

United States of America



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Nearly 50 years ago, Schon (1971) urged universities to become aware of life ‘beyond the stable state’ and Toffler (1970) predicted that the information age would force academia to accommodate an ‘accelerating pace of change.’ Their prescient observations about the future have characterized American higher education for nearly 50 years, perhaps best exemplified by the role distance education (DE) has played in this process. DE’s remarkable progression in the US arena began well before the electronic era, extending over a 225-year period. It is a phenomenon that perhaps represents the most significant transformation within academe in a millennium, presenting exciting opportunities and formidable challenges. This chapter offers a descriptive analysis and commentary of key aspects of DE at the post-secondary level in the US, with perspectives gained from the author’s 35 years of scholarship and practice in the field.

Origins

Caleb Phillips can be credited as the ‘father’ of distance education in the US, who in 1728, advertised in the *Boston Gazette* that any persons in the country desirous of learning shorthand could be sent weekly lessons via the postal service, and be as well instructed as those living in Boston. Anna Tucker, founder of the Boston-based Society to Encourage Study at Home (1873–1897), might be considered the ‘mother’ of American correspondence education. In 1883, Illinois Wesleyan College founded the Correspondence University, and use of DE for occupation-related training occurred in Pennsylvania, evolving into International Correspondence

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Schools. The first actual DE program originated with the extension division of the University of Chicago in 1892 under the leadership of William Rainey Harper (Holmberg 1995). Holmberg notes that from these beginnings, until around 1970, expansion of DE occurred with modest enhancements in delivery modes. The founding of the British Open University in 1969 brought recognition and legitimacy to the field, generating new initiatives in the US and elsewhere.

Among influential “early adopters” of DE was the University of Wisconsin’s Extension Division which, through the pioneering leadership of its director Charles Wedemeyer from the mid-50s to mid-60s, defined DE as a distinct form of educational practice. The development and implementation of DE became more acceptable as students’ needs became more apparent, faculty recognized its effectiveness, and institutions became more proficient in DE design and delivery (Granger 1990). Adoption of DE was slowest in the northeastern US, home to many elite institutions reluctant to alter their centuries-old ways of educating young men from established families. Eventually, DE became a nationwide phenomenon in meeting the needs of residents dispersed over geographical expanses, especially in rural states (e.g., Maine). Common institutional models that emerged included autonomous DE mode only, and dual mode (classroom and DE). New entities (e.g., Western Governors’ University) were launched, as some DE advocates recognized that transforming existing institutions to incorporate DE was not a viable option.

It is useful to identify successive ‘generations’ of DE technologies:

- 1st (1950s–1960s): Single one-way modality (radio, print, TV), highly structured, delivered materials supported by instructor;
- 2nd (1960–85): Multiple modes (audio-video cassettes, TV, print, fax), prepackaged, structured materials for independent study;
- 3rd (1985–95): Multiple modes (computers and networking using broadband enabling 2-way communication (email, audioconference, chat, satellite, cable, phone, print), structured materials able to accommodate interactive technologies providing direction and support to learners;
- 4th (1995–2005): Multiple technologies (email, chat, computer networks, Internet, high bandwidth transmission enabling individualized, customized, live interactive exchanges, satellite, video and audioconferencing, phone, fax);
- 5th (2005–15): Multiple technologies and applications similar to 3rd and 4th generation; mass ownership of computers and online support services; increased attention to instructional design; more open access to resources (Boettcher and Foster 1996).

US-based DE was initially sponsored primarily by public 4-year universities, followed by for-profit entities, and eventually by private institutions and many 2-year community colleges, thereby encompassing the entire gamut of higher education offering hundreds of degree programs characterized by diverse delivery modes. This pattern emulated the earlier proliferation of private liberal arts colleges, rise of public land grant universities, expansion of community colleges, and creation of the GI Bill for post-WW11 veterans—all notable events affecting generations of students

in the US. Clearly, the Internet/WWW have had the most profound effect on US higher education in the current era. The US environment never fostered the phenomenon of mega-universities with tens of thousands of enrollments as was the case in other countries (e.g., Thailand, China, Korea). It was not until 1996 that the first major ‘from the ground up’ online institution (University of Phoenix) was founded. It began offering classroom-based instruction in non-campus venues, then instituted an online delivery system that grew exponentially, eventually becoming the largest online institution in the US.

