

New Analysis of 100 Academic Continuity Plans Provides Recommended Solutions for Academic Disruption

Best Practices For Academic Leaders Developing Academic Continuity Plans

Boulder, CO (Aug 24, 2023) – Academic continuity planning is an essential component of the business continuity plans of colleges and universities, and yet hundreds of institutions were not prepared for the months-long academic disruption caused by lockdowns in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. A new guide, [Planning for Academic Continuity: A Guide for Academic Leaders](#), developed by Every Learner Everywhere, shares with readers the results of an analysis of 100 academic continuity plans and summarizes the best practices for developing a versatile plan while providing resources that are aligned with your institution's resources. Every Learner advocates for equitable outcomes in U.S. higher education through advances in digital learning. This report summarizes how digital learning tools and platforms provide a solution for moving learning environments online in times of academic disruption.

With a goal of providing the field with a set of best practices and resources for developing a general-use academic continuity plan, we reviewed the literature on academic continuity as well as the actual plans of over 100 colleges and universities to discover patterns in structure, policies, and recommendations. The analysis sample included 65 public four-year institutions, 26 private four-year institutions, and 10 public two-year institutions. Referencing the most comprehensive plans in our sample, we drew up a list of 15 topics that could serve as a baseline for what plans should include. From that list, we assessed all the plans on how extensively, or if at all, they covered the topic. 67 of 100 institutions included all 15 topics. High-priority topics included: communication, moving classes online, digital learning, and delivering course content. The high-priority topics indicate a focus on making courses work using digital tools.

"Digital learning is a major component of college courses in times of normal academic operations," says author Patricia O'Sullivan, Every Learner Everywhere Manager, Content Development and Special Projects. "During times of academic disruption, digital learning is essential to maintaining academic continuity. However, faculty and academic leaders must include students in academic continuity planning to ensure their expectations of student access to digital tools are realistic and equitable." Digital learning—when integrated and executed intentionally to improve access, lower costs, and provide students with a learning experience that is personalized to their needs—can address many of the inequities that serve as roadblocks to student progress and success.



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The purpose of this report is not to downplay the physical and mental health impacts on students, staff, and faculty during times of crisis, but rather, to encourage administrators of colleges and universities to maintain a plan for academic continuity that can be used in both –short- and long-term situations, so that trauma is not compounded by confusion about academic policies and obligations. Established academic continuity plans allow colleges and universities to use their resources to manage disruptions, rather than using them to develop new plans and policies for each disruption event. Simply put, schools with academic continuity plans are in a much stronger position to manage times of crisis and disruption.

To download the free resource, [Planning for Academic Continuity: A Guide for Academic Leaders](#), or learn more about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to equitize higher education through digital learning, visit everylearnereverywhere.org. To contact Every Learner Everywhere, email everylearner@wiche.edu, or call (303) 541-0208. Follow Every Learner on Twitter [@EveryLearnerNet](https://twitter.com/EveryLearnerNet).

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Every Learner Everywhere is a network of partner organizations with expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments. Our mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes for Black, Latino, and Indigenous students, poverty-affected students, and first-generation students. Our collaborative work aims to advance equity in higher education centered on the transformation of postsecondary teaching and learning. We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning through direct technical assistance, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institutional practices and market trends. [WCET](#) (the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies) and [WICHE](#) (the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) serve as the intermediary organization for the Every Learner Everywhere Network. For more information about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to equitize higher education through digital learning, visit everylearnereverywhere.org.