

Transcription for

THE KEY WITH INSIDE HIGHER ED

EP. 37: ASSESSING LAST FALL'S INSTRUCTION, FROM THE FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

DOUG LEDERMAN

KRISTEN FOX

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS

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DOUG LEDERMAN: Hello, and welcome to The Key, Insider Higher Ed's podcast for news, analysis, and insights. I'm Doug Lederman, Inside Higher Ed's editor and cofounder. Thanks for several thousand of you who downloaded by first podcast episode a couple of weeks ago. Much appreciated, and I hope you found it worth your time.

That first episode explored last fall's enrollment data and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and the recession on disadvantaged students. This week's edition also both assesses the fall semester and tries to spin forward to see what we can learn from it. Today, we're going to talk about how the fall term unfolded academically from the perspective of the faculty members in the equivalent of the trenches in higher education, those teaching the introductory courses that typically serve as either gateways to launch students' academic careers or gatekeepers that can knock them off course. Understanding how colleges have adapted their instruction and academic support since the pandemic began and how the changes they have and haven't made have affected students is really important, especially given mounting evidence that low-income, first-generation, adult Black and brown students are much more likely than their peers to have been deterred from pursuing their educational plans in the year since COVID-19 emerged.

To understand this landscape we're talking today about a recent report published by the research and consulting firm Tyton Partners and Every Learner Everywhere, a national network focused on using

digital learning to support disadvantaged and underrepresented learners. In the conversation that follows, Kristen Fox, a director at Tyton and author of the report "Time for Class: The Impact of 2020 on Introductory Faculty and Their Students" describes the very heartening progress that faculty members at thousands of colleges and universities made in improving their own teaching and the experience they gave to students. But Kristen also notes some troubling findings about student success in introductory courses.

KRISTEN FOX: The percentage faculty saying that more students are stopping out of their courses and seeing increases to the DFW rate, the drop-failure-withdrawal rates are increasing. And that's really concerning because we're seeing that more frequently at two-year institutions and community colleges have obviously been traditionally access points into higher education as well as at institutions that are serving higher rates of Pell-eligible students.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Jessica Rowland Williams, director of Every Learner Everywhere, discusses conversations that her organization had with some of those very students and in which they expressed deep appreciation for the hard work their instructors had undertaken in the pandemic, and seemed to recognize that much of the responsibility for improving students learning experiences falls to their colleges, not the professors themselves.

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: One of the things that they asked for was for faculty to be better prepared and to be better trained. Our students are recognizing the importance of training for faculty and they realize the faculty can only do so much.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Without further delay, on to today's discussion.

Do professors think they taught more effectively in the fall than they did in the spring? Did they feel supported by their institutions? How do they think their students fared and did all groups of students fare the same? These are some of the questions explored and at least partially answered by a series of reports published over recent months by Every Learner Everywhere, a network of college and technology groups focused on using digital learning to drive equitable access and success in higher education, and Tyton Partners, a research and consulting firm that is part of the network. A third of those reports, *The Impact of 2020 on Introductory Faculty and Their Students*, was released last week and its findings ran the gamut from heartening to disturbing. I'm pleased to be joined today by Kristen Fox, director of Tyton Partners and the report's lead author, and Jessica Rowland Williams, director of Every Learner Everywhere. Welcome to you both.

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Thank you. It's good to be here.

KRISTEN FOX: Thank you, it's great to be here.

DOUG LEDERMAN: So Kristen, could you start by sharing a few findings from the new report that you think are most compelling and most important for college and university instructors and administrators to focus on?

KRISTEN FOX: Yeah, well, thanks, Doug. So a couple of things for context. The research that we did was focused on interviews, focus groups, as well as a series of surveys that occurred over the course of the pandemic with thousands of faculty at institutions across the country, so over 1500 unique institutions across the country, in addition to a targeted longitudinal sample of introductory faculty or faculty teaching general education or introductory level courses at over 600 institutions.

And I'm going to focus a little bit on what we learned from that second group, right, so the faculty teaching general education or introductory level courses, because they play such an important role, an important access point in higher education at which students are either successful in progressing or not.