Miller (2011) described the simultaneous diversification and convergence of technologies that advanced DE. In the 1980’s, technologies available for instruction were relatively few and simple; a decade later technology had changed dramatically in that it didn’t just reach individual students, but extended the traditional classroom environment to all. The creation of two-way interaction between teacher and students, and students with fellow students advanced the effectiveness of DE, enabling exchanges among communities of students across time and space. Miller notes that this technology-rich environment had important implications beyond course design and delivery; it changed the way we define DE (i.e., not by the technology used, but rather by the nature of interaction involved in the educational process).

The creation of national professional entities to support DE-related activities was a long time in coming. Early efforts focused on correspondence study, later followed by a broader view of practice labeled ‘distance education,’ terminology formally adopted in 1982 with the creation of the International Council of Distance Education. As instructional technology went from being novel to ubiquitous, it fostered the establishment of organizations to support individual and institutional users (e.g., National University Teleconference Network). Funding sources identified DE as a worthwhile initiative for support (e.g., Annenberg/CPB Project, beginning in 1981), mainly for design of courses utilizing media.

In the earlier years of DE’s development in the US, no national body, governmental or private, materialized to serve as a centralized coordinating entity to promote, oversee, and assess DE planning and policy. As late as 1990, Hezel maintained that policy formulation remained a relatively low priority among most DE providers, and that few state or local projects had written or published a coherent set of policies to guide their planning and practices. The annual US Congress Office of Technology Assessment Report now offers federal and state policy recommendations for DE planners, with emphasis on policies relating to governance, management, planning, finances, communication, and accreditation. Gradually, various nationally-oriented groups contributed to these growing endeavors [e.g., the American Council on Education promulgated ‘guiding principles’ for DE (1996)].

Despite relatively little collaboration among hundreds of US institutions that have developed a vast array of DE offerings utilizing different delivery systems, most adopted some version of Peters’ so-called industrialized approach to course production (Peters, in Keegan 1993). Though most faculty accustomed to the guild tradition of developing and teaching their own courses as their exclusive intellectual property resisted the team approach, it has become accepted practice by most DE providers. Long-held practices (e.g., copyright law, fair usage), underwent

modifications through the presence of DE. DE became acceptable at many institutions not necessarily because they embraced the concept, but rather because it was seen as a revenue-producing function that met the increasing expectation of on-demand access to higher education.

Impact on Higher Education

Has a ‘paradigm shift’ in US higher education occurred as a consequence of DE? Have integrated digital technologies encouraged a rethinking of the role of higher education, something the academy has long resisted? Some critics, taking the broad view of DE, allege that we have witnessed the massive deployment of 21st century technology, yet the result has been to essentially reinvent the 18th century university on a more global scale (Conley 2010). Technology-assisted learning has not displaced face-to-face pedagogy in the US as some faculty feared, but has produced changes that have moved the campus-centric model closer to a consumer-centric one. Academe’s reaction to DE has largely been dictated by perceptions of it as either opportunity or threat. Correspondence courses represented a relatively benign alternative to classroom instruction, and so encountered less opposition than did the introduction of the online format which threatened conventional teaching and its teachers.

The early evolution of DE and its adoption by more institutions contributed to what might be called the ‘institutionalization’ of DE in the US, changing its image from a cottage industry to a growing segment of higher education at a pace sustained over at least the past two decades and which only recently shows any sign of abetting (Allen and Seaman 2013, 2014). Though the dramatic growth of DE expanded access to higher education, doubling and diversifying the post-secondary student population, a provocative question regarding the higher education landscape prevails: Despite the appearance of innovation, has DE largely occurred within the accepted paradigms of academe with scant evidence of fundamental change?

As so-called ‘virtual’ universities emerged (e.g., Western Governors’ University), more options became available to learners. Although the residential college remained largely intact, electronic campuses emerged to provide flexible ‘anytime-anyplace’ learning integrating classroom and electronic components, and increasing continuing professional education and training augmented by employers and non-academic organizations. New technologies and shifting demographics placed new demands on institutions adopting DE, requiring new infrastructure and systems to meet the differing lifestyles and expectations of learners. A common institutional conundrum has been whether to create a central unit to coordinate all DE activities, or to allow each sponsoring unit to manage its own.

