

# Gilfus Education Group

Education Strategy, Research, and Implementations

## Lifelong Learning

## The New Normal for Higher Education

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### **About the Gilfus Education Group**

The Gilfus Education Group delivers education innovation by bringing refreshing clarity to academic and corporate enterprises through educational, technology, and business consulting. The company provides a wide array of services to clients across the United States and around the world, offering insightful and diversified expertise to the education industry. Since 1997 the Gilfus Education Group team has served thousands of universities, colleges, schools, academic content providers, and education and technology companies in meeting their mission-critical planning and technology needs.

Our group consists of individuals of the highest caliber talent and experience in educational research, strategy, planning, and technical implementation services representing capabilities for meeting organizational objectives and compliance, evaluating education quality and outcomes, and supporting technical integration, infrastructure, and delivery.

# Lifelong Learning

## The New Normal for Higher Education

## Foreword

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Lifelong learning is quickly becoming a cornerstone of our higher education system. There is a growing need to provide new capabilities to power the work force while meeting the dynamic needs of today's 21st century student. By leveraging competencies refined from within distance learning and continuing education organizations, traditional institutions can transform themselves in a manner that not only meets individual student needs but generates new revenue to support the institution during trying times. In this way the Gilfus Education Group delivers on the promise of the transformative potential of technology-enabled innovation in the education and knowledge industry. We are excited to share how this can be made possible by the introduction of a Lifelong Learning Platform.

– Stephen Gilfus, Gilfus Education Group



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## The Changing Face of Education

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Until the middle of the 1800's, higher education focused on educating the young in traditional, classical curricula. By the mid-19th, century Europe and the United States used the best technology of their day, the postal system, to open educational opportunities to people who wanted to learn, but were not able to attend conventional schools. The students who most benefited from such correspondence education included those with physical disabilities, women who were not allowed to enroll in educational institutions open only to men, people who had jobs during normal school hours, and those who lived in remote regions where schools did not exist.

By the end of the century, however, a number of vibrant institutional movements had appeared that expanded the scope of traditional education and the range of learners who were served. Colleges and universities grew to embrace technical and scientific subjects, vocational education, applications of research to practical matters and problem solving correspondence courses through

continuing education. Education, training, and professional development for living a good life and making a good living thrived together in public colleges and universities. Community colleges grew to become critical providers of traditional and adult learning. Many private institutions, especially those in urban or metropolitan areas, also introduced adult learning to serve proximate populations. Private, for-profit universities and proprietary vocational schools moved aggressively into the traditional and the adult learning market. New technologies and the introduction of the Internet introduced online, blended and e-learning, making it even easier to serve adult learners. Continuing education and distance learning organizations lead the way by adopting technologies and flexible operations to support the varied needs of adult learners.

By the end of the 20th century, most major universities were expanding their traditional, degree-credit offerings with a variety of adult, continuing, and executive education experiences, some for credit, and some non-

credit. New education programs were offered through a combination of organizational mechanisms: Extension Divisions, Adult and Continuing Education Units, Schools of Professional Study, Executive Education Programs and Distance Learning Units. The diversity of these programs and their unique operations propagated completely new organizations within the traditional institution. New processes for education delivery and learner support mechanisms advanced to meet the dynamic needs of the adult learner marketplace.

The early 21st century began the age of education globalization with local education institutions continuing their expansion efforts both within and outside North America, in an attempt to meet growing market demand. The breakdown of geographic boundaries has facilitated both local and global competition. Today's depressed economic environment and challenged workforce have dramatically

increased the needs and demands of learners to retool their capabilities, acquire new competencies and align knowledge to the emerging new economy to avoid being laid off. At the same time, leaders within traditional education institutions, colleges and universities, are aggressively seeking new sources of revenues to counteract current federal, state and local budgeting shortfalls.

A challenged economic environment coupled with the reduction in traditional institutional funding has created a perfect storm of opportunity for organizations adept at evaluating, creating and offering new education programs. Those institutions with historical developments and expansions in adult learning, continuing education and executive education have recognized an innate ability to meet the diverse needs of today's economically challenged learner.

- The University of Wisconsin–Madison, in 1907, developed an identifiable continuing education program to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- In 1969, Empire State College, a unit of the State University of New York, developed programs exclusively focused on providing higher education to adult learners.
- In 1976 the University of Florida created its own Division of Continuing Education and most courses were offered on evenings or weekends to accommodate the schedules of working students.