And so a couple of things that we learned that I think are really important and heartening, right? First, obviously, we always say higher education is slow, but, wow, how quickly did higher education pivot this spring, summer, and fall to really elevate professional development, the level and caliber of online experiences for students and for faculty. Over 90 percent of faculty taught this fall in either an online or blended format, so that's incredible. And many of those were faculty teaching for the first time online in hybrid formats. Over 70 percent incorporated digital tools and technologies for the first time. 60 percent embedded more active learning into their courses. And we heard loud and clear from faculty that they saw firsthand the struggles that their students were facing as they struggled through the pandemic. So I think those are all positive things.

We also saw on a positive note that instructors said their perception of online learning actually improved, that the same individuals at a rate where 5 percent more said they thought it was a positive method for teaching. And we also saw a perception that institutions really elevated their ability to support faculty over this period of time, so again, at about a 10 percent jump.

However, on the other hand, the important thing I think for institutions to know is that despite all the hard work, we still have significant work to do and there's some significant challenges, most importantly some news coming out of introductory faculty in particular is reported increases, so the percentage of faculty is saying that more students are stopping out of their courses and seeing increases to DFW rates, so drop-failure-withdrawal rates are increasing. And that's really concerning because we're seeing that more frequently at two-year institutions and community colleges that obviously have traditionally been important access points into higher education, as well as at institutions that serving higher rates of Pell-eligible students. So really important for us in the field to be thinking about and I'm happy to unpack more.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Yeah, and last week's podcast focused on the enrollment numbers from the fall, which definitely showed a disproportionate impact, negative impact on various disadvantaged and underrepresented students. And while obviously you don't necessarily have the data by race for how the students were affected, the institutional numbers certainly back that up in terms of not enrollment but maybe retention. So Jessica, how do the report's findings look from the perspective of an organization like yours that is focused on improving student outcomes?

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think one thing that stood out to me about this report, Kristen and Doug, was how exhausted faculty report themselves being and just completely overwhelmed, you know. And I think that that's just such a critical part of what's happening during this pandemic that I think often gets overlooked. So from an Every Learner Everywhere perspective, we really do focus on both listening to students and understanding their experiences, but also supporting faculty and building digital learning experiences that are rooted in equity and will ensure positive outcomes for students. You know, every learner everywhere... And so I think that in reading the report it really just continued to underscore the need for organizations like ours to continue of support faculty, to continue to find new ways to provide resources to faculty, because they are exhausted.

DOUG LEDERMAN: They are the face of the institution in a way that, they're obviously accustomed to being one of the faces of the institution, but especially for students studying at a distance, their role increased. They were a student success person in a way they didn't necessarily view themselves before. So let's talk about the faculty for a few minutes.

Kristen, what is your thought about what sort of how the faculty beyond the exhaustion and the other feelings they had, what are your thoughts about, what did we learn about faculty other than putting the lie to the idea that they're not willing to adapt? What did we learn about sort of how they adapted, and

particularly again, so much you want to think about how things spin forward, what do we think, did they change their view of their role and what they should be doing day to day?

KRISTEN FOX: What we've heard from faculty is, yes, they are exhausted, by this ter, right, and by all of the work that they did to transition courses. And they've spent more time doing it across,so we as faculty teaching entry level courses how long per week their taking to prepare for, teach, and grade student work, and, of course, across the boards, so it's over 14 hours a week per course, and across all of the activities, more time spent during the pandemic. So, again, multiply that out by someone who's teaching four or five courses, right, and you're talking about, you know, 60-plus-hour weeks. So that is something that we continue to monitor and track.

But what we found is that when the full student experience is the course, right, is the teaching and learning, that's a lot on the shoulders of instructors, right? They're on the frontlines of seeing student mental health issues. They're on the frontlines of where students are struggling to use technology, and they're on the frontlines of seeing where the digital divide is really impacting their students, right, and trying to revert those things and get students to the right places. So I think that's where we saw many faculty really seeingt that engaging their students was really important, and working incredibly hard to make sure that they were engaging in individual outreach and connecting with students to support them during this period of time in ways that were not always sustainable, though, right? It took a toll on faculty themselves so that they could support their students. So I think one... Obviously, that's challenging in the near term. In the long term, right, we also see evidence that faculty that had already been using digital tools, and we've allowed them to look at student performance and kind of direct their outreach accordingly, you know, some evidence that took less of a toll. So, Jessica, I welcome any of your thoughts as well.