The changing landscape forced added attention to areas such as student services and course schedules, which many institutions had taken for granted, assuming that prevailing means of doing business could remain intact regardless of new trends. But diminishing resources and increasing enrollments demanded greater productivity,

economies of scale, focus on quality, and attention to competition-aspects that many institutions did not possess expertise needed to respond in an orderly, timely fashion. These challenges could not be ignored, and were exacerbated by new student markets choosing educational providers on the basis of convenience and price rather than geography and prestige. These realities prompted many institutions to reinvent themselves, creating new entities to better respond, or integrating new elements into existing modalities, attempting to reduce costs without sacrificing quality or reputation. Those that resisted change, preferring to rely on traditional modes and markets for continued success, did so at their own peril, and as enrollments declined, some did not survive.

One example of a struggling institution that morphed into a leading online provider is University of Southern New Hampshire, largely propelled by a president with online education expertise and a commitment to consumer needs. It began its online offerings in 1995 and currently enrolls 34,000 DE students, with 5 off-campus sites, over 200 undergraduate and graduate degree programs, many customized to serve domestic, international, and military learners.

Any change is likely to cause discontinuity with prevailing practice, what Christensen (1997) refers to as disruptive technology, and though it may spawn innovation, it does not come about easily. The evolution of DE in American higher education reflects this disruptive element that persists in many settings to the present, as evidenced by faculty skepticism, tensions between traditional values and new practices, and competition for limited resources. This phenomenon is accentuated by new technology requiring constant adaptation to incorporate the latest features, just when providers and users become comfortable using the last innovation, causing further disruption. This technological transience has been a reality of DE in the US for at least the past two decades. Yet, it is important to recognize that DE has survived and ultimately thrived within the US landscape, a testimonial to those pioneers committed to pursuing this goal, often when the climate surrounding them offered little support. Though the conventional classroom remains at the epicenter of pedagogy, technology-supported learning management systems are a dominant DE feature that represents a digital *tsunami*.

A key question is whether DE has reached a “Tipping Point” in the US or elsewhere. If so, what is the evidence for this, and if not, when will it occur? When online enrollments exceed classroom enrollments? When students and faculty choose online courses as their preferred option for learning and teaching? When institutions reward faculty for accomplishments in the online milieu? When distinctions between face-to-face and online instruction are blurred? When electronic global ‘campuses’ are commonplace? Despite impressive gains in DE that meet some of these criteria, it clearly has not yet supplanted mainstream higher education in the US. Indeed, conflicting opinions persist among faculty, employers, and learners regarding the merits of online learning.

Enrollment Growth

Innumerable surveys have been conducted to chronicle DE growth in the US, particularly in the online era. By the mid-1980s, 65 US institutions offered degrees through DE (Perry 1984) at a time when relatively few European institutions did so. Findings of the National Survey of Desktop Computing in Higher Education (1996) indicate that by the mid-1990s, IT usage grew dramatically (e.g., the percentage of college courses using electronic and multi-media resources between 1994 and 1995 more than doubled). Other survey results: An estimated 753,640 students formally enrolled in DE courses; one-third of all institutions offered DE courses; 62% of public 4-year institutions offered DE courses compared with 12% of private institutions doing so; and a quarter of institutions offered degrees that could be completed through DE courses exclusively.

Approximately 2,876,000 students enrolled in DE courses in 2000, a nearly 100% increase since 1997; 56% of 2 and 4-year institutions offered DE courses in 2001–2; 90% offered by public institutions (National Center for Educational Statistics NCES 2004). Noteworthy is that public institutions provided nearly twice as many online courses as private institutions. By 2003, online enrollments were growing 20% annually; much of this growth occurred in the for-profit sector, which accounted for 2/5ths of the \$5 billion in higher education revenues (NCES 2004).

In the 2000s, enrollment in all (4100+) post-secondary institutions increased from 16.9 million to 20.4 million, including online enrollments of 46% in public institutions and 42% in for-profit colleges (EDVENTURES, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 2010). In 2010, University of Phoenix had the largest online enrollments (380,000), equaling combined enrollments of the next 9 largest online institutions (US News and World Report-Education 2010). In 2012, 5.3 million online enrollments reflected a 3.7% increase, but an 8.7% decrease in for-profit numbers (Babson 2013), with half in fully online programs. Among 1300 academic and business leaders surveyed by Pew (2011), 57% agreed that in 10 years, a majority of students would obtain part of their education via virtual classes.

