

A Framework for Action

In the tenth year of its existence, the EDUCAUSE National Learning Infrastructure Initiative (NLII) has embraced a framework for action. The framework describes the interrelationships among five forces affecting behavior associated with the role of technology in transforming teaching and learning: *agents*, *technologies*, *roles*, *communities*, and *rules* (see <<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/NLII0364.pdf>>, figure 2, p. 3).

The purpose of the framework is to help organize the continuously evolving set of issues that are at play and to understand and shape associated behavior so that on today's campuses, strategic decisions respect the interdependencies among the key variables and are not based on shallow, simplistic assumptions. The interaction of *agents* using *technologies*, guided by *rules*, in their *roles* within *communities*, has the potential to produce unanticipated, and often transformational, outcomes.

Faculty, students, administrators, and campus leaders are the *agents* of change, and they must participate appropriately in decision-making. *Technologies*, tools, and techniques are the instruments the agents have available to enable change in their realm of influence. Course management systems, learning objects, e-portfolios, wireless clouds, and transformative assessment methodologies are examples of such tools and techniques.

Roles, relationships, and perspectives change as the technologies empower the agents in new ways. Students use e-portfolios to manage and own their learning, and they use wireless connections to discover new knowledge even while engaged in a traditional classroom experience. Faculty assume mentoring and guiding roles in response to the new

learning dynamic; they assist students with developing discrimination in online source selection, and they guide students to communicate effectively and gracefully in an online world. In the new learning ecosystem, everyone is a learner. Campus learning designers provide professional guidance for the integration of technical and pedagogical endeavors toward deeper learning. And administrators and campus leaders realize that new technologies, tools, and techniques fundamentally change the nature of the academic program; consequently, they become engaged in decisions about technology.

Although many speak of the "campus community," the notion of one cohesive, self-reliant campus community is an anachronism. Technology is enabling the formation, and enhancing the effectiveness, of the many different types of *communities* that now coexist on campus. New communities form because members are using the tools (e.g., learning objects or e-portfolios) or because the tools are supporting and nurturing the members (e.g., virtual communities of practice). Students begin to view online communities as an important aspect of their intellectual and social growth. Faculty and professional staff turn to online communities of practice for professional nurturing. New business models, based on collaboration, begin to appear as a means to produce outcomes that would be impossible to achieve alone. The traditional aversion to collaboration is slowly but steadily abating with the recognition that behavior is different in this framework for action, and collaborations are springing up within and among institutions of higher education.

The *rules* change as the tools enable and

foster new measures of quality (e.g., learning objectives and outcomes assessment). Governance conventions applicable to an industrial-age pace and nature of change are supplanted by ones that acknowledge the volatility of decision-making in this new framework. Budget and organizational structures also change in recognition of new behaviors and interrelationships, as do policies. New norms emerge. Entrenched assumptions about correct practice give way to the use of thoughtfully conceived principles to guide decision-making regarding the role of technology in enabling healthy learning behavior for faculty and students alike.

As the technology matures, as its enabling power becomes apparent, it would be naïve to assume, hope, or pretend that (1) these five very powerful forces operate sequentially or independently and can be dealt with in an orderly fashion, without consideration of their interdependencies, or (2) the political process will yield consensus on whether (or how) to direct campus priorities, actions, and resources toward a transformed teaching and learning environment. The interplay of these forces within the framework has already enabled the evolution of the faculty-student relationship from teaching-centered to student-centered to learning-centered, in which all parties in the relationship participate and benefit. Understanding behavior within the context of the framework for action is now a reasonable expectation of campus agents who need to comprehend, shape, facilitate, and own the change that is the inevitable outcome.

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