

# 101 WACKY IDEAS

RECLAIMING A NATION  
OF PRE-GRADUATES

PROCESS & PERSONAS



# TALENT IS CRITICAL

Educational attainment is the biggest predictor of success for cities and metro areas today. The research is unassailable. The more educated a city's population, the more robust its economy will be. In fact, educational attainment explains 58 percent of any city's success, as measured by per capita income.

# THE TALENT DIVIDEND

In a move to increase the political and civic will to produce more college graduates and thereby help cities capture real economic gains, CEOs for Cities calculated the Talent Dividend. Increasing college attainment by one percentage point in each of the 51 largest metropolitan areas would be associated with an increase in personal income of \$124 billion per year for the nation.

With the support of the Lumina Foundation for Education and DeVry Inc., CEOs for Cities launched a 30-city Talent Dividend Tour in 2009 to present these findings to local urban leaders. One fact stood out: every metropolitan region has a large number of adults with some college, but no degree. Getting these adults to finish college -- we call them "pre-graduates" -- is a key strategy to achieve the Talent Dividend.

# WACKY IDEA SCORECARD

## HUMAN DESIGN CRITERIA

AFFORDABLE ACCESSIBLE PERSONAL ENGAGING REWARDING



## IMPLEMENTATION CRITERIA

MASS APPLICABILITY EASE OF EXECUTION FINANCIALLY VIABLE EASE OF COMMUNICATION



## WACKY ACCELERATOR

WOW! GAME-CHANGING! YIKES!

# PRE-GRADUATES

In order to develop strategies to get pre-graduates to complete a four-year degree, their special needs must be better understood. CEOs for Cities engaged KvJ & Company, a team of innovation advisors, lead by Katherine von Jan, that identify tomorrow's unsolved needs to help organizations link emerging and established trends to bold opportunities for growth, innovation and leadership.

The project had three parts. Ethnographic research, including participant journals, excursions and in-home interviews, was conducted by anthropologist Mike Youngblood and team with pre-graduates in Seattle, New York, Memphis and Chicago. What emerged were key insights into the journeys students take through school and the challenges they face. From the ethnographies, student personas were created, providing a foundation for ideation.

The second part involved interviews with experts across disciplines to bring a fresh perspective and thinking to higher education. This included seven innovator interviews and two college executive interviews. An ideation salon was held with six experts to discuss personas and brainstorm ideas.

The third element of the project involved further ideation within KvJ & Company through internal salons. To determine the top ten, ideas were organized into categories based on personas' needs and evaluated and prioritized using a scorecard of human design criteria, implementation criteria and the wacky accelerator (see left). The top ten ideas were built out to recognize potential revenue and costs associated with each idea.



Through expert interviews and multiple salons, hundreds of ideas were developed, evaluated and refined to reveal:

# 101 WACKY IDEAS

RECLAIMING A NATION  
OF PRE-GRADUATES

**PROCESS & PERSONAS**

The full list of 101 ideas can be found in the sister publication ***IDEAS***.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was made possible by the Lumina Foundation for Education. We are especially appreciative of our 12 pre-graduates who participated in our ethnographic research allowing us to understand their education experiences and lives. We would also like to thank innovation experts including Maria Aiolova, Dan Ariely, Noah Brier, Adele Falco, Meg Foye, Tony Hsieh, Mitchell Joaquim, Joel Podolny, Jason Rzepka, Denis Weil and higher education experts Charles Bantz and Sharon Thomas Parrott who participated in interviews and ideation salons. Additionally, we are thankful to Paula Allen-Meares, Charles Bantz, Luis Proenza, Shirley Raines, Mark Rosenberg, Wim Wiewel and Nancy Zimpher for being “critical friends” to the findings and recommendations. And a special thank you to Suzanne Walsh of the Lumina Foundation for her continued partnership in this work.