In fall 2013, 5,522,192 students were enrolled in DE courses (NCES 2016). The latest Babson report indicated a 3.9% one-year increase in DE students, to 5.8 million, with approximately half taking all of their courses at a distance. Public institutions continued to represent a significantly larger proportion of DE students. Despite these impressive numbers, the percentage of chief academic officers who say online learning is critical to their long-term strategy fell from 71 to 63%, and only 29% report their faculty accepts the “value and legitimacy of online education.” Schools with the largest DE enrollments report 60% faculty acceptance, while 11.6% of faculty at schools with no DE do so (Babson 2015).

Among the factors that have fostered recent growth in US online enrollments has been the lifting of the so-called “50% rule”, legislation the US Congress passed in 1992 to counter the proliferation of ‘diploma mills’ and correspondence programs that began in the 1980s. The regulation prevented any college that enrolled more than 50% of its students or provided more than 50% of its courses at a distance from

participating in federal student-aid programs. Despite concern that a change would prompt an online boom and create more diploma mills, the restriction ended in 2006, but remained in effect for correspondence programs. Those endorsing the demise of the rule argued that (1) it discouraged institutions from launching new initiatives that better serve nontraditional students, and (2) it was unnecessary because state and regional accrediting agencies do an adequate job of preventing fraud and inferior programs from continued operation.

In mid-2016 the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) proposed regulations to improve oversight of DE programs by clarifying state requirements for institutions to participate in federal student aid programs. A longstanding requirement is that institutions be authorized in the state in which they are located for eligibility to receive federal student aid. While institutions must have authorization in the states in which they are physically located, there are no federal requirements for DE providers in states where they are not physically located. The proposed regulations close this loophole, alarming some state regulators because it would lead to an influx of institutions they need to review (www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/education, (July 22, 2016)).

Role of Faculty

A primary reason why DE did not become more readily amalgamated with conventional teaching on US campuses has been due to intractable faculty resistance. Other impediments include the absence of viable infrastructure to facilitate IT, and the lack of effective leadership to advance DE. Also, early IT interest among faculty was often focused on acquiring new tools for research rather than applying them to their pedagogy. Most faculty used IT primarily for email, word processing, Web searches, and finding materials to augment their face-to-face courses. When teaching issues were addressed, it was often in the context of how to adapt new technology to old pedagogy.

Though new technologies enabled enhanced pedagogy, skeptical instructors were reluctant to take advantage of these resources. They did not know what was relatively easy to do using IT; they were not especially interested in IT if it did not facilitate their research; IT changed too rapidly and was seen as disruptive; they did not feel their institution spent adequate funds on technology; they believed technology would encumber their teaching rather than enrich it (Allitt 2005). At the other end of the continuum were teachers whose over-reliance on technology sent the message that machines are necessary for students to learn, while lessening the need for teachers to actually teach. But as course management systems proliferated and more features were offered, users' expectations rose, and more teachers and students depended on them. Instructors' primary role shifted from providing content to facilitating the learning process (Beaudoin 1990).

A conspicuous lacuna among many teacher-education programs was the absence of guidance in how to incorporate technology into pedagogy. This weakness is later

exacerbated if institutions provide minimal training to new faculty employed to teach online. Despite increased attention to this, a Babson College survey (2010) of training for online teaching reported that 5.6% received no training, and 57% received only informal mentoring. Another Babson survey (2008–9) found that only 12–13% of faculty rated their institution above average in providing incentives and recognition for developing and delivering online courses. A probable consequence of this is that only 28% of all faculty accepts the value and legitimacy of online education (Babson 2013).

The Digital Age has introduced a new paradigm into the teaching-learning equation: Web-centric courses, high interactivity, varying formats, resources accessed via computer networks, greater student independence in managing learning. These developments have brought faculty-related issues to the fore, including: promotion and tenure, release time, course load, curriculum revision, publishing, compensation, and intellectual property- all areas of faculty life that had remained largely unchanged for decades. Pervasive resistance from much of the professoriate persists, so much so that Ayers (2005) maintains the fundamental principles of academe remain largely unchanged because of conflicting priorities (e.g., the academy values physical place and stability; DE emphasizes mobility and change).