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Yeah, another thing that I saw in the report that was really striking for me was the fact that if faculty felt like their professional development was sufficient and they felt more prepared for kind of taking on this role. And for faculty that didn't feel like their professional development was sufficient, they felt a lot less prepared. And I think that that's important to note. And when you layer the equity lens onto the that, you know, the fact that, really, the matter is that more well resourced institutions are more likely to have stronger professional development support for faculty. And so you're looking at a system where you have the most well resourced institutions having better support systems and better prepared faculty, and therefore likely better able to support their students, with our most well resourced students, and then, you know, on the other end of the spectrum you have less resourced universities who have less support for faculty, leaving them feeling less prepared, and that's impacting the students who really need the support the most.

And so I think, you know, what we're seeing is just this inequity that's still systemic, that's got so many different layers from the faculty to the institution to the students, I think this pandemic has really just opened our eyes to that and elevated the idea of how like it's not just about inequity at the student level, but even at the faculty level and how they're being supported. You know, there's still systemic inequities that exist.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Money is always going to be an unequalizer. But are there things you saw, either of you, that institutions do to make sure their faculty were prepared that less well resourced institutions might draw from? Are there tactics and strategies that maybe are less dependent on money that you found were effective in the view of the faculty?

KRISTEN FOX: First, we saw institutions really rise to the challenge. And interestingly, it was instructors at community colleges that felt most supported by their institutions, right, which is not necessarily what you might have expected if we just look at resourcing at institutions. And I attribute that in part to the real focus on teaching and learning as core, right, and understanding of the importance of the student experience at many community colleges and for many of those instructors.

And another thing too that we saw is really peer-to-peer learning networks across institutions, right? So the most powerful thing that we heard from faculty, and we especially heard this this summer, was do not put some other consultant up in front of me telling me how to teach. I need practical application and tools. I need to learn from my peers. And we saw a really movement to learning discipline associations, from learning professional associations, in addition to institutional resources, as well as the supplier and vendor community, right? If you talk to any of the major publishers, any of the LMS and digital tool providers up there, and their entire sales forces, basically, from March onward was essentially providing implementations, support, and professional development to institutions. And in particular, we saw that introductory faculty relying on external vendors, for better or worse throughout the pandemic, at higher rates than in upper level instructors.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Now, obviously, one of the biggest questions on all sorts of fronts is sort of what sticks, what lasts from this moment. The increased emphasis on teaching, especially as Kristen pointed out, when the college experience was increasingly defined by the instruction, at least in the near term, that had focus on and support for teaching. There are some systemic things within a lot of institutions that don't prioritize teaching necessarily as much as different types of institutions.

Do you think that there is likely, and this will be a little crystal ball gazing I think, but do you think there's

likely to be any change in how institutions think about tenure and promotion and other sort of rewards, because we know that faculty members are smart. They behave that way, based on how they're going to be rewarded. And obviously in this moment we saw people step up. Are you optimistic that there will be structural changes that make this last?

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: I am optimistic and I think so because I think we're entering a period of time where institutions are going to have to be held accountable for what they are doing and not doing in ways that they haven't been before. And we see that already without that current dropout rates that we're seeing. Our students are voting on who's doing things right and who's not with their feet. And they're sending, I think, a clear message to institutions that they have to kind of prove their value here in a lot of ways.

And I think that we all know and I think that over time everyone's going to have to face that how we teach our students is important, right? And value of learning, and how the student is learning, and being an effective teacher is an important part of the value proposition for higher education. And I do think that in order to sustain high-quality teaching, which will keep students, is going to be important to reward and to incentivize teachers and instructors to continue to redesign courses.

And, you know, I think a lot of the things that we think are easy, like redesigning course or really professional development are things that take a lot of time. I think, you know, coming back to this issue of time, there's some much time that has to go into teaching well, and I think if anything else, that our institutions and institutional leaders are beginning to wake up and see that, and realize that we have to continue and incentivize and allow faculty to have the time to do what they need to be effective teachers.

DOUG LEDERMAN: So we're talking with Kristen Fox of Tyton Partners and Jessica Rowland Williams of Every Learner Everywhere. Kristen, did you want to add something?