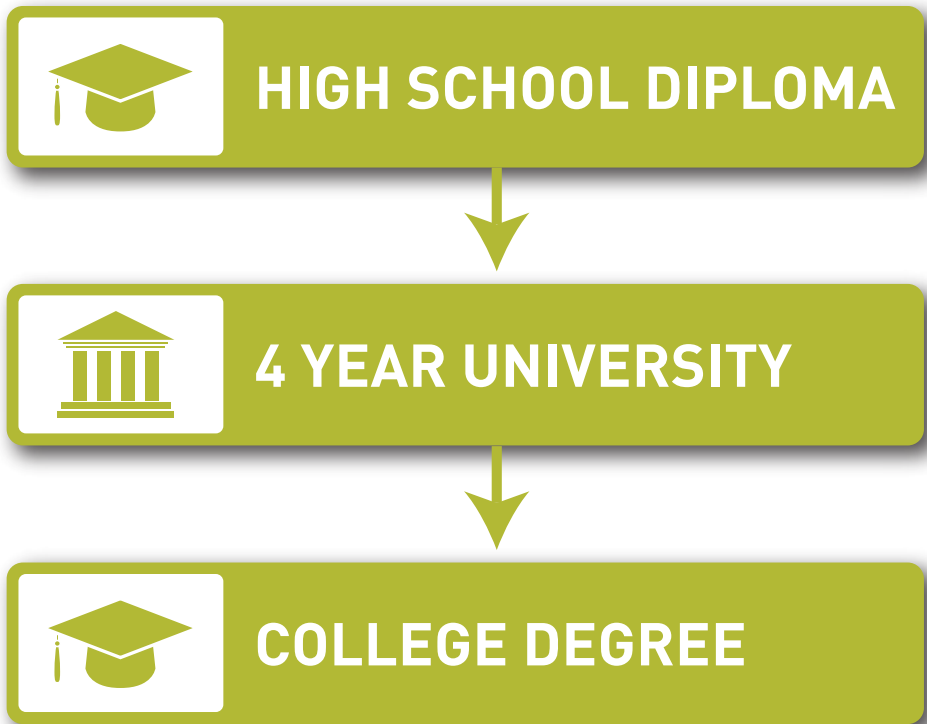
**ETHNOGRAPHIC  
RESEARCH  
FINDINGS**



# TYPICAL TINA, NOT OUR TARGET

Typical Tina attends college almost immediately after graduating high school and completes a degree within four years.

Most students understand this (or something similarly uncomplicated) to be the socially “expected” college journey.



# THE JOURNEY ISN'T ALWAYS SO SIMPLE

 **HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA**



 **ACADEMIC SUSPENSION**  
FOR ONE SEMESTER

 **MOCK TRIAL TEAM**  
FAR MORE ENGAGING THAN COURSES



 **NO SOCIAL REWARD**  
FOR STUDIOUSNESS


 **LOSES SCHOLARSHIPS**  
BECAUSE OF LOW GPA

 **DAUNTING SCHOLARSHIP**  
BUREAUCRACY

**GAP**

 **WRONG CULTURAL FIT**  
BUT EXCELLENT FINANCIAL AID

**GAP**  **CANNOT GET NEW**  
BECAUSE OF BAD CREDIT

 **JOB vs SCHOOL SCHEDULE**  
CONFLICTS LEAD TO SUSPENSION



## ROMANCE

FAR MORE ENGAGING THAN CLASSES

## ASHAMED TO SEEK COUNSEL

FROM HIGH ACHIEVING PARENTS AND SIBLINGS

# GAP



## NO FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

FROM PARENTS

SHIP

CREDIT

2021 1245 5651 3007

## INCREASED DEBT

FROM CREDIT CARDS



## SCHEDULING CONFLICTS

BETWEEN CLASSES AND FOOTBALL PRACTICE

Y LOANS

GPA

# 2.23

## GPA TOO LOW

FOR SCHOLARSHIPS



## DEFEATED & UNMOTIVATED

# GAP

# SAMPLE OBSERVED JOURNEYS



NOT MOTIVATED, COLLEGE DOES NOT SEEM RELEVANT



DIFFICULTY NAVIGATING AID



JUST TRYING TO GET INTO THE FINANCIAL SWEET SPOT



I DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET STARTED AGAIN



CANNOT PASS MATH



*THIS IS GOING TO BE MY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE, THIS FEELS LIKE ME*

# CHALLENGE AREAS

- **AFFORDABILITY IS BIG, BUT IT'S USUALLY NOT THE WHOLE SOLUTION**

We know that some pre-graduates cannot afford to go back to school. Based on ethnographic studies we also know that simply making it affordable won't ensure that they attain degrees. They also need other help.

- **COST IS ALMOST ALWAYS A RELATED ISSUE**

If it takes three tries to pass a class it's not just an academic problem, those credits are three times more expensive. If classes compete with work hours it's not just a scheduling problem, it's lost income.

- **TOO RICH FOR ASSISTANCE; TOO POOR TO PAY OUT OF POCKET (SEARCHING FOR THE FINANCIAL SWEET SPOT)**

The financial aid system leaves many feeling stuck between a rock and a hard place...and convinced that college is too much of a sacrifice for people in their financial bracket.

- **NO MATCH FOR THE IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION OF LIFE**

College has difficulty competing with the stimulation, the social rewards, or the real-time financial rewards of other life opportunities such as jobs, social life, partying, or parenthood.

- **WORK AND COLLEGE OUT OF SYNCH**

The value of learning is not always self-evident. On the long path to a degree, there is no interim evidence that college is "getting me somewhere."

- **COLLEGES HAVE NO SKIN IN THE GAME**

The long-term-value promise of college is often perceived to be just a lot of talk. Colleges get all the benefit of the students' tuition and students take all the risk; there's no reason to believe the college is "invested in my future success."

- **HOLES IN THE SUPPORT NET**

Colleges are often perceived to “not give a damn” about students. Students can feel completely adrift in college, with no effective moral and advisory support from the institution. The lucky ones get this support from friends or family members.

- **NO TRAINING IN HOW TO BE A STUDENT**

Students enter college with high-school level training in how to study. Most find this inadequate but have no clue what to do differently.

