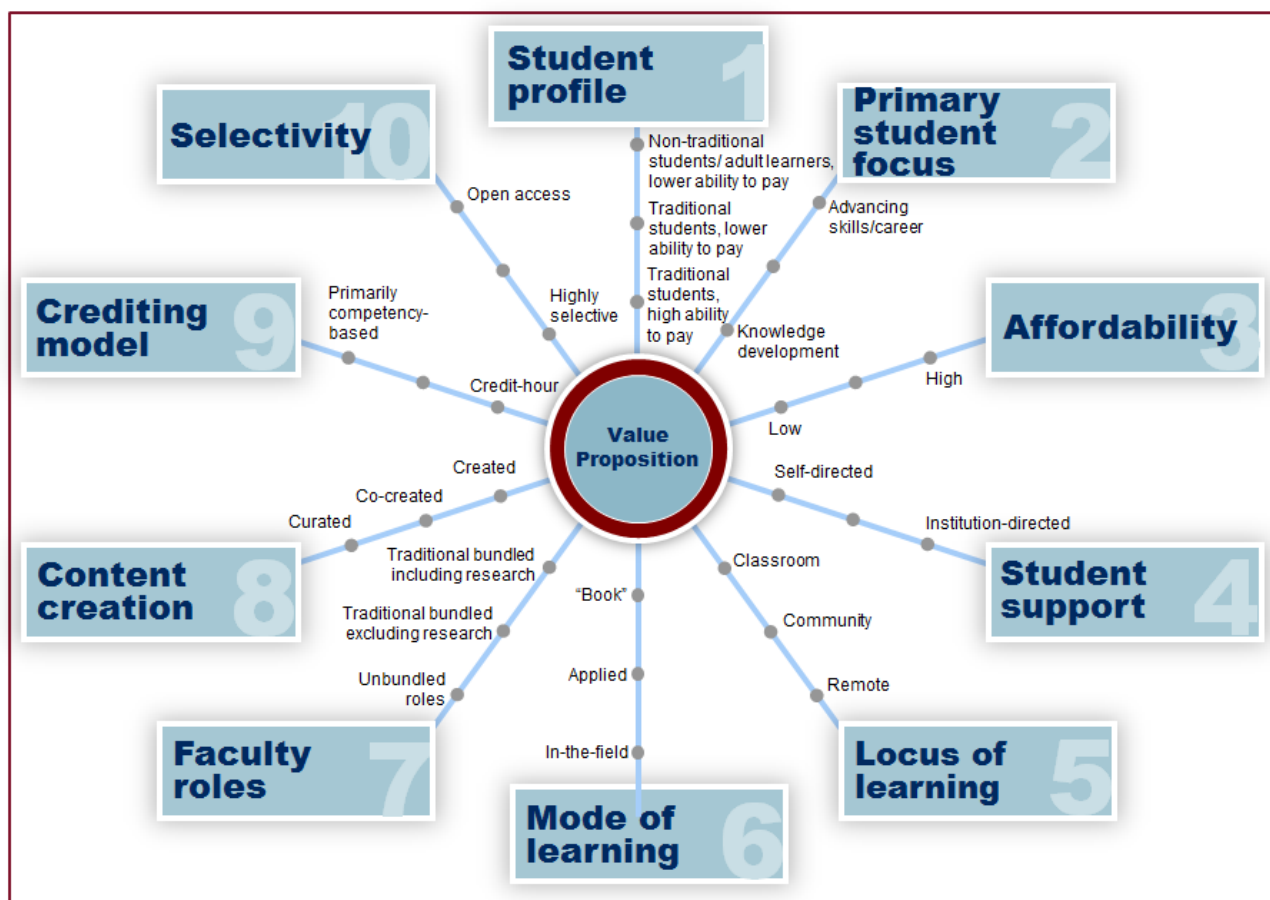


HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

Part 2: Perspectives from the Field



Through in-depth interviews with more than 100 higher education experts and leaders to identify key themes for [successful changes in higher education](#), 10 models of transformational change surfaced that are leading to noticeable results for institutions and students.

The graphic above illustrates a framework of issue areas for institutional leaders to consider explicitly and in relationship with each other to ensure they make decisions that best align with their institution's goals, and help each institution organize and operationalize a value proposition.

Institutional Snap Shot | Franklin & Marshall College

Six years ago, Franklin and Marshall (F&M) was one of many small town liberal arts colleges under pressure from rising costs and a shrinking pool of traditional applicants—meaning students, often from middle to upper class families, who benefit from existing support systems and are set up for success in higher education.. President Dan Porterfield knew that he had to think beyond the status quo to combat these pressures, while delivering against its value proposition of a school of teaching excellence.

F&M leadership implemented a bold theory of change—a plan to maintain and raise its level of academic and student quality— by focusing on underserved, disadvantaged students. Practically, this meant changing their business model to eliminate merit aid, a controversial move at a time when similar institutions were participating in a “merit arms race,” and shifting their focus to recruiting and supporting highly qualified low-income students. The “merit arms race” had, in essence, limited F&M’s access to talent to less than 10 percent of the student population.

F&M’s leadership set out to transform the college by narrowing in three of the [10 major dimensions](#) to create their updated value proposition: student profile, affordability, and student support. Using the value proposition framework, F&M was able to make strategic choices, and even cuts, that best aligned with the goals of the institution to ensure increased student success.

President Porterfield and his team created a new pipeline of talent through a set of strategic K-12 partnerships that

would select prepared students from families with lower ability to pay and created programs to prepare high-performing high school seniors for college.

They also implemented a broader set of student support services including smaller classes and revamped career services, as well as additional services designed for low-income and first-generation college students including cohort learning communities, and a faculty-led advising model that enlisted the help of professors who were themselves first-generation college students.

Even in a short period of time, F&M has seen a turnaround in quality and application numbers. F&M’s class of 2017 includes 21 percent first-generation college students and 17 percent Pell grant recipients. The average first-year class SAT scores have remained high for the past five years while the admit rate of the last three classes has remained selective. In addition, F&M has seen an increase in the geographic diversity of the student body and academic quality. F&M is a prime example of how leading national colleges and universities can thrive while providing opportunities for success to underrepresented students.

A major theme among the recent research with institutional leaders was a lack of dramatic reshaping of their institutions. While almost all colleges and universities are experimenting and tweaking their models, few institutions have radically restructured their postsecondary experience. Franklin & Marshall challenged this trend by making risky decisions that challenged way things have always been done, and it is paying off.

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Sue Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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