Online Learning as a Strategic Asset

As DE gravitated from the fringes of higher education, it finally became recognized as a strategic institutional asset. Findings based on 231 interviews with administrators, faculty and students at 45 public institutions and 11,000 survey responses from faculty (McCarthy and Samors 2009) illustrate this development. Online learning programs:

- work effectively as a core component of strategic planning and implementation;
- benefit from ongoing institutional assessment and review;
- are strengthened by centralization of key functions;
- may be more readily accepted if overseen by academic units;
- need reliable financing mechanisms for sustainability and growth;
- succeed with adequate resources for faculty and students;
- have the capacity to change campus culture if campus leaders communicate that DE is fundamental to the institution’s mission and priorities.

A striking findings is that although more than two-thirds of responding CEOs recognize that online programs are strategically important to their institution, less than one-half actually included online programs in their strategic plans. This, despite the number of students taking online courses continues to expand at a rate far in excess of overall enrollments (Ibid.).

For-Profit Providers, Partnerships, and Economics

Higher education is a significant industry in the US economy. The total average cost for one year of college is \$20,400, and some charge \$60,000 or more annually (NCES 2016). For-profit DE institutions have played a significant role in the US market. Most such entities have been recognized as efficient, innovative, and engaged in improving quality in their offerings. Flexible scheduling, relevant programs, robust student services, and effective recruiting have enabled many to rapidly expand and become highly profitable. Yet success has invited scrutiny, particularly from the US Department of Education (DOE), citing high attrition, excessive course enrollments, lack of rigor compared to classroom instruction, and claims that employers are hesitant to employ graduates of online degree programs. These aspects are viewed as indications of failure, while administrators of proprietary programs argue these are among the myths DE programs must overcome. DOE now more actively exercises its regulatory authority, especially regarding financial aid practices, but in most matters, it largely defers to states' monitoring and authorization.

Many institutions charge a premium for online courses, and some add a surcharge for hybrid courses. A survey by Campus Computing Project/WCET (Parry 2010) found that among 182 institutions, nearly half charged more for online than classroom courses. Those charging less for online instruction are often criticized by online faculty who feel this conveys that such courses are 'not as good' as campus-based offerings, and thus provides ammunition to skeptics. Further, cheaper online courses can undercut classroom course numbers. Online courses have obviously made education more accessible and convenient (for providers and consumers), but not necessarily more economical, even in an era when institutions attempt to achieve economies of scale to reduce costs while maintaining standards.

Despite academes inherent parochialism, expansion-oriented institutions have recognized the benefits of establishing formal collaborations, typically in the form of consortia with like-minded counterparts, or partnerships with for-profit organizations. These arrangements have generally been quite successful, though certainly some have resulted in more conflict than collaboration, as differing goals may clash. This is especially so when international collaborations are attempted in unfamiliar cultural milieus. Nonetheless, many successful DE enterprises among US institutions would not have thrived without the advantages of a corporate partnership providing expertise in non-academic functions, such as marketing, recruiting, technical support, and student services (e.g., University of New England-USA launched several DE programs from 'scratch' in the early 90s utilizing corporate partners; currently, without need for these alliances, 1/3rd of its offerings are online). It is assumed that these 'opportunistic alliances' are more cost-effective than offering DE unilaterally, yet there is no clear evidence to support this belief (Hough 1992). But there are typical advantages including: reduced costs, less duplication, higher quality courses, enhanced services, and expanded options for learners.

Accreditation and Quality Assurance

As DE programs were added to the portfolio of more institutions, US providers were understandably concerned about how accrediting bodies would assess them, fearing they might be held to different or higher standards than conventional programs. But generally, similar criteria have been crafted by the 6 regional agencies and so have not constrained DE initiatives. For example, the New England accrediting body established DE policies in 1998; these did not replace its Standards for Accreditation, but rather specified ways its standards are applicable to DE programs, and provided examples of evidence. Eventually, with adoption of guidelines developed by the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, quality control in DE expanded from regional to national cooperation (Lezberg 2007). Quality Matters, an international organization that assists with ensuring high standards in online course design and delivery is a widely used resource. The Distance Education Training Council serves as a national accrediting group (mainly reviewing proprietary programs), augmenting periodic peer-reviewed assessments conducted by regional accrediting agencies. Twigg (2010) observed that lingering concern remains about the quality of online education, even among accredited institutions, despite the fact that all are subject to quality assurance systems, and the distinction between DE and face-to-face modes is blurring.

Social and Ethical Issues

The impact of computers on education providers and consumers in the US, as elsewhere, has been enormous. This phenomenon has affected the American professoriate as well as students immersed in a virtual world powered by online tools (and toys). These resources offer users enhanced experiences in many activities and endeavors, but there can be a 'dark side' to this realm. As Turkle (2011) has chronicled, the current digital generation often has difficulty distinguishing reality versus simulations of it. Turkle (2004) is alarmed that the virtual environments self-directed learners constantly inhabit compromise the quality of their social and educational interaction. She offers evidence that as students become more adept at instant word processing, it is often at the expense of deep thinking and effective use of language. Another issue is that learners' access to multiple sources of information requires choices about what material is most relevant and reliable, a skill inexperienced researchers lack. As more educational providers make courseware accessible mainly via online sources, and require students to function exclusively in online settings, it becomes an all-consuming lifestyle. The ethical implications of this are unavoidable.

The pervasive impact of technology has heightened attention to appropriate ethical behaviors expected of students by those who plan, manage and evaluate DE activities, but are providers as attentive to their own practices? Much effort is made to encourage or enforce guidelines for students to adhere to in their online learnings, but this

may be less so for instructors. This is not to suggest that inappropriate behavior is noticeably present in the US professoriate, but rather to note that the digital revolution in academe can create situations in which individuals and organizations may overlook or ignore areas in which ethical practice could be compromised. The dissemination and enforcement of ethical standards for DE practice in the US have not been actively undertaken by local or federal governments. It has been largely left to the discretion of institutional providers to articulate their own expectations, though accrediting agencies and many professional associations do identify areas of preferred behavior among their constituencies.

Consideration of ethics in DE usually elicits opinions regarding the issue of equity in terms of access and opportunity for learning. Many DE advocates envisioned that the availability of virtual resources would shrink the so-called digital divide and thus ‘democratize’ higher education worldwide. The US would seem to possess ideal conditions to be especially effective in this transformation compared to many resource-impooverished nations. Ironically, despite its technological advances, socio-economic disparities in the knowledge-based society have persisted, and while online enrollments have swelled, tuition costs have risen so dramatically that many are still denied opportunities for further education. Community colleges are notable exceptions in this regard, and exponential growth at some of these institutions reflect this commitment.

The Future

The dramatic changes in the learning landscape fostered by DE over the past several decades have prompted theorists and practitioners to prognosticate about the future, within the current decade and beyond. DE is currently characterized by many of its converts as the exemplar of how teaching and learning should occur. But, we might soon view DE, as we now know it, to be outmoded when supplanted by new tools currently beyond our comprehension. American academics have a penchant for assuming most educational innovation originated in the US, and will have a lasting worldwide impact. The US, in DE as well as other sectors, pioneered major theories and practices currently in vogue, but some trends can move in reverse. For example, MOOCs (massive open online courses) and collaborative learning facilitated by social media and other interactive tools are dominant features of DE, enabling hundreds, even thousands of learners to share a common educational experience. Yet, MOOCs have already lost some currency, and Moore recently editorialized that, despite its virtues, online group interdependence can occur at the expense of autonomous learning (Moore 2015). In a subsequent editorial Moore (2016) enthuses about greater emphasis on ‘personalized learning’ and how emerging trends encourage new innovative approaches to DE pedagogy.

It is interesting to consider what a group of practitioners convening in 1996 to imagine the future university prognosticated what the learning environment might look like 10 years later: Fewer institutions; more differentiation among them; more

for-profit educational enterprises; the end of geographic hegemony; more educational brokers functioning as credit banks and credentialing services; and increasing demand for higher education worldwide. The group cautioned that higher education would have to anticipate and address these new realities if they wished to succeed. Yet, overriding their deliberations about the future was the fundamental question of whether or not this sector has the capacity to change in order to accommodate and thrive, or indeed, to survive a prospective new educational world order? (Twigg and Oblinger 1996).

Many of these phenomena have since been realized in the US and elsewhere. Yet, it cannot be ignored that DE, despite its remarkable advances, still remains as somewhat of an anomaly on many campuses, and its practices, including large-scale enterprises (e.g., MOOCs), are still viewed as alternatives to mainstream education. Perhaps, only when leaders recognize that DE is a strategic force for institutional transformation, and when “Old Millennium” ways of doing are replaced by “New Millennium” thinking, will that elusive “tipping point” truly be achieved. It is those with vision able to articulate, advocate and operationalize these goals who will ultimately make their organizations relevant for the digital age and for all citizens in the US and beyond who now live in a complex global community.

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