- **BEHAVIORAL IMMERSION IS OFTEN KEY**

Immersion in the social aspects of being a student is huge. The more immersed students are, the more “normal” the student lifestyle feels and the more social support they get for sticking with it.

- **STUMBLES CAN BE DEMORALIZING**

The challenges of college can be humiliating, especially when faced with high personal expectations or high-achieving family members and friends. Dropping out is often a short term face-saving strategy.

- **THE LONGER YOU’RE OUT, THE HARDER IT IS TO GO BACK**

Lives change and people get out of the groove. They develop new relationships, restructure their daily patterns, acquire new habits and goals. Every year people spend away from college makes it more difficult to readapt to the rigors of being a student.

- **NEEDS AND CHALLENGES CHANGE OVER TIME**

Few students face the same sets of needs and challenges at every point in their college journey. Pigeonholing students into specific areas of need can result in interventions that are no longer appropriate as the journey evolves.



# PRE-GRADUATE PERSONAS

“I’m not really sure what I should be studying, or if I even need the degree.”

# LOST LEONARD

## AMBITION

To find his true calling.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Lost Leonard has been in and out of college for ten years. He's tried several different colleges and several different majors, but never feels like he's getting much closer to the elusive degree. Sometimes, he's not even sure if it matters. When he's not in college, he's tinkering in one or another unfulfilling job – but he sees plenty of examples around him of people who've succeeded without college.

## LOST LEONARD'S PAIN

### COLLEGES HAVE NO SKIN IN THE GAME

Leonard often feels that the long-term-value proposition of college is a hoax. Colleges get all the benefit of the students' tuition and students take all the risk. Colleges aren't "invested in my future success."

### HIS SUPPORT NET HAS HOLES

When he's in college, Leonard often feels completely adrift, with no effective moral or advisory support from the institution. Some students get support from friends or family members – but Leonard can't rely on that. If the institution doesn't help him find his way, nothing will.

“I used to be so stellar mentally – why am I having so much trouble in college?”

# DISHEARTENED DAVE

## AMBITION

To believe in himself again.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Disheartened Dave was a super star in high school, but now he thinks that might have been his peak. Maybe he's lost his magic touch because college has left him feeling defeated and disheartened. When he started college his GPA quickly went from great to really bad. So bad that he's been on probation twice and has lost his academic scholarship. He's taken one required class three times and still can't pass, while he excels in extracurricular endeavors.

## DISHEARTENED DAVE'S PAIN

### **STUMBLES CAN BE DEMORALIZING**

The challenges of college can be humiliating, especially when faced with high personal expectations or high-achieving family and friends. For Dave, dropping out is partially a short term face-saving strategy, if he tells anyone at all.

### **A SQUARE PEG**

Dave can't afford to go back to school now, but two full scholarships didn't help the first couple times around. He is brilliant – he reads books like “The History of Calculus” for fun and taught himself Japanese – but college seems designed to make him fail.

“There are  
so many  
interesting  
things, why  
waste time  
and money on  
school?”

# AVID ANNE

## AMBITION

To experience all that life has to offer.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Avid Anne gave college a try, twice, but it just didn't capture her imagination. Although she's highly motivated and a natural learner, she finds the world outside the classroom far more interesting than the one inside. College strikes her as artificial and disconnected from the rest of life. She knows that college degrees have symbolic importance for employers, but that's not a good enough reason for her to go into debt.

## AVID ANNE'S PAIN

### **COLLEGE AND REAL LIFE ARE OUT OF SYNCH**

For Anne, college is a sterile laboratory closed off from the real world. She sees her professors as people without any real life experience, and sees most of the classes as devoid of any real life usefulness.

### **NOT ENOUGH IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION**

Anne's unsatisfying college experiences can't compete with the stimulation, the social rewards, or the real-time financial rewards of other life opportunities. On the long path to a degree, there is not even any interim evidence that college is worthwhile.

“I gave college  
my best shot. I  
just wasn't rich.”

# STRAPPED SUSAN

## AMBITION

To get on a better career track.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Strapped Susan did well in college. She enjoyed her classes, earned good grades, and felt like she was building a foundation for her future. But then the money ran out and she just couldn't afford to continue going. Now she's been out of college for the past two years and feels like her life has been put on hold – but she just can't seem to find the “financial sweet spot” that will make it possible for her to return.

## STRAPPED SUSAN'S PAIN

### TOO RICH AND TOO POOR

The financial aid system leaves Susan stuck between a rock and a hard place. She's too well paid to qualify for the financial aid she needs, but she's still in debt from her previous tuition and can't afford to pay more tuition out of pocket.

### FITTING SCHOOL IN IS COSTLY

When classes compete with work hours it's not just a scheduling problem, it's lost income. Susan has considered some less expensive online programs that she could do at night, but she's wary that they may be scams. And it's not just to get the degree– she believes she deserves a better learning experience.

“If I was going to go back to school, there would have to be two of me.”

