academic Affairs (14%), Student Services/Affairs (5%), Advancement (5%) and Information Technology (5%); the president (25%); or a director or equivalent (11%).



The most common functional area innovation is assigned to is the President’s Office (32%), Academic Affairs (22%), or Institutional Effectiveness or equivalent (11%). Therefore, although a vice president is the most common position primarily responsible for innovation, the President’s Office is the most common functional area of the institution to which innovation is assigned.

Even though most respondents indicated that innovation is “very much a priority,” and has been for 6 or more years, several innovation initiatives are currently underway, and employees are encouraged to contribute to innovation efforts at their institution—half of colleges (50%) do not have a documented and widely agreed upon definition of innovation; more than half (54%) do not have a dedicated position with primary responsibility for innovation; and, of those who have identified a position, less than one-fourth (18%) are solely dedicated to managing innovation.

Even though most respondents indicated that innovation is “very much a priority,” half of colleges do not have a documented definition of innovation and more than half do not have a dedicated position with primary responsibility for innovation.

Respondents indicated that functional areas of the institution where the most innovation is taking place are the President’s Office, Student Affairs/ Services (programs and services); Academic Affairs (administration), and Workforce Development/Continuing Education. Conversely, the functional areas where the least innovation is taking place are Administrative Affairs/Services, Institutional Effectiveness (or equivalent), Information Technology, Academic Affairs (classroom), and Student Affairs/ Services (administration).

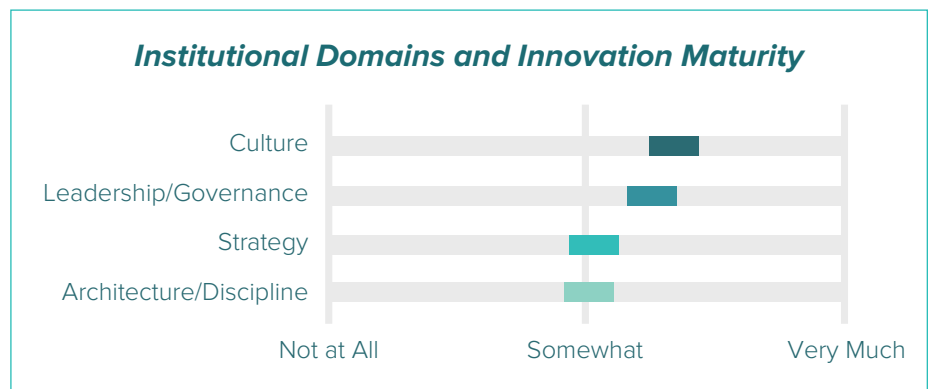
| Functional Areas Where the MOST Innovation is Taking Place | Functional Areas Where the LEAST Innovation is Taking Place |
|---|--|
| President’s Office | Administrative Affairs/Services |
| Student Affairs/Services (programs and services) | Institutional Effectiveness (or equivalent) |
| Academic Affairs (administration) | Information Technology |
| Workforce Development/Continuing Education | Academic Affairs (classroom) |
| | Student Affairs/Services (administration) |

Common resources available at institutions to initiate/support innovation include strategic, internal alliances/partnerships; strategic, external alliances/partnerships; networks of innovators in multiple departments; professional development for innovation (introductory and ongoing activities); and dedicated innovation funding. Pertaining to funding for innovation, the most common sources are federal grants, the institution’s primary operating budget/general funds, private/foundation grants, other state grants/funding, and donations/funding raised by the institution. Additionally, 43% of respondents indicated that special, state-sponsored innovation funding is available. The least common resources available to initiate/support innovation are innovation management system/process, a dedicated functional area (e.g., unit, department, etc.), dedicated position(s), and innovation metrics and assessment processes.

| MOST Common Resources to Support Innovation | LEAST Common Resources to Support Innovation |
|---|--|
| Strategic, internal alliances/partnerships | Innovation management system/process |
| Strategic, external alliances/partnerships | Dedicated functional area (e.g., unit, department, etc.) |
| Network of innovators in multiple departments | Dedicated position(s) |
| Professional development for innovation (introductory and ongoing activities) | Innovation metrics and assessment processes |
| Dedicated innovation funding | |

The survey also included select statements from the Innovation Maturity Spectrum pertaining to the four institutional domains critical to innovation: Strategy, Leadership/Governance, Architecture/Discipline, and Culture. Each statement in the survey included attributes that characterize each phase

of the Innovation Maturity Spectrum (from nonexistent to evolving). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement was true about their institution on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 3 (fully). Results revealed that institutional domains with the greatest innovation maturity at respondents' colleges are



whereas the least mature were Strategy and Architecture/Discipline. The attributes and respective institutional domains that survey responses reflect have the most and least innovation maturity are depicted in the following table.

| Institutional Attributes Reflecting Greatest Innovation Maturity | Institutional Domain Critical to Innovation | Weighted Average (scale 1-3) |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Entrepreneurship, foresight/insight, empowerment, openness, inclusion, and continual learning are core values and desired qualities and behaviors. | Culture | 2.3 |
| Risk-taking is viewed as a necessary condition for innovation. | Culture | 2.29 |
| The college and employees engage in continual experimentation, learning, and adaptation. | Culture | 2.26 |
| The college has implemented ideas/innovations that were originated by external, outside stakeholders and/or institutions. | Culture | 2.25 |
| The colleges' innovation capabilities, outcomes, and impact differentiate it from its peers. | Culture | 2.24 |

| Institutional Attributes Reflecting Least Innovation Maturity | Institutional Domain Critical to Innovation | Weighted Average (scale 1-3) |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| Innovation competencies and capacities are included in hiring and talent development processes. | Architecture/ Discipline | 1.82 |
| Innovation is taking place in ALL units, departments, and divisions at the college AND through cross-collaborative strategies and activities. | Strategy | 1.91 |
| The college’s governance bodies change processes to streamline decision- and policy-making processes to support, sustain, and scale innovation. | Leadership/ Governance | 1.96 |
| The college engages students in the innovation of its programs, services, and processes including the generation of innovation ideas/projects. | Strategy | 1.97 |
| The college has systematic processes and tools/resources in place to generate and select ideas and to design, prototype, test, launch, and evaluate innovations (in programs, services, business models, processes, etc.). | Architecture/ Discipline | 1.98 |

CONCLUSION

This survey was conducted to learn how institutions mature their innovation beyond the emerging point, leaping over the “innovation valley of death,” systematizing innovation management and execution, and continually evolving to face future challenges and opportunities. Lessons learned from this survey are also important because we believe innovation maturity is necessary for innovation-related activities to become more integrated, sustainable, and impactful.

Survey results show that many community colleges have begun to prioritize innovation in numerous ways, including by dedicating a position or resources to managing innovation or encouraging employees at all levels and across the institution to contribute to innovation efforts.

Survey findings also provide a snapshot of the extent of innovation maturity at community colleges, particularly in two of four institutional domains critical for innovation: Culture and Leadership/Governance. In the other two domains, Strategy and Architecture/Discipline, there is some maturity, but to a lesser extent. From our perspective, increasing innovation maturity in these areas is important for greater innovation impact, scale, and sustainability. Clearly, to provide a blueprint and examples of impactful practices, further research and study is required.

To learn more about the Innovation Maturity Spectrum or to comment on this report, please contact Marcy Drummond at marcy.drummond@outlook.com or Mindy Feldbaum at mfeldbaum@thecollaboratoryllc.com.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INNOVATION SURVEY QUESTIONS

The League for Innovation in the Community College and The Collaboratory are seeking your insights on higher education innovation and, more specifically, how institutions are being organized to spur and increase innovation. Understandings gained will be used to inform the field as institutions become more innovation-focused.

Towards this aim, we are requesting your/your institution's assistance by completing a survey that takes approximately 15-20 minutes. Ideally, it would be completed by the person who is primarily responsible for leading innovation and/or who has the most, direct knowledge of innovation at your institution.

Individual/each institutions' responses to the survey will be kept confidential. The survey may also be anonymous if an email address is not provided when asked. Questions in the survey may be skipped or the survey may be stopped at any time. The survey may also be saved and completed at a later time (if an email address is provided).

1. What is your email address?

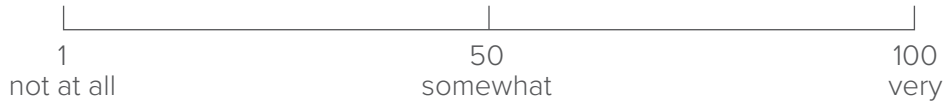
2. What best describes your role/position at the institution? Select one.

- a. President
- b. Vice President, Senior Executive, or Equivalent
- c. Dean, Manager, or Equivalent
- d. Director or Equivalent
- e. Staff member
- f. Faculty member
- g. Other (please specify) _____

3. Which functional area of the institution best describes where you are assigned? Select one.

- a. President's Office
- b. Academic Affairs - Administration
- c. Academic Affairs - Faculty _____ (please specify discipline)
- d. Student Affairs/Services
- e. Administrative Affairs/Services
- f. Information Technology
- g. Advancement/Foundation
- h. Workforce Development/Continuing Ed
- i. Institutional Effectiveness or Equivalent
- j. Innovation Management or Equivalent
- k. Other _____ (please specify)

4. On a scale of 1 to 100, how innovative is your institution?



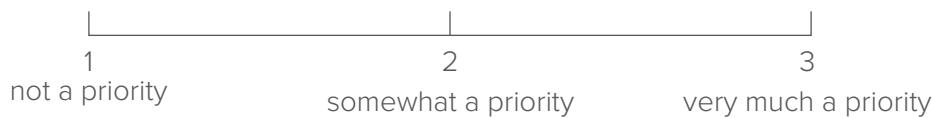
5. On a scale of 1 to 3, how much innovation is taking place in each of the following functional areas?

- a. President's Office 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- b. Academic Affairs - Administration 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- c. Academic Affairs - Classroom 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- d. Student Affairs/Services - Administration 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- e. Student Affairs/Services - Programs and Services 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- f. Administrative Affairs/Services 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- g. Information Technology 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- h. Institutional Effectiveness or Equiv. 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- i. Workforce Development/ Continuing Ed 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- j. Advancement/Foundation 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much
- k. Other key, functional areas _____(specify) 1 not at all 2 somewhat 3 very much

6. Are employees at all levels and across the institution encouraged to contribute to innovation efforts?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

7. How much of a priority is innovation at your institution (e.g. innovation is viewed as a strategic pillar for the institution to achieve its mission, goals, and/or success; the college exerts substantial effort to innovate; the college establishes innovation goals and metrics and systematically works to achieve them; the college dedicates resources for innovation)?



If answer is a 1 or 2 skip to question 10

8. How long has innovation been a priority?

- a. 0-1 year
- b. 1-2 years
- c. 2-3 years
- d. 4-5 years
- e. 5-6 years
- f. More than 6 years

9. Select the 3 most pressing “drivers” that make innovation a priority at your institution?

- a. Addressing financial pressures
- b. Changing student demographics
- c. Increasing enrollment
- d. Improving student academic success
- e. Improving student workforce success
- f. Technological changes/advances
- g. Increasing competition from other institutions/education providers
- h. Increasing/diversifying revenues
- i. Changing landscape/future of higher education
- j. To be a leading institution/leader in the field
- k. Recognizing the need to do things differently to achieve goals, greater success
- l. Building a better culture
- m. Strengthening partnerships
- n. Attracting better employees
- o. Reducing costs
- p. Other _____ (please specify)

Skip to question 11

10. If the answer to question 7 was 1 or 2...

Select 3 most compelling “drivers” you think will/might make innovation a priority at your institution.

- a. Addressing financial pressures
- b. Changing student demographics
- c. Increasing enrollment
- d. Improving student academic success
- e. Improving student workforce success
- f. Technological changes/advances
- g. Increasing competition from other institutions/education providers
- h. Increasing/diversifying revenues
- i. Changing landscape/future of higher education
- j. To be a leading institution/leader in the field

- k. Recognizing the need to do things differently to achieve goals, greater success
- l. Building a better culture
- m. Strengthening partnerships
- n. Attracting better employees
- o. Reducing costs
- p. Other _____ (please specify)

11. From the words* below, select 3-5 that is/should be in your institution's description (or definition, justification, strategy) of innovation. * Note: words are listed in alphabetical order and do not reflect any priority or importance

- | | | |
|---------------|----------------------------|---|
| • Adept | • Future | • Scale |
| • Agility | • Improvement | • Solutions |
| • Change | • Learning | • Strategic |
| • Creation | • New | • Student |
| • Empowerment | • Outcome | • Success |
| • Excellence | • Performance | • Technology |
| • Execution | • Possibilities | • Transformation |
| • Enterprise | • Purposeful | • Untapped |
| • Evolve | • Re-architect/Re-engineer | • Value (greater benefit, better value proposition, etc.) |
| | • Relevancy | |

12. What additional words would you include in the description (or definition, justification, strategy) of innovation, if any?

13. Is your institution's definition of innovation documented and widely agreed upon?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

14. Is there someone/a position at your institution with the primary responsibility to execute/manage innovation?

- a. Yes
- b. No (if no skip to question 19)

15. What best describes this person/position's role at your institution?

Select one.

- a. President
- b. Vice President, Senior Executive, or Equivalent
- c. Dean, Manager, or Equivalent
- d. Director or Equivalent
- e. Staff member
- f. Faculty member
- g. Other (please specify) _____

16. Which functional area of the institution best describes where the person/position is assigned? Select one.

- a. President's Office
- b. Academic Affairs
- c. Student Affairs/Services
- d. Administrative Affairs/Services
- e. Information Technology
- f. Advancement/Foundation
- g. Institutional Effectiveness or Equivalent
- h. Innovation Management or Equivalent
- i. Other _____(please specify)

17. What is the position title (if known)?

18. Are you this person?

- a. Yes
- b. No (if no skip to question 19)

19. In this position, do you have responsibility and authority to drive and coordinate innovation efforts over the long-term and across the institution?

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. What resources are available at your institution to initiate/support innovation? Select all that apply.

- a. Dedicated positions
- b. Dedicated functional area (e.g., unit, department, etc.)
- c. Dedicated innovation funding
- d. Network of innovators in multiple departments
- e. Strategic, internal alliances/partnerships
- f. Strategic, external alliances/partnerships
- g. Innovation management system/process
- h. Innovation metrics and assessment processes
- i. Professional development for innovation (introductory and ongoing activities)
- j. Other _____ (please specify)

If “c” is selected in question 19...otherwise skip to question 21.

21. If your college has dedicated innovation funding: which sources, in order highest percentage of funding, are utilized for the innovation fund?

- a. Institution’s primary operating budget/general funds
- b. Special, state-sponsored innovation funding
- c. Other state grants, funding
- d. Federal grants
- e. Private/foundation grants
- f. Donations/funding raised by the institution
- g. Other _____ (please specify)

22. Approximately how many innovation-related initiatives or major activities is your institution currently undertaking?

- a. 0-1
- b. 1-2
- c. 3-4
- d. 5-6
- e. More than 6
- f. Unsure

23. Indicate the extent to which your institution reflects the following statements (Not at all, to some extent, fully):

| | Not at All | To Some Extent | Fully |
|--|------------|----------------|-------|
| The college establishes innovation goals and systematically works to achieve them. | | | |
| The college and its employees routinely engage in trend-scouting, foresight, and future-scaping activities. | | | |
| The college engages students in the innovation of its programs, services, and processes including the generation of innovation ideas/projects. | | | |
| Innovation is taking place in ALL units, departments, and divisions at the college AND through cross-collaborative strategies and activities. | | | |
| College leadership has a structured approach for managing uncertainty and for evaluating, assessing, and mitigating risks associated with innovation. | | | |
| The college's governance bodies change processes to streamline decision- and policy-making processes to support, sustain, and scale innovation. | | | |
| Full transparency of innovation accountability and results exists; this information is regularly communicated internally and externally. | | | |
| The college has employees who create innovation networks and relationships internally and externally. | | | |
| The college's organizational structure enables agile and effective execution of change processes. | | | |
| Metrics and targets are established for innovation, generally, and are routinely utilized for assessing innovation effectiveness and impact. | | | |
| The college has systematic processes and tools/resources in place to generate and select ideas and to design, prototype, test, launch, and evaluate innovations (in programs, services, business models, processes, etc.). | | | |
| Innovation competencies and capacities are included in hiring and talent development processes. | | | |
| Risk-taking is viewed as a necessary condition for innovation. | | | |
| Entrepreneurship, foresight/insight, empowerment, openness, inclusion, and continual learning are core values and desired qualities and behaviors. | | | |
| The college has implemented ideas/innovations that were originated by external, outside stakeholders and/or institutions. | | | |
| The college, and employees, engage in continual experimentation, learning, and adaptation. | | | |
| The colleges' innovation capabilities, outcomes, and impact differentiate it from its peers. | | | |