

# Six Predictions

for the Future of Higher Education



Higher education was on the precipice of change before COVID, so the global pandemic has not necessarily changed the industry's trajectory, but rather accelerated it. Here are BVK's predictions for how rising costs, shrinking budgets, shifting demographics, expanding technology and the impact of COVID will forever change the landscape of higher education.

# PREDICTIONS

ONE:

# **Outcomes Matter Most**

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Remember back in the early 2000's, when Millennials were coming into their own in the higher ed space? Granite countertops and central air conditioning-equipped apartments displaced cramped, restrictive dorm rooms. Sushi, tabbouleh and green juice appeared as staple items in dining halls, and out went the sloppy joes and cold sandwiches. Rec centers went from free weights and treadmills to climbing walls, saunas and even lazy rivers. Experience, one could argue, surpassed academics for this past generation.

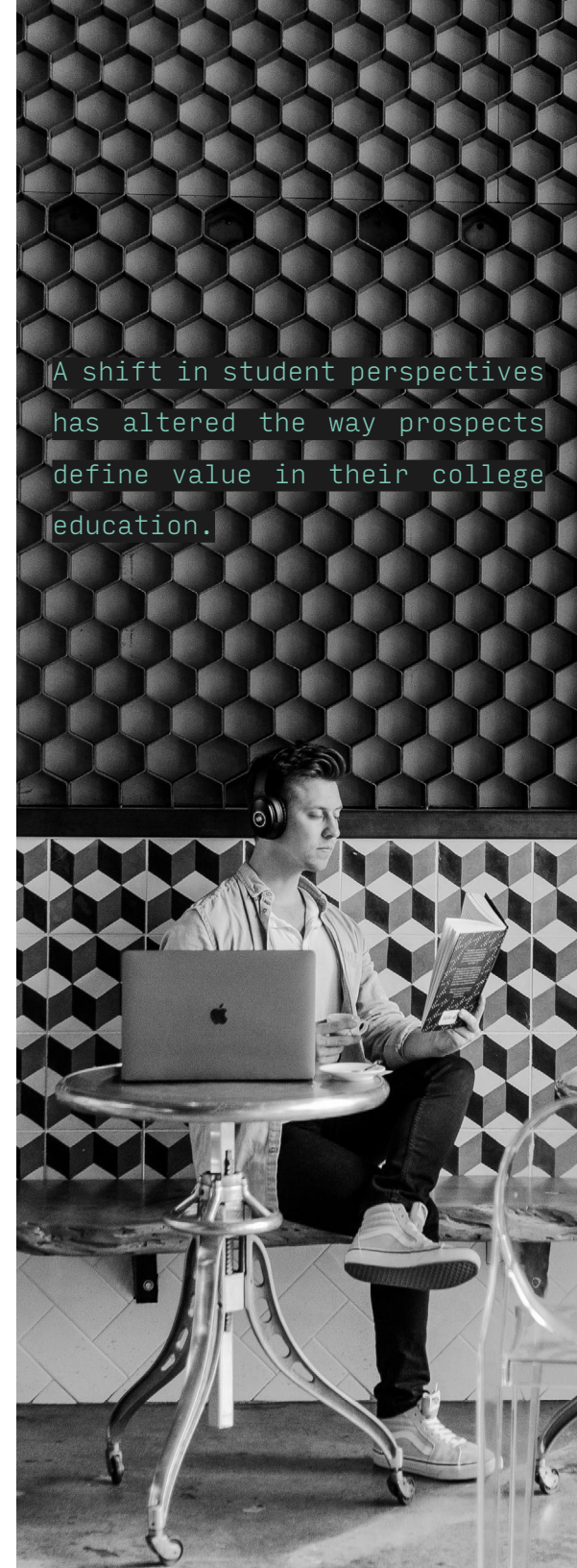
Today, however, a shift in student perspectives has altered the way prospects define value in their college education. As a result of the great recession, the Covid-19 pandemic and more, outcomes have become the new experience. Students in this upcoming generation are going to evaluate value based on expediency to completion, mid-career earnings, access to majors/minors and pre-professional programs and direct paths to a career.

Centennials are a generation that does not let the proverbial grass grow under their feet. Intentionality, purpose and drive are at the core of their being. Whereas in the past, high school

students used free time as a form of self-discovery and "play time," the college students of today are using free time as an opportunity to prepare for the future. Think about students exploring internship opportunities while in high school (which was long-reserved as a post-high school activity), flexing entrepreneurial muscle by developing a side hustle (photography business, lawn maintenance, influencer activity), or taking non-required courses in Python, Photoshop or other technology.