# BUSY BETH

## AMBITION

To include learning in day-to-day life routine.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Busy Beth is in a predicament: she wants to finish her degree and has finally pulled together the financial means to make it possible, but she just can't figure out how to restructure her routines to make room for classes and homework. Compared to kids, job, housework, and other time-consuming things that she has to do, carving out time and discipline for college seems like a relatively low priority.

## BUSY BETH'S PAIN

### MIND THE GAP

Beth has learned that the longer you're out, the harder it is to go back. She's out of the college groove. Her life is organized around other responsibilities now. Every year she spends away from college makes it more difficult to re-adapt to student life.

### CULTURAL EXPATRIATE

Part of Beth's challenge is distance from the college context. It's difficult to reconcile her routines with the social and routine behavioral aspects of being a student. The more immersed students are, the more "normal" the student lifestyle feels and the more social support they get for sticking with it. Others feel alienated or simply foreign.

# PRE-GRADUATE PERSONAS

These personas reveal consistent themes for developing powerful solutions that meet the needs of high-potential pre-graduates.

## LOST LEONARD

Wants to find his true calling.

## DISHEARTENED DAVE

Wants to believe in himself again.

## AVID ANNE

Wants to experience all that life has to offer.

## STRAPPED SUSAN

Wants to get on a better career track.

## BUSY BETH

Wants to include learning in day-to-day life routine.

# HUMAN DESIGN CRITERIA

These are guidelines for designing, evaluating and implementing wacky ideas for reinventing college. Ideas must be:

## AFFORDABLE

Help students anticipate, understand, and meet the financial requirements of entering and completing college.

## ACCESSIBLE

Help students access courses, information, resources and feedback (ongoing validation) critical to the successful completion of their degree.

## PERSONAL

Recognize the needs and interests of students as individuals rather than a “one size fits all” approach.

## ENGAGING

Capture students’ interest and enthusiasm in coursework and activities that support completion of their degree.

## REWARDING

Help demonstrate to students and society that the effort and expense of college is “worth it” in the end and in between.



# EXPERT FINDINGS

we asked our  
experts to get  
wacky

“Universities should redefine their competitive space. What business are they actually in? What is it they can democratize and make insatiable?”



## DENIS WEIL

VP, Innovation & Concept  
Development McDonald's

Denis Weil, Vice President, Innovation and Concept Development, for the McDonald's Corporation, likes to push the boundaries of linking design with business.

Denis is a guest lecturer at the Institute of Design (ID), Illinois Institute of Technology, on the topic of "Business Prototyping" and holds a Master's degree in Design Planning from ID. Prior to joining McDonald's in 2001, Denis spent 12 years in Product Development and Brand Management in Packaged goods and E-commerce businesses.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Democratize the learning and credentials so they are accessible to anyone who wants to get a standard, quality education
- Apply the lessons of convenience to education: how can students get in, get out and get what they need?
- The system must recognize and move a super star through the process when they are ready, not when the institution is ready (on their imposed timeframe)
- Broaden the definition of education away from a degree as a revenue generator towards learning as a revenue generator
- "The Bun is the carrier" at McDonald's; there are only 5 products that are standard worldwide – you need a framework for freedom
- "The custom, local experience is not watered down, it's dialed up"

## BIG IDEAS

- Shoulder to shoulder training– give students the opportunity to work together to solve real-world problems with real companies
- Interviews for development– consistent feedback and an understanding of the direction you're headed in even if you're not ready to move to the next level (there's gratification in knowing where you're at)
- Apply the military model to education– improve preparation and understanding of roles before thrust into the real world
- Specialize and franchise your best programs, while allowing some elements to be customized

“Professors are police that force people to study. But, learning should be a fun, social activity that is motivating and mandatory.”



## DAN ARIELY

Professor of Behavioral Economics at Duke University

Formerly the Alfred P. Sloan Professor of Behavioral Economics at MIT Sloan School of Management, he is a professor of marketing with no training in economics, considered to be one of the leading behavioral economists. Ariely is the author of *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions*. When asked whether really understanding one's irrational behaviors could make a person's life worse, Ariely responded that there could be a short term cost, but that there would also likely be long-term benefits.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Universities prefer larger classes for cost savings but smaller classes to deliver a better educational experience
- Professors often police rather than teach students to ensure that they study – the focus has been taken off of learning
- Education should be designed around materials and motivation: give students the materials they need to learn and valid reasons to study beyond degree attainment
- Studying is more productive in a social environment

## BIG IDEAS

- Freshman seminars with coaches– keep classes larger to save money but ensure that every student has an older student mentor who helps them adjust to college and navigate the system
- Position studying as a social activity– combined with other gratifying activities to rebrand the experience for students
- Schedule study time as part of course work– forces people to make time in their busy schedules to study

“Universities  
could cut costs  
and deliver a  
better education  
by becoming  
specialists.”