KRISTEN FOX: I was going to say, what are things that are going to stick, what are the things that are going to sustain and change? And I think from an infrastructure perspective, right, there's not going back. All institutions understand now that investing in digital transformation and making sure you've got that infrastructure in place is critical, right? And again, do you see increased partnership with OPM providers around that, right, like to TU and their new model, you know, more around enable that.

And so how does each institution make sure that whether individually or through partnership or consortia, right, that they are able to, you know, deliver the digital experience to students.

I also think teaching practice, we are seeing an acknowledgment from individual faculty, so at the faculty level, you know, benefits around some practices, and they told us explicitly, wow, I tried this during the pandemic out of necessity, and I'm realizing that it's really effective, right, breaking my course into smaller chunks, using asynchronous methods, using chat features to get engagement from different students. The shy students are now participating and I can connect and engage students in different ways. So we're actually seeing, I think, some aha moments that I think will really endure when it comes to some teaching practices that are really effective.

And then from the student policy perspective, I'm hopeful that this will be a moment where we think about changes from a regulatory perspective around transfer credits and around how we bring students back, and help remediate students who've got learning loss.

Incentives matter to your question, Doug, around teaching and how faculty are rewarded, and certainly we've seen in this moment that the quality of teaching makes a difference for student outcomes, and there's a light that's been shown on that will have some change in how we think about core teaching.

DOUG LEDERMAN: That's where I wanted to go next, to dive a little more into the student outcome data that the report showed. To me those were pretty worrisome, especially the sense that the outcomes were worse presumably among the already most vulnerable students. Do you want to share any more about those sort of outcome data and what they say to you?

KRISTEN FOX: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, so one of the things we tracked is an increase in the percentage of faculty saying that drop-failure-withdrawal rates were increasing, where almost 40 percent at two-year institutions, both for student drop rates and failure rates, and then just over a quarter of faculty at four-year institutions saying that that rate was increasing.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Much more than who said it decreased.

KRISTEN FOX: Exactly. Whereas only it's about 10 percent said it decreased. So that is really concerning and that's, you know, reflective of the conversations that we're having with faculty at institutions.

And what we're hearing is that they are working hard to engage students, but students are overwhelmed, so those numbers are higher at two-year institutions, they're higher at institutions where students are at greater rates of Pell eligibility, which is a proxy for income, obviously. And so what we are seeing is that barriers include work, right? I've lost income. I need to work. When we look at New America put out a perspective on the student experience just a few weeks ago that corroborates what we've heard from faculty, right, which is that it's about needing to work. It's about need to balance my family. And it's also uncertainty from the pandemic about the job market, etc., and with that [UNCLEAR] and my education will be.

And we particularly, when we look at the student perspective, you see some of those doubts about the value of education in particular from, you know, African American students. So I think that's really concerning and that's a place where we want to shine a light on the problems that we as the field need to solve for, especially when it comes to these introductory level courses.

DOUG LEDERMAN: And your organization broadly, your network sort of focuses on particularly those vulnerable students who it seems, as is usually the case when things get hard, is they get hurt more. And so what is your sense of building off the data in the report but also what you're hearing more generally, both explanations for the increased or worsening outcomes for them, and especially, obviously since we're trying here in a podcast like this to help people figure out what to do, what do we do about it?

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Yeah, that's a great question. Our network does focus on these populations and we've done a lot of work to talk to these students. We recently released a report, you know, where we spoke to marginalized students only. You know, sometimes we do studies that are looking at all students and it's hard to tease out the voices of the marginalized and minority populations.

So we spoke to them, and we didn't just have them answer questions, but instead sat with them for two hours and did focus groups to really get into the nuance and the details of what they were going through. And we found that 90 percent of them were struggling with online learning. They were like, this is really hard for me. I'm not thriving in this environment, which I think very much aligns with what we're seeing in Time for Class 3.

I would like to highlight, though, that 65 percent of them showed appreciation for their faculty, right? You know sometimes we get into these conversations and it's like we think a student vs. faculty kind of a

situation. That's not what we're hearing at all. I think, you know, we're in a really tough spot in general and I think our students understand that the faculty are really doing the best that they can, and it's not hard because of them, you know.

One of the things that they ask for was for faculty to be better prepared and to be better trained. Our students are recognizing the importance of training for faculty. And they realize the faculty can only do so much.

You know, to speak to this part in the report about students feeling overwhelmed, the one thing that students are requesting is that faculty would be more understanding and flexible with requirements. So it's a little bit of two-part here. You know, it's, yes, we're feeling overwhelmed and there's a lot going on in our life. And the other part that we haven't really addressed is and we need you to be flexible with us so that we can continue our education. And so I think that would be a great conversation that we can have at some point about, you know, about how faculty can support students to help them to continue on.

There are a lot of concerns that have come among students around mental health issues and mental health challenges, and that was also echoed in the report. and I think that's been a key factor for students not being able to persist.

And then another thing that students have mentioned that would be helpful for them is consistency in how the virtual environment is being administered. A lot of our students talk about how each course is so different, and the platforms are different, and the tools are different, and everything is different, and each faculty member is doing the best they can to create this really incredible opportunity, but may not consider that if you're in four or five different courses, then it can be really hard to keep up with, you know, where to go for assignments and what to complete.

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Again, talking with Kristen Fox of Tyton Partners and Jessica Rowland Williams of Every Learner Everywhere... So we saw on a couple of the points you raised, flexibility, we saw a bunch of institutions in the spring, and I think probably somewhat fewer in the fall, change their grading practices to go to pass-fail. And we also saw some institutions say we're not going to judge faculty, we're not going to assess faculty in the same way we normally do. I think there was a lot more of that in the spring and than in the fall. I'm curious, both of you, what flexibility looks like, because obviously any talk of changing standards, changing requirements, some people are going to view as automatically weakening and a lowering of quality, so I'm curious how you look at that balancing act and what does flexibility look like that doesn't result in a lowering of standards?

KRISTEN FOX: I talked to a community college instructor who cited real concern about equity at their campus, as well student as outcomes during the pandemic. And one of the things that he gave as a really specific example was that normally he gives three days to complete an assignment, now he gives five days, right, or extending that period of time once an assignment is given to understand, to accommodate again, unpredictable childcare, unpredictable work schedule. It existed prior in some ways, but now we're exacerbated. So that's one example.

Another, I think, really good example of how to not only provide flexibility but also to provide scaffolding in a digital environment for students that may not be used to is to give an assignment that is something like, Access to syllabus via the online course shell. Give me a summary of what the first assignments are, or submit your plan for, you know, how you're going to accommodate and fit learning into your life in this first month of the term, right, or something like that. So some ways to really both accommodate schedules that require flexibility as well as to embed into your assignment flow, right, an assignment that builds confidence, gets a good grade up front, right, and make sure that you know that the student knows what to do to be ready to learn, are two really practical examples.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Interesting. Jessica, thoughts from you?

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Yeah, those are great examples. And one that I heard recently from a group of students that I was talking with was one student said that their professor would regularly send mental health checks to the class to survey, to check in to see how they were doing. And it gave them the opportunity to let them know if there was something going on. I think that we intuitively that if a student needs an extension or has something going on that they're just going to raise their hand and say that. That's not always the case, particularly when you're talking about like first-generation students or poverty-affected students, or students of color. So just providing that opportunity and that space for the student to consider, you know, like, wow, this has been a really hard week for me, or, you know, my

grandmother's ill, and share some of that, also invites opportunity for students to request flexibility from their professor.

DOUG LEDERMAN: It's going to be really interesting. I think we certainly saw from various surveys and conversations faculty members having their eyes opened to their students as people, much more so than when they came in the door of the classroom and walked out 50 minutes later. Standardization is another area, and you didn't use that term exactly, but when you're talking about the differences a student having to navigate three or four different structures in a course, etc., the idea of standardization or centralization is another area that tends to get some faculty members kind of worked up. So how you think about the balancing act of trying to be student-centered sort of across instructors?

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: That's tricky. I think, you know, we have to listen to our students when they say that's what they need. And that's something that we've heard consistently and overwhelmingly from our students as a roadblock to their success. So I guess my inclination is, you know, if they're saying that's what they're struggling with to try to find a solution for it.

DOUG LEDERMAN: In a way, and even if it means a little less control for the faculty member. I mean, it's just maybe one of those times where that's necessary.

KRISTEN FOX: And I guess I would also say that having a consistent student's experience in terms of how an online course or a blended course is structured and what that experience is when you log in is different than taking away academic freedom. Those are two different things that we're talking about here. We talking about a user experience where, when I log in to one course, it's not a completely different experience and platform. And so that is something that goes back to infrastructure and common approach. And I think should be a goal for all institutions, in particular those across introductory courses and students who are beginning in their experience.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Going back to this question of sort of how things will likely have changed for the long term because of this moment, the question of whether we see meaningfully more online, blended, technology-enabled learning going forward. If we're going to see more use of technology in the classroom, how do we deal with the fact that that has historically not been great for academically less well prepared students, and how do you see those two things blending going forward? Jessica...

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: I feel like, one, let's not get amnesia and forget that learning in a

traditional classroom has also not served those populations particularly well. I think, you know, that we forget that the disparities existed before we introduced this technology, right? Like the technology alone is not the cause of the disparity, right? The disparities were already in place. But I think that if we take that lens off, you know, and we say like this is systemic, right, this is deeper than technology. There are deeper issues at play here, then I think we can use this as an opportunity to create systems of education that actually serve students well, right? And we cut all the excuses out and we say, okay, we're going to be introducing technology in the classrooms, right? Why don't we listen to our students, listen to our faculty, understand, you know, the reasons why there are gaps and there are inequities, and then actually try to create solutions for some of those things going forward?

DOUG LEDERMAN: Systemic change is hard in higher education, because we don't have a system, we have maybe an ecosystem. And so change typically happens at the instructor level, maybe at the department level, maybe at the institutional level. How do we drive that kind of systemic change in a nonsystem?

KRISTEN FOX: Great question. I think there's grassroots work, right, happening at the individual faculty level where we are seeing faculty, based on this experience, change how they are teaching and the tools that they are using based on the needs that they...

DOUG LEDERMAN: Because they're seeing students in need and responding.

KRISTEN FOX: Yeah. What we are also seeing is, right, provost and academic leaders who are saying we need to get course materials into the hands of our students more effectively. We need to make sure that whether they are print, digital, or otherwise, accessible, that students can use them, and we need to make sure that we have a more consistent experience, and that we not seeing students stop out of these courses at the rates that they have historically.

DOUG LEDERMAN: Jessica, any additional thoughts on that?

JESSICA ROWLAND WILLIAMS: Yeah, one thing that I'll add is what we know is that our institutions are becoming more and more diverse. That's the trend. And so I think that looking at the funding, like the money, follow the money sometimes, right? I mean, we're getting to the point where if institutions don't know how to serve these populations of students, then their bottom lines are going to begin to be impacted. And so that's one thing, right, so there's like the moral fact that the importance of supporting

these students for all types of moral reasons, but then there's also just some very practical additional reasons that you've got to figure it out for these students.

DOUG LEDERMAN: And if you believe like I have come to that a lot of times change doesn't happen. We don't change as humans mostly unless and until we have to. And, yes, we want to see people make changes for the right reasons, sometimes they make them out of necessity, and I think we are likely to see more need on the part of institutions, which hopefully will translate into more willingness to try new things.

I've been talking with Kristen Fox of Tyton Partners and Jessica Rowland Williams of Every Learner Everywhere. Thanks to both of you for sharing your insights.

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That's it for this episode of The Key. We'll be back again in the coming weeks with podcasts about early days of the Biden Administration and discussion of the digital divide in higher education, and a peek at the new feature from Inside Higher Ed, aimed at getting inside the heads of today's college and university learners.

Before we close, I wanted to say goodbye to a young man who the world lost way too soon this week. Andrew Nichols for senior director of Higher Education Research and Data Analytics at the Data Education Trust, a research and advocacy group here in DC. Before that, he worked at the Maryland Higher Education Commission and the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. In those roles and in his research and opinion writing and speaking, Drew marshaled data to underscore the prevalence of racial, socio-economic, and other inequity in higher education, and he was a forceful advocate for acknowledging and closing gaps in student access and attainment. He died last week two years after being diagnosed with cancer. I want to offer my condolences to those who knew and loved Drew, and to urge others to carry on the important work he championed. We'll miss you, Drew.

Until next time, I'm Doug Lederman and this is The Key.