According to a Q2 2019 U.S. Monitor study, 76% of Gen Z agreed with the statement, "There is too much emphasis on accomplishment and not enough on pleasure for its own sake." And to further bring this point home, consider the behaviors of Gen Z during their down time as a result of Covid-19 and the resulting stay at home orders. 47% of Gen Z admitted to learning a new skill or hobby during the coronavirus outbreak, compared to just 42% of Millennials, 18% of Gen X and 8% of Boomers. Down time is not what it used to be for Centennials. As the pace of the world quickens and technology enables quicker access, Gen Z is focused on getting ahead at all times.

A shift in student perspectives has altered the way prospects define value in their college education.





## CASE IN POINT: KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

### Outcomes Matter Most

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Kansas State University boasts an exceptional community atmosphere on campus. Located in Manhattan, Kansas —also endearingly known as “The Little Apple”— K-State was able to offer a big school feel in a rural, caring town where professors know your name and become invested in your success. Over time, this caring approach and commitment to success took on the moniker, K-State Family.

The university wanted to better understand how its brand equities translated and resonated with prospective student audiences—particularly those from out of state who may not have familiarity with K-State, the Little Apple, or even what a university “family” could look and feel like to them. A well-kept secret, Kansas State wanted to better tell its story in a way that matched what today’s rising high schoolers look for in a university.

United in a desire to put students first and allow them to make a difference in the world, Kansas State University launched a bold new brand campaign. *Don’t Make the World Wait* acknowledges the Gen Z proclivity to progress, innovation and boldly exploring a path to a better tomorrow. Today’s high school students don’t want to passively wait on the sidelines and watch their future form around them. They want to take on an active role and bring their skills and abilities to the table as a means for shaping the world. *Don’t Make the World Wait* empowers student, faculty and alumni voices and gives them a seat at the table of change and progress.

Through an open, inclusive environment that supports and nurtures student ambitions, Kansas State University is the next generation land-grant institution that is open and optimistic to all that is to come, creating the future of education for the state of Kansas and beyond.



TWO:

**Experiential Learning  
will be Re-Imagined and  
Expanded Affordably**

# Experiential Learning will be Re-Imagined and Expand Affordably

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A hallmark of today's higher education system has been collaboration and collective learning in a residential setting. But, the traditional college experience typically comes with a high cost that, even before COVID, was becoming prohibitive and increasingly questioned. The rapid exodus from campus to online learning due to the global crisis is beginning to break down psychological barriers to online learning and is offering new opportunities for colleges and universities to rethink the residential-only model. As a result, institutions will accelerate integration of new digital technology to allow for immersive and personal education remotely. These new augmented and hybrid learning modalities will allow colleges and universities to maintain their gold-standards of delivery, while helping make a four-year degree more accessible and affordable to more deserving students.

Remember that the future college student looks much different than it did 10, or even five, years ago. With more and more

students entering the college experience as the first in their family, they bring fewer preconceived notions of what the undergraduate experience "should" look like. This is a tremendous opportunity for universities to step in and innovate. The market, in many ways, is demanding it. Introducing learning modalities in new and unique ways—blending virtual instruction with on campus practicum, for instance—is likely to be more readily adopted in present times.

Gen Z, as previously mentioned, is exceptionally pragmatic, akin to generations before them who experienced the Great Depression and other monumental economic crises. And this has stuck with them. Even prior to COVID, economic anxiety was very high for Centennials, with 47% self-reporting their levels as severe or high, compared to 36% of the total population. Layered on to that is the generation's inclination to circumvent tradition and norms, refusing to settle for "that's the way we've always done it."



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## CASE IN POINT: GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

### Experiential Learning will be Re-Imagined and Expand Affordably

Georgia State University is ranked as the second most innovative school in the country by *U.S. News and World Report*. The innovation ranking doesn't just apply to technology or sciences but also curriculum, campus life, faculty and facilities.

*U.S. News* describes the reasons for Georgia State's innovation ranking include the 200 majors and minors offered, the Freshman Learning Communities program and the more than 400 student organizations offered. Students even have the ability to give input in the planning of new university-wide programs and ideas.

"I believe that restructuring our universities to better serve all students and drive student success is absolutely essential to the future of higher education and the modern university," Georgia State University President Mark Becker said in a press release.

The Student Success Center has been led by Timothy Renick since 2008. Renick started at Georgia State as a chair of the department of religious studies and director of the Honors Program before entering his current position as the senior vice president for Student Success. Renick's direction for Student Success has helped with the "fastest improving graduation rates in the nation and the elimination of all achievement gaps based on students' race, ethnicity or income level," according to

his biography on the Student Success website. Student Success has pushed a number of initiatives to increase student engagement, including the Success Academy and the chatbot Pounce.

Success Academy was started in 2012 as an alternative to deferring rejected applicants—giving them a second chance to become a Panther. These students spend time in the summer working with tutors, financial literacy and academic skills programs, all while enrolling in seven credits' worth of college classes.

Pounce, the automated chatbot, sends and answers thousands of questions via text messages to all incoming and current Georgia State students. These messages include answering questions about financial aid and immunization documents, placement exams and class registration.

Leveraging the momentum at the University, the J. Mack Robinson College of Business recently launched Robinson Transforms, which includes both innovative programs and delivery methods that prepare students to meet the demands of a constantly shifting market. The challenges in business have never been this dynamic and through their innovative curriculum and flexible delivery models, Robinson equips students to be nimble and flexible, giving them the skills and tools to thrive in a fluid future.





THREE:

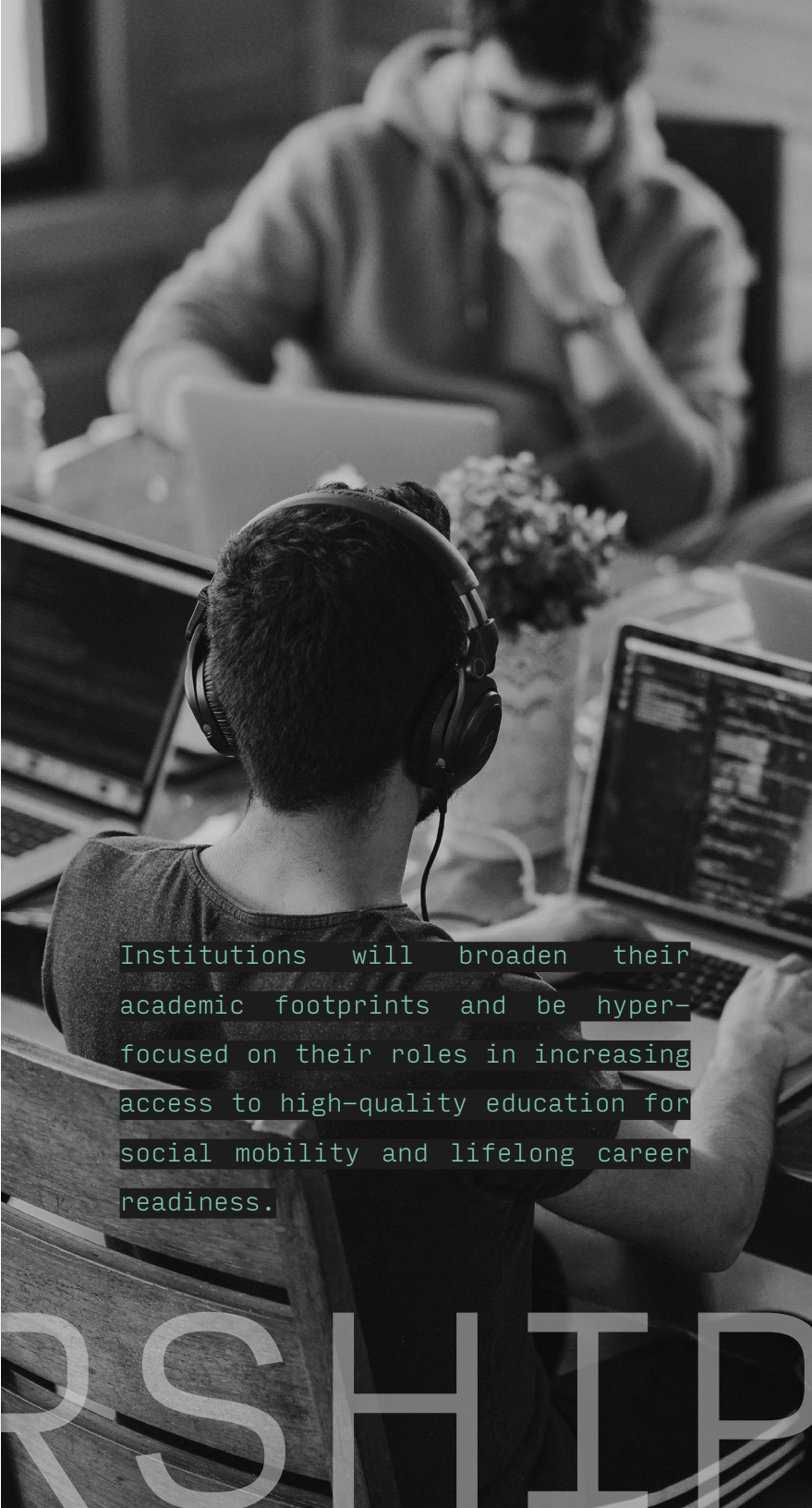
# **Public/Private Partnership Will Help Fill Budget Gaps**

## Public/Private Partnership Will Help Fill Budget Gaps

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As colleges and universities fight to fend off the impact of state funding decreases and institutional budget cuts, they will look to expand partnerships with businesses to develop programs that meet the demands of individual workplaces and prepare new graduates with the skills needed for in-demand jobs. These offerings will include flexible degree completion programs, add-on degrees, badging, and partnerships that provide micro-credentials, experiential learning, co-op experiences, and customized workplace skills development.

Institutions will broaden their academic footprints and be hyper-focused on their roles in increasing access to high-quality education for social mobility and lifelong career readiness. In addition, institutions will find new revenue streams from their existing infrastructure by offering memberships to their libraries, access to fitness facilities, playing fields and theatres, and creating increased opportunities for community outreach and engagement.



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PARTNERSHIP

## CASE IN POINT: ALBION COLLEGE

### Public/Private Partnership Will Help Fill Budget Gaps

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At Albion College, the goal set forth in the institutional Strategic Plan was to emerge as an exemplary residential, undergraduate, liberal arts college. A large component of reaching this end state was forging local partnerships that would allow students, faculty and staff to tap into the community surrounding the Albion campus. As a college committed to advancing the tenets of a liberal arts education and defining what the future of a liberal arts institution looks like, Albion's president and trustees believe strongly in the importance of establishing partnerships with the town.



What does this look like for Albion? From the college's year-end report, the following has been accomplished:

- + Seven homes are being renovated or constructed in Albion's Harrington Neighborhood, between the College and downtown.
- + A new, \$12M Courtyard Marriott opened through a partnership among the state, College alumni and Albion College.
- + With support from the Corporation for National and Community service, Albion College serves as a host site for 11 AmeriCorps VISTA members, who work with partner organizations in the community to expand capacity in education, food security and health, and economic development.
- + Nearly \$8000 in funding has been raised to support a trail network campground in Albion, which will make the city a regional recreational hub.

Through a partnership between Albion alumni and community partners, the college facilitated the creation of two organizations that handled property acquisitions, investment and development. In addition, a pillar of the university's capital campaign, Purple and Bold, focused on critical capital improvements that open doors not just for Albion, but the campus's surrounding community as well.

FOUR:

# **Enrollment Will Dig Deeper and Hold Tightly to What They Have**



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While the numbers vary depending on who you ask, one thing is certain: traditional undergraduate enrollment volume will go down, with the anticipated “cliff” firmly placed at about 2025-2026. This means selectivity, which has been the benchmark for quality at the university level, will become more challenging. Institutions will need to drill down on their waitlists and re-evaluate their admissions criteria as more colleges and universities compete for fewer students. These efforts will be even more essential as the trend for reduced dependence on standardized tests continues and institutions provide more equitable and inclusive opportunities for traditionally underserved applicants.

International student recruitment will become increasingly difficult, even after the restrictions from COVID-19 have been lifted. On-going health concerns, travel restrictions, and the

global economic crisis will put a significant strain on international student recruitment, which in 2018-19 accounted for over 1 million students entering the US higher education roles.

It will not only be harder to find students here and abroad but in the wake of NACAC rulings, retaining and keeping enrolled students will be an increasingly important priority for enrollment managers. Since the rules of the game have changed, universities will need to implement strategies to quell poaching and invest in keeping students engaged, rewarded, and connected to the institution. This means creating meaningful and relevant experiences that go beyond the traditional offerings of quality programs, facilities, and career opportunities, which are easily challenged and duplicated in a competitive marketplace.



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## CASE IN POINT: MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

### Enrollment Will Dig Deeper and Hold Tightly to What they Have

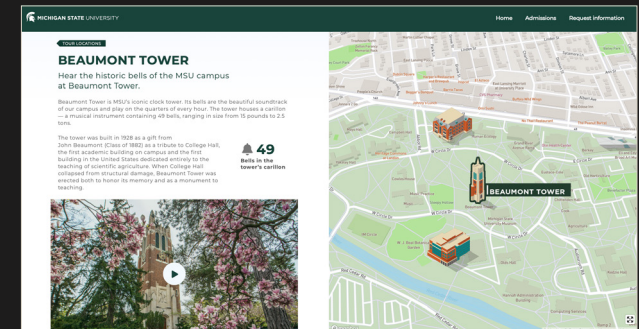
Many universities are choosing to double down on the strategies and tactics that have served them over the past decade. Others, like Michigan State University, are looking to flip the script and appeal to a new generation of students in ways like never before. The college selection process is a critical life milestone, transitioning from childhood to adulthood. As a result, it is more important than ever to protect this defining moment and to build innovative and authentic digital experiences that allow prospective students get a true, authentic taste of what it's like to be on campus. And not just through the lens of the university's admissions office (remember: Gen Z is very skeptical of institutions), but from the perspective of real students.

At MSU, the post-COVID questions were many and caused a shift in thinking:

- + How do we impact yield positively despite challenges in bringing prospects to campus?
- + How does MSU bring campus to prospective students and their parents in a meaningful and dynamic way?
- + How can the university capture content that would enhance, or even replace, traditional campus visits?
- + How can prospects engage with us at times that work for them?
- + How can universities use content to create an effective dialogue with prospective students, serving up personalized, relevant content that helps them envision themselves at Michigan State?

While almost all universities have a virtual tour, an opportunity existed to bring the campus to life. Not just show the university's buildings and landmarks, but to tell their story. Bring them to life. Show how a student would engage at those places, and why they matter.

Michigan State University launched its first virtual experience, encouraging students and their family members to see campus and its beautiful building, but to also get a sense of what the experience in those important places might feel like. Students, then, have a chance to try out what it might feel like to be on campus as a student. What's best is the virtual experience can continue to grow over time, along with campus, to highlight what's new, what's relevant and how students continue to evolve their campus experience.



<https://virtualtour.msu.edu/tour/campus-highlights-tour/beaumont-tower/>

FIVE:

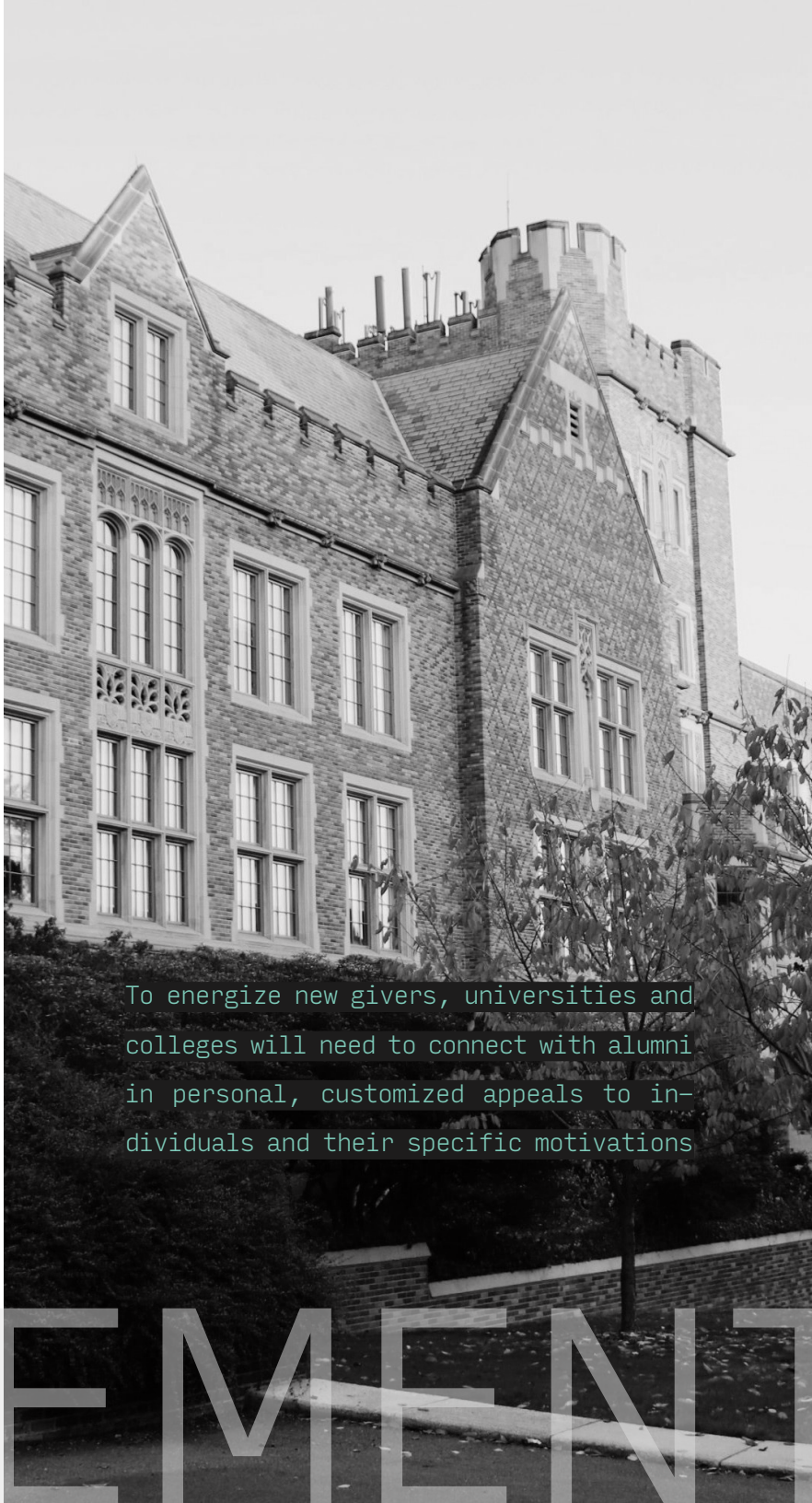
# **Advancement Will Get Personal and Purposeful**

## Advancement Will Get Personal and Purposeful

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To help make up for budget shortfalls, advancement teams will need fresh strategies to increase alumni giving rates. Today, only around 11% of alumni give at most colleges and universities, but that average soars to 48% among colleges with the highest giving rates, according to US News National University rankings. These findings suggest there is a great opportunity to increase participation in many schools.

To energize new givers, universities and colleges will need to connect with alumni in personal, customized appeals to individuals and their specific motivations. The new generation of Millennial donors is less concerned about giving “to their university” and are motivated by “giving through the university” to make contributions that benefit individuals and society. The rules of engagement for increasing the level and frequency of participation will be to create highly personal, hyper-targeted campaigns that align with individual values and demonstrate the impact giving can make on improving the lives of people and the world around us.



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ADVANCEMENT



## CASE IN POINT: DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

### Advancement Will Get Personal and Purposeful

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Designed to help raise charitable funds for university-related projects, Inspire DePaul is the central hub for contributing to crowdfunded projects. Individual fundraising campaigns can be posted by members of the DePaul community, including students, student groups, faculty and staff. This approach aligns with donor desires to meet the needs of real people, giving through the university. The personal, emotion-based appeals resonate with donors who look to make a difference with their gift.

Two highlighted funds from Inspire DePaul include:

#### **Depaul Responds: Student Emergency Assistance Fund (SEAF)**

**Amount Raised: \$67,433**

Given the immediacy of COVID-19, there were additional, unanticipated financial pressures put on some DePaul students and the SEAF fund. This fund helps address the immediate needs of students experiencing hardship as a result of COVID-19. Providing funds for travel expenses, meals, technology needs and other necessities will help students who are facing financial hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Personal Protective Equipment For Healthcare Workers**

**Amount Raised: \$116,541**

DePaul is collaborating with partners around the state to address the immediate, critical need for personal protective equipment for Illinois healthcare workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. DePaul and collaborators can create up to 6,500 face shields per day. Every additional \$25 donated helps fabricate and deliver 10 additional masks.

And the results of this approach speak for themselves. Through June 30, 2020, the COVID-19 campaigns alone raised more than \$200,000 and involved more than 1,000 donors.



SIX:


# **There Will be a Shift to Consumer-Driven Marketing**

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The challenges facing higher education are ushering in a more “consumer-centric” understanding and approach to marketing. This approach starts with a greater understanding of student needs, wants, behaviors, and attitudes and isolates the important values that lead to decision making and brand choice. As a result of COVID, ongoing social unrest, and calls for greater understanding, equity, and inclusion, we see large societal shifts that have awoken a new generation.

These shifts require university marketers to assess their value propositions to align with the cravings of a new generation for safety, belonging, empowerment, and purpose. Even at a time when budgets are constricting, institutions will need to invest in brand awareness and institutional reputation to stand out among a sea of increasingly competing choices. Further down the funnel, consumer-driven incentives such as tuition discounts for early commitment will become the norm. These types of offers will be particularly prevalent among first-generation students and communities that have been traditionally unnoticed.



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## CASE IN POINT: UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

### There Will be a Shift to Consumer-Driven Marketing

Even prior to the additional challenges our nation and the world are facing, higher education reform was on the horizon. These efforts have been accelerated in many institutions, including at the University of Louisville, a public research university located in Kentucky's largest metropolitan area.

Ahead of some of their peers, the university already follows a set of guiding values that shape the UofL community and guide actions. Every member of the University of Louisville family is expected to follow these Cardinal Principles. These principles demonstrate the university's understanding and support of the changing needs of all students.

Louisville is taking the final steps to reframe its brand under the human value of "vitality" at a time when a sense of resilience, passion and dynamism are crucial to a building momentum to meet the needs of a changing world. Their pending campaign is the packaging that will bring the mission and vision to life across the whole Louisville community.

To further underscore the vitality they strive to bring to the campus and the city of Louisville, UofL has responded to the social justice concerns with the Cardinal Anti-Racist Agenda.

As a top-tier research university engaged in its community, the University of Louisville is uniquely positioned to take on the grand challenges facing the world through research and scholarship. The university has chosen to concentrate its research and scholarship efforts behind three grand challenges, knowing the solutions we find will make a difference and create a thriving future for Louisville, for Kentucky and for the world.

"The epidemic of racism and inequity has always been part of our society, but we are seeing the impact now in sharp focus and clarity.

It's not enough to say 'I'm not racist.'

We must become anti-racist."

— **Neeli Bendapudi**  
President, University of Louisville



## C

### Community of Care

Let us be a University that is a **Community of Care**. Care for self, care for one another as the Cardinal Family and care for the community beyond. We are a community—not just a collection of individuals. We are a community—not just buildings connected by an HVAC system.

## A

### Accountability

**Accountability.** We keep our promises. We own mistakes. We are accountable to the team.

## R

### Respect

**Respect,** irrespective of position. We respect each other's humanity and dignity, no matter what our positions in the organization are. We also respect our right to differing and conflicting positions on issues. We will be a place that prepares students for ideas, not protects students from ideas.

## D

### Diversity and Inclusion

**Diversity and Inclusion.** We celebrate diversity of thought, perspectives and life experiences. As our state motto declares: United We Stand, Divided We Fall. We want everyone, in the richness of all of their many unique and intersecting identities to feel included in the Cardinal fold.

## I

### Integrity and Transparency

**Integrity and Transparency.** We will be true to our mission of an urban research university to create, disseminate and apply knowledge. Integrity is our collective commitment to make decisions with the best interests of our university in mind and to share the decision making rationale and the outcomes.

## N

### Noble Purpose

**Noble Purpose.** Each of us will identify for ourselves the way in which we make a difference. We know we must solve the problems of access and affordability to give everyone the opportunity to find and pursue their own noble purpose.

## A

### Agility

**Agility.** We will recognize that things change and when they do, we must change things. We know that when adaptation in an organization does not keep pace with adaptation in the environment, the organization will not survive.

## L

### Leadership

**Leadership.** We recognize that management is a position but leadership is an activity. We will all behave as owners of the University of Louisville because we are. "We are UofL" is not just a hashtag or a slogan. It is our declaration of leadership and ownership.



In the coming months of 2021 and beyond, the landscape of higher education will be shaped by the tides of change. At BVK we believe these forces will not only bring new challenges but also opportunities for brave and resilient institutions to embrace new ideas and build upon the promise of higher education to improve people's lives and make the world a better place.

We're in this together.

**Don't hesitate to reach out to us if we can help you navigate the future.**  
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