## JOEL PODOLNY

Dean & VP of Apple University

Former dean of Yale University's business school, Joel Podolny is currently the vice president and dean of Apple University. Podolny is a widely-cited expert on how individuals and firms use social status to gain power. His resumé shows 11 "A" hits from 1990-2008 — including five years as a full-time administrator — plus an academic book and a co-authored textbook.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Universities have an opportunity to cut costs by sharing resources across departments rather than disciplines
- All universities feel like they need to “offer everything” – there is a lot less specialization than one would expect
- Professors carve out niches within their field and teach students with the intent to cultivate “mini me’s”
- Tenured faculty simply “don’t get their students” because they don’t have the career students are trying to pursue
- Interdisciplinary mingling is not encouraged by professors (e.g. arts and sciences professors do not like the idea of their students taking business classes)
- “University education is designed for faculty and not the students;” engaged faculty members try to bridge gaps, but for many it’s not a priority

## BIG IDEAS

- Universities as specialists – by focusing resources around core strengths and top programs, universities can package and syndicate content to other schools while cutting costs
- Design education around cause-centric experiences that engage students and enable them to solve real-world problems (i.e. environment, globalization)

“People want to be seen as the geniuses that they are, and universities should focus on their core emotional needs.”



## MEG FOYE

Deputy Editor Seventeen Magazine

Meghann Foye has been deputy editor at Seventeen for two years, top-editing the magazine's health, real life, and buzz/trend features, and working with the web team to coordinate multi-platform campaigns, such as Seventeen's Body Peace Project, college-life "Freshman 15" program, and New Body, New You: All Access, celebrity trainer program. Previously, Meghann was executive editor Womans-Day.com, senior editor at For Me Magazine, which she helped to launch, and also held print and online positions at Woman's Day and Elle.com.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Universities have an opportunity to leverage social media platforms like Facebook and MySpace to target students through key word searches
- Replacing credits with a points system would help reposition learning as a game and ultimately be more rewarding
- Build consistent feedback and diverse opinions into course learning in the form of a career bar or panel to help students connect with passions and strengths
- Failure can be disabling and humiliating for students but universities should embrace failure as an opportunity to learn and develop courses to support that idea
- People want to be seen as the geniuses that they are and universities should focus on their core emotional needs
- The admissions process could be more engaging if students submit their business models and ideas for growth instead of selling their existing accomplishments to the university

## BIG IDEAS

- Develop the Genius/Failure bar on campus – rewards students for making mistakes and working together to learn from them
- Online program with a coach – time management tool to help students organize tasks and the time they need to get them done
- Create a course on failure – course material features stories of people who attribute their success to their failure
- University endorsed community platform (Learn.gov) – social media supported platform that caters to every student and makes learning as easy as creating a Facebook profile; universities are incentivized to participate and develop content

“We should apply mentoring and staged learning—like karate – to the education experience.”



## ADELE FALCO

Solution Architect Research in Motion (RIM)

Adele Falco is Solution Architect with Research in Motion (RIM), makers of the BlackBerry smartphone. She works with BlackBerry enterprise customers in planning and designing mobile solutions for their organizations. Previously, she was a consultant in the media and publishing industries creating automated content management systems. Formerly the Associate Director of Publishing Technology for BMG, she also co-founded the technology consulting firm, Rampart Systems, focused on web publishing.

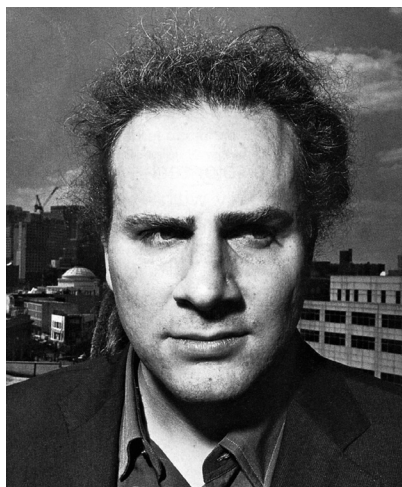
## KEY INSIGHTS

- People who are fitting college into their schedule would benefit from someone helping them to organize their time
- The time constraints of university learning don't match up with real life; if you could control the dial and the pace, learning would be more accessible; "I don't blow the course if I have to temporarily stop"
- "For people who work at a job that is not fulfilling, the idea of coming home and spending more time at a computer is not thrilling"
- Fraternity does not exist for the adult student
- The current financial model for universities to collect payment for courses upfront creates the perception that universities are "vested in failure"

## BIG IDEAS

- Create cohort groups by combining people from various life stages who will support each other and increase fraternity and a student's opportunity to network
- University incubator – a professor moderates a group of students with varying skills to conceive solutions to problems and create opportunities for everyone on campus to be involved
- Isolate interest or passion fraternity groups for adult learners
- Karate Model – students are mentored and rewarded through every stage of learning
- Offer certifications without taking a class if students learn on their own time
- Learning portfolio – students hold onto the points they've accumulated whether they pass or fail a course

“There’s a lack of creativity and innovation in education. Society doesn’t value things like skateboarding for all its indirectly critical potential.”