## Technology's Impact on Education

Technology has had a profound impact on the very nature of what it means to be a learner. Since 1980, the experiences of both traditional and adult learners in higher education have been transformed by the compounded accretion of thirty years of advances in information and communication technologies and increased internet technologies with power that has increased exponentially over time.

Think of it in terms of Moore's Law applied to the accelerating nature of learning experiences. Moore's law describes a long-term trend in the history of computing technology and implies that overall computing technology doubles approximately every 18 to 24 months. Applied generically Moore's law precisely describes a driving force of technological and social change in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Just recollect the procession of devices we have used (Sony Walkman, personal computer, laptop, and now Smart Mobile Devices, RIM Blackberry, Apple iPhone, Apple iPad ); the sources of computing power we have leveraged (mainframes, mini computers, networked personal computers, and cloud computing); and information repositories we have experienced over those years (traditional library stacks, integrated library systems, international digital libraries, learning object repositories, and semantically searchable resource pools).

Put simply, technology's impact on education has been characterized by compounded advances in the speed and scale of

experiences, plus the evaporation of long-existing boundaries, both physical and conceptual. Technology impacts have increased efficiencies and the productivity of many educational processes and practices. More importantly, they have changed how, when, and where we communicate with one another and how we create, share, and experience knowledge.

Technology has also altered the manner in which learners engage with faculty, other learners, and educational resources. Learning and knowledge-sharing activities associated with the Internet and the World Wide Web have been particularly transformative, creating collaborative learning environments that exist beyond the limitations of campus-based organizational infrastructures. In the process, education has modified its operations and created programs that support learners at a distance with new evening and after hours schedules, creating options that are especially attractive to adult, lifelong learners as a part of their quest to combine busy lives with active learning.

*“Moore's Law...overall computing technology doubles approximately every 18 to 24 months.*

21st century students live in an environment of choice and access. As technology empowers institutions to serve their learner clienteles more flexibly and holistically, it also empowers learners to seek solutions and alternatives that meet their needs from a broader range of providers, both traditional and non-traditional. Many institutions that have been serving a local adult learning market find that they are now confronting growing competition from other institutions. Technology can provide new capabilities enabling institutions to create significant competitive advantages.

However, today's educational institutions struggle to meet the needs of today's learners while creating a competitive advantage. Most existing institutional enterprise systems, processes and practices were designed in the early part of the 21st century.

During the early to late 1990's, enterprise resource planning, student information and learning management systems advanced by leveraging the Internet to support the administrative, academic and campus life needs of conventional students. The basic architecture of enterprise resource planning (ERP) and learning management systems (LMS) is rooted in the mindset of traditional learning practices translate into virtual technology environments.

Over the last 10 years ERP, SIS and LMS systems have not effectively kept up with the capabilities required. Most are not prepared to serve the 21st century student and the lifelong learner. Institutional leaders need to change, update and create new operational and technological strategies and adapt them to the new reality of the expectations and requirements of lifelong learners.



## The Evolution and Development of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is an expansive concept. According to Wikipedia, Lifelong learning programs include the following range of familiar activities:

- continuing education,
- professional development
- workforce development
- executive education
- vocational education
- certificate programs
- corporate training, and
- personal development courses.

An institution seeking to achieve a competitive advantage in lifelong learning

should develop systems, processes, and practices that seamlessly accommodate a number of these forms of lifelong learning.

With the growing needs for highly specialized professionals and for retooling to reflect changes in the post-recession economy, the popularity of lifelong learning programs at colleges and universities in North America dramatically increased during the late 2000s. Lifelong learning promises to continue to grow.

The most competitively successful lifelong learning providers will be those that figure out how to help all varieties of lifelong learners, including those who need to learn just-in-time and all- the-time to fulfill personal and/or job-related needs.



## What Are Examples of Today's Lifelong Learner in Practice?

1. Jill Grayson, a middle manager at a pharmaceutical company, is pursuing an Executive MBA on weekends through a program at her local public university.
2. Pat Tyson is a retired teacher taking a course in personal wine making and thinking about a second career.
3. Randolph Small is engaged in a leadership development program at his employer, a large regional bank, that has been especially tailored to the bank's needs and is embedded in their human resources talent development system.
4. Patel Khan is developing his entrepreneurship and innovation knowledge through participating in a community of practice developed by a large Midwestern university to engage practicing businessmen and entrepreneurs in their region.
5. Suzanne James is an elementary school teacher enrolled in an in-school master's degree program in reflective practice and taught by university faculty visiting her school.
6. Archie Jones is a graduate civil engineer who has enrolled in a professional refresher program offered by his graduate department at the university where he is an alumnus.
7. Kwanzi Andrano is participating in a master class in project management offered by the Project Management Institute in collaboration with his local university.
8. Andrea Philamina is enrolled in a workforce development program supported by the State of Michigan, seeking both an office administration certificate and job placement with participating firms.

## Diverse Programs for Diverse Learners

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Administrators of lifelong learning programs are often challenged to evolve their programs to meet their students' needs while being hamstrung by systems designed for supporting conventional students. Sample challenges include:

- Attracting potential students via marketing programs – how can an institution leverage its relationship with its own alumni plus reach other students who might be interested.
- Course schedules that do not cleanly align within traditional semester structures and providing rolling, open enrollments – the flexibility to fit the needs of different kinds of lifelong learners.
- Options for students to earn credit hours, continuing education units, or certificate credits for the exact same course, depending on their purpose.
- Various pricing options for the exact same course depending on the type of credit or factors such as discount structures (corporate discounts) for employer sponsored students.
- Students, faculty and administrators tracking student progress towards completing a variety of learning objectives – degrees, certificates, employer-specific programs, or even specified competencies.
- Treating and servicing students as clients or customers – which include the responsiveness and capacity to match their students' particular needs with personalized offerings.

Addressing these challenges has become increasingly important as the significance of lifelong learning as a net revenue generator becomes more widely understood.

## Lifelong Learning Is the New Normal

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Research has shown that only about 15 percent of higher education students still fit the traditional definition of young adults age 18 to 22 who live on campus and go to school full time. Many students today are working adults, often with families, who want to advance in their careers and are at various stages in their learning journey through life.

Many institutions, such as community colleges, predominantly serve such students. Even traditional universities have come to depend on enrollments of working adults. Adult learners are actively seeking new capabilities to give them an edge in today's challenging economic environment.

Meeting the needs of a dynamic workforce requires agility in program design, student responsiveness, and the ability to juggle and manage a portfolio of different lifelong learning offerings. Education institutions need to expand their own efforts in operations and technology so learners can have a holistic view of the institution's capacity to serve their needs. Meeting the needs of today's dynamic learner is an emerging core competency fueled by a shifting demographic and advances in technology. Clearly, lifelong learning and the ability to develop successful lifelong learning programs is the New Normal for higher education.

## Developing a Lifelong Learning Platform for Education

Leaders of lifelong learning programs clearly need well-developed, proven capacity to seamlessly manage all of the elements of lifelong learning relationships with their learners. In the future, robust organizational capacity will be the differentiating core competency for successful offerings that address a full range of learner needs. Such organizational capacity will be created over time by the interaction of five related elements:

1. Technology infrastructure
2. Policies, processes and practices
3. Skills of faculty, staff and administrators
4. Supportive organizational culture and
5. Vibrant leadership

The element that is most lacking today is a combination of technology platform and support services that are architected to deal with the seamless integration of lifelong learning and management of the relationship with the lifelong learner. Today's systems are not easily adapted to seamlessly deal with the full range of lifelong learning relationships.

The Gilfus Education Group's believes a new platform is needed for higher education that can meet the following requirements:

- Work in synch with existing campus ERP and LMS systems
- Engage students as they expect to be engaged

- Allow seamless self-service: rich, always on, accessibility online
- Enable open enrollment and other flexible designs in course offerings
- Support marketing in context to their relationship with the school
- Provide the capacity to cultivate lifelong relationships with lifelong learning students
- Understand learning goals and objectives
- Follow goals closely as they change through on-the-job and career changes
- Enrich each relationship with contextual, meaningful communications and interactions
- Enable student-designed offerings that adapt to their needs
- Incorporate new information requirements as an extension to conventional campus systems, creating a single, holistic information environment
- Reflect proven best practices from leaders to introduce efficiencies and enhance performance in the cultivation and management of lifelong learning relationships and operations.

New platforms and services are necessary to support the vibrant lifelong learning environments of the future. The industry requires a new breed of lifelong learning enterprise technology platforms which address the un-met needs of lifelong learners in a way that will be pivotal to many institutions achieving financial sustainability in the New Normal.

**NOTES:**

## NOTES:



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