



**WCET Webcast: [Issues and Trends in Edtech in 2018](#)
January 18, 2018
Questions and Answers**

Q: Any thoughts on the status of Augmented/Virtual Reality and Adaptive Learning in higher ed for 2018 (lot's of hype about these in recent years)?

Michael: I was surprised by the hype in higher education around Virtual and Augmented reality in 2017. They will undoubtedly play an exciting role in education, but I'm not yet convinced that they'll be as easily incorporated with sound instructional design in a widespread way across colleges and universities at a reasonable expense in the near future. The early buzz may prove me wrong, but the verdict is still out. My sense for adaptive learning is that it's proven a lot harder than people thought to do this in a really robust ways across divergent subjects. In other words, it might be easier to do it in a lower-level math class where there are thousands and thousands of students doing the work (see something like DreamBox Learning in K-12 education) but harder to do as you move out to more esoteric subjects. Ultimately learning is a lot harder than recommending your next movie from NetFlix or what you should buy next from Amazon--and it's a lot higher stakes, too.

Q: Government controlled students loans and grants have driven up the cost of higher education. If the government offers more, the colleges and universities have charged more. Is there not an argument to shut down government student loan program and turn back to market competition?

Amy: While I absolutely understand the sentiment, unfortunately the private market will not allow us to meet our national commitment to access. A private lender would be crazy to lend to someone with no credit history (most 18-year olds), no co-signers (students from poor families with poor credit), or low incomes (likely many adults who are returning to college precisely because they want to increase their earnings). Federal student loans are available to correct a market failure in order to give people access to (and hopefully success in) college. That being said, I do think there should probably be tighter limits on PLUS loans, both parent and graduate. There are other things the feds could and should do so that schools don't just see loans as grant aid to institutions with no strings attached, but that's a separate question from denying undergraduate students loans.

Q: What impact will net neutrality have on this space?

Michael: I'm probably the lone wolf that thinks the current back-and-forth over net neutrality is overhyped and won't have nearly as much impact as people think. We've basically gone back to a policy environment similar to one we had before net neutrality, and Internet providers were not doing the things back then that Google and others are claiming they will now.

Q: Is there any discussion of updating the definition of 'graduation rate'? from only counting FTFT students?

Amy: Great question! Yes, there has been a lot of talk and some action (but more action is definitely needed). IHEP has a handy-dandy update on the recently-released Outcome Measures from NCES--as well as what is being collected and what we still need:
<http://www.ihep.org/postsecdata/data-at-work/new-postsecdata-explainer-student-outcome-metrics-ipeds>

Q: Will more schools develop or redevelop course so they are more ADA compliant?

Van: Yes, we believe that a larger number of schools will work to ensure that not only are their courses ADA compliant but that they are using the best principles of universal design. We believe that the same things that make courses accessible under ADA are also the sorts of things that will help all students. Universal design not only assures ADA accessibility but makes learning truly learner centered.

Q: With the Dept. of Ed. defining and using the Carnegie Unit to define how Federal Financial Aid is disbursed, what impact does this have on the ability of Higher Ed to engage in innovation, especially in the online/electronic Space?

Amy: Where to begin? It is true that the time-based measure is the root of lots of problems in higher ed (focusing on time, rather than learning, for a start). The problem is we don't yet have a replacement. So while we may be eager to "throw it out," we don't have a "what" to replace it with. But that doesn't mean we need be stuck with the status quo forever--I think the federal government can--and should--create safe spaces for innovation where we can try to move from the credit hour to something more outcomes based.

Q: How do we move the focus to outcomes and away from inputs, especially in light of the administration of title IV funds.

Michael: I'd like to see us open up the innovative categories of programs--like competency-based learning--to those providers who are willing to share significantly in the risk with their students, such that they are on the hook for the repayment of the government as well if the return on investment for their students isn't there. In concert with that, I'd also like to see a move toward income-based repayment plans like income share agreements and away from student

debt. Lastly, we've done a lot of work creating standards around programmatic outcomes at educationqa.org, and I'd love to see these private solutions be part of the answer as well for moving providers toward outcomes as opposed to defining inputs like regular and substantive interaction that are fraught with problems. Ultimately, the government could reframe the question of which providers can have access to federal dollars and to how much through a question of credit worthiness through this sort of a mechanism.

Amy: It's absolutely the right question--I think we need more folks calling for it. Unfortunately, right now the political power of incumbency and inertia is far more powerful than the political power of those calling for more of a focus (you couldn't get less of a focus) on outcomes.