## MITCHELL JOAQUIM

Co-Founder Terreform 1

Mitchell earned a Ph.D at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MAUD Harvard University, M.Arch. Columbia University, BPS SUNY at Buffalo with Honors. He is a Co-Founder of Terrefuge and Terreform 1. Currently faculty at Columbia University and Parsons, formerly an architect at Gehry Partners, and Pei Cobb Freed, he has been awarded the Moshe Safdie Research Fellowship, and the Martin Family Society Fellow for Sustainability. He won the History Channel/ Infiniti Award for the City of the Future, NY and Time Magazine Best Invention of the Year 2007. His project, Fab Tree Hab, has been exhibited at MoMA, and was selected by Wired magazine for “The 2008 Smart List: 15 People the Next President Should Listen To.” Rolling Stone magazine honored Mitchell in “The 100 People Who Are Changing America.”

## KEY INSIGHTS

- “College should be selfish” – the educational experience should be designed around the needs of the student
- Businesses should create opportunities and incentives for part-time employees without a degree to go back to school
- Society doesn’t value karate or skateboarding and universities could change this by broadening the scope of learning to include the artistry and skills of trade professions
- There’s a lack of creativity and innovation in education and the pervasive idea that students must “get through this door to get to another door”
- College has to help people “do what they’re busy doing” and have a real world purpose
- Shift the model of education from being to doing through practical application and experience

## BIG IDEAS

- Eat your ice cream first model – take the courses that excite you first, followed by the more general courses through the lens of your major
- Students as entrepreneurs – students work together to solve a particular problem and apply the solution to the real world
- Career Discovery Camp (Terreform 1) – students try on a career in an immersive and accelerated environment to find out if a field is right for them

“There’s an opportunity to leverage technology to keep track of high risk students.”



## NOAH BRIER

Head of Strategy Barbarian Group

A self-described tinkerer, he feeds his online-strategy work for clients including GE and Dove by creating, on his own time, compelling projects at the intersection of social media, digital advertising, and anthropology. One is Brand Tags, a Web site that flashes a logo and asks consumers to submit the first word that comes to mind. The answers go into a tag cloud that so far has 1.6 million words related to 900 brands.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Universities should combine course-work with social media applications like Facebook and Twitter
- Students perceive going back to college as an increasingly bigger task the longer they're out and universities need to find a way for it to stay small
- If students could erase failure and go back to school with a clean slate it would encourage more people to finish their degrees

## BIG IDEAS

- Leverage technology to create applications that help students manage their time and connect with cohorts and mentors
- iPhone Happiness Application – professors receive text message alerts about students when they are unhappy or at risk of failure
- Schedule study time as a mandatory part of course work and assign mentors to help students manage their time
- Erase failure – wipe the slate clean for returning students who failed courses their first time around in college

“Students should be rewarded for their collaboration and participation, not just their academic achievements.”



## MARIA AILOVA

Co-Founder Terreform 1

Co-founder Terreform 1 and founder of Compost Art Center, Maria is involved in the design and construction of affordable and dynamic space. Maria has been a critic at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard, Rhode Island School of Design and Boston Architectural Center, Washington University and City University of New York.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- The word college is restrictive – learning is for everyone, but not necessarily college
- The admissions process needs to be flipped to “who can we take in” from “who can we leave out”
- Apprenticeship should be an alternative to coursework giving students the option to work alongside an expert in the field to receive certification

## BIG IDEAS

- Peer to peer projects – students are matched based on complimentary strengths and weaknesses to support and learn from each other
- Learning vacations – employees take a sabbatical from their jobs to participate in short-term immersive learning and potentially discover a new area of interest

“There are societal benefits to mass college attainment. It’s not just about getting people over the finish line.”



## SHARON THOMAS PARROTT

SVP DeVry Inc.

Ms. Thomas Parrott joined DeVry Inc. in 1982 after several years as an officer in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Student Financial Assistance. She served DeVry in several student finance positions and later assumed responsibility for corporate communications and government and public relations. In her current position, she is responsible for implementing and maintaining DeVry's corporate and government compliance program. She is also responsible for managing relations with key external audiences, including government officials, education policymakers and legislators.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Colleges should match students to programs based on their passion and aptitude not on what they have to offer
- It is the responsibility of universities to brand and give status to a different kind of learning
- Colleges should apply the sports recruiting mentality to recruit pre-graduates
- Colleges have to reset the model so that businesses think it's a good thing for employees to leave to devote time to degree completion
- Colleges are too structured around existing jobs and that standardization doesn't allow for jobs that don't exist yet

## BIG IDEAS

- Develop a career interest/entrance test to streamline the admissions process and match students to universities
- Learning collection – offer students credit for experiential learning
- Army reserve model – intense week of course work/training for students who don't have the time to devote to college full-time
- Democratize career discovery – give everyone a chance to find out how to best apply their talent

“It’s critical that universities put the student experience at the center and develop programs that best support them.”



## CHARLES BANTZ

Chancellor of Indiana University  
Purdue University Indianapolis

Charles R. Bantz became the fourth chancellor of IUPUI in 2003. Prior to coming to IUPUI, he served as Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at Wayne State University in Detroit. Under his leadership, IUPUI has experienced remarkable expansion, including growth in research funding, dramatically improved graduation rates, and awards for civic engagement and the Principles of Undergraduate Study. New facilities include three buildings for research, two buildings for instruction, an 800-bed student housing complex, and the new Campus Center, a focus of student life.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Adult learners just need to be taking a couple of courses to be engaged and an idea like pop up classrooms allows them to do that
- The on campus Failure Lab captures the “cohort effect” by giving students the opportunity to “survive together”
- Students are more and more accustomed to doing things on their own and the learning dashboard gives them the tools to do just that
- IUPUI’s successful “Road Scholar” program gives students with a GPA of 3.75 and over free parking for a semester
- Campuses have a great deal of room to lower the barriers for entry through the admissions process for returning students

## BIG IDEAS

- Specialization and franchising of a university’s best programs has the greatest chance to succeed if schools leverage their assets and core strengths to deliver more value to students
- Research feedback is a critical part of testing and implementing an idea because it forces continuous evaluation and improvement
- Find ways to understand the student experience around a particular challenge and design programs that support that experience

“Students should design what they need for themselves.”



## JASON RZEPKA

VP Public Affairs MTV

A driven, strategic public affairs leader with polished partnership, new media, communications and relationship-building skills, engaging and educating young adults to take action on the biggest challenges facing their generation. Jason uses MTV's superpowers for good. He was formerly head of communications for the Pop!Tech Institute, a renowned idea summit and innovation network. Pop!Tech's core mission is to accelerate the positive impact of world-changing people and ideas.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Franchising your core strengths is game-changing— and a logistical and political challenge
- MTVU's credit card program is a successful microcosm of the Membership Rewards idea, offering network-exclusive benefits to students and incentivizing performance— and it works

## BIG IDEAS

- Solutions to improve affordability and the overall education process should come directly from the source – students who understand what they need better than anyone
- MTV is working with the Gates Foundation on a three-year initiative that includes a crowd-sourcing student challenge to design solutions for making college more affordable
- Leverage the MTV and MTVU challenge and existing project work to partner on the “Wacky Ideas” and build out relevant top 10 ideas

“Students are customers. What are they buying? Make their learning and journey of degree attainment a ‘wow’ experience in every way.”



## TONY HSIEH

CEO Zappos

Tony joined Zappos.com in 2000, and under his leadership, Zappos has grown gross merchandise sales from \$1.6M in 2000 to \$597M in 2006. Tony focuses on continuing to grow the business at a rapid pace while maintaining the culture and feel of a small company. For marketing, the company relies on return business and word of mouth, pouring the money that would pay for marketing and advertising into customer service instead. With the success of Zappos, Tony also recently launched a pay for content service for businesses.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Leveraging web 2.0 technology and meeting students where they already are is critical
- Make the experience life-altering when they get there; make every detail a “wow” experience
- For any of these the power is 10% idea and 90% execution; get the details right and be true to the mission and customer

## BIG IDEAS

- Think of colleges in the business of “changing the world;” they are delivering a platform for people to do that while they are there and beyond
- Transparency is critical for trust – Zappos uses Twitter for internal and external communications and doesn’t hide anything – it forces us to act in our customers best interest
- Ignore the competition; they are probably not doing anything interesting and they marginalize most talent by focusing on only one “kind” of talent
- Pay attention to and deliver the best service possible for the greatest number and diversity of customers; define offerings and models that “take care” of students
- In any of these efforts, focus not only on profit, but also the passion and purpose of the university; balance these 3 P’s



# TOP 10 WACKY IDEAS

# THE BEAUTY SCHOOL MODEL

Students clock hours when they can in a lab to test and utilize their new skills; students can work more or less whenever they want, but never fall behind if they log minimum hours (providing you meet paying client deadlines).

Students start with case study work, but transition to working on real 'clients' supervised by trained professionals or professors.

Companies outsource real work to these labs at low cost (the way people get cheap haircuts at beauty schools). Jobs may include customer service, accounting, design, market research and more.

Partner with larger firms that have call centers like JetBlue, Apple and Dell. Partner with IBM consulting, large accounting firms or major international research and polling companies.

Partner with other colleges locally to combine resources.

# CUT COSTS & GENERATE REVENUE

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Set up a student “call center”
- Recruit businesses as “clients”
- Staff project and team managers

## CUT COSTS

- Eliminate classes that can be provided via on the job learning and instruction
- Cut high-priced staff
- Partner with other colleges to combine resources

## GENERATE REVENUE

- Students earn (low) wages
- University earns a percentage of wages (to offset the upfront investment and student tuition)

# FRIENDLY (LOW-BARRIER) ADMISSIONS

Make it easier and feel less challenging to go back to school. And waive admissions fees while you're at it.

Admissions staff are the equivalent of the Wal-Mart "greeter" or a flight attendant. They welcome and help returning students through the vastly simplified admissions process.

Students prove they were once accepted to a four year degree program anywhere and they are admitted.

No transcripts are necessary unless students want credit for those courses. Full transcript portability is critical for those who want to continue from where they left off. Previous credits should be transferable without cost.

Also provide "entry courses" to let candidates "try on" the student lifestyle and get integrated without the hassle of admissions or applications. Admit them based on their course work not their application.

# CUT COSTS

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Restructure the admissions department
- Outsource fact-checking (did they indeed get accepted to a 4 year college at some point)
- Train students to be admissions “greeters”
- Develop “entry courses” for admission without “proof”

## CUT COSTS

- Eliminate 95% of admissions department (no review of any admissions forms, 100% portability from accredited 4 year program)

## GENERATE REVENUE

- Students pay low-price (equal to admissions fee) for fact-check and transcript portability; university earns a percentage on each transaction
- Earn more from “entry courses” where students pay more than price of admissions by taking an approved continuing education-style course

# COMPETITION REALITY SERIES

Like America's Next Top Model or Trump's Apprentice, create a reality show-style competition for students to apply their learning locally on campus, in their city and in business.

This is not just a reality show – the point is not stardom, rather this is a model for structuring college experiences as a game.

Students compete in real life activities in alignment with their degree and coursework. They win jobs, internships, college credit or college payment.

Incoming classes split into teams of cohorts to compete as they earn their degrees to minimize quitting or failing.

The “show” follows students competing as they go through their program, paid by sponsors or advertisers. They can also be packaged as additional future online courses.

# GENERATE REVENUE AND CUT TUITION

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Structure reality show (casting, direction and process)
- Reality show production (director, film, lighting, sound, editing and other production)
- Establish media partnership or website for broadcast
- Establish and manage partnerships with sponsors
- Packaging content as online courses

## CUT COSTS

- Eliminate classes and campus space and replace them with real world workplaces and classrooms
- Cut staff to 'coaching' hours versus full-time; use real world mentors versus professional professors

## GENERATE REVENUE

- Advertising revenue
- Sponsorships (e.g. GE sponsors an environmental degree competition)
- Package and sell or syndicate future online course content

# MEMBERSHIP REWARDS PROGRAM

Students achieve academic milestones and receive rewards from the campus or city.

Some rewards are fun and frivolous like food, airline tickets, electronics, concert tickets and more. These can be donated via corporate sponsors.

Some rewards are academic or career-focused like exclusive internships, books and learning journeys.

Some are life management rewards like childcare, Zipcar, parking spots, car tune-ups, dry cleaning and errand runners.

Top students can earn some cash back (financial reward) or the possibility of taking as many classes as they want for a fixed fee to expedite their completion.

Pay for this by cutting the cost of programs irrelevant to non-traditional students like sports teams.

# CUT PROGRAMS TO FUND BETTER ONES

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Recruit sponsors (corporate sponsors, local businesses; American Express rewards)
- Develop an electronic tracking system to collect, manage and obtain rewards

## CUT COSTS

- Eliminate programs of lesser or no value to non-traditional students like sports teams

## GENERATE REVENUE

- Minor fees for redeeming rewards

# SPECIALIZE & FRANCHISE YOUR MOJO

This is a call for smarter allocation of resources to consolidate and package expertise. Universities don't need to have a college for every focus.

Eliminate college programs that are not within the school's core expertise, strengths or recognition.

Focus on your best programs and package, brand and franchise them to other universities.

Obtain and offer franchised classes from other universities at lower cost, supplementing or replacing your own proprietary program investment for those programs that are not core.

The new motto is: "it's easier, cheaper and sexier to do what you know you can do well." Work your "mojo." It's more expensive and harder to try to do those things that you are not so good at because you think you are supposed to.

# CUT COSTS AND GENERATE REVENUE

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Evaluate strength of programs
- Package top programs into franchised courses and materials
- Market these courses to other universities
- Search for and acquire franchised courses in programs that are weakest at your university (create an alliance with complimentary university)

## CUT COSTS

- Eliminate weak degree programs or colleges within your university (offer them via franchised programs)
- Eliminate programs with minimal popularity (offer these classes via franchised programs)
- Cut staff and infrastructure that support those programs

## GENERATE REVENUE

- Deliver your top programs to more students globally
- Sell or lease real estate from programs cut

# CAREER DISCOVERY CAMP

Rethink the freshman year and restructure it to enable students to try on careers with real employers to see if it is their true calling.

Partner with firms to provide these atypical internships. Students must actually develop “portfolio work.” Career discovery is designed to find and release their inner rock star.

This process prevents people from investing time and money in courses and a career they might hate.

An eight month school year could accommodate six Career Camps for completion in the first year, with relevant course work and discussion groups in the evening.

Career discovery can be supported in the virtual world to allow students to continue networking and training, but does not replace real in-person experience.

Career discovery clearly requires greater institutional attentiveness to individual strengths and interests.

# CUT COSTS AND FRESHMAN TUITION

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Partner with a significant number of companies locally (and around the globe)
- Develop a career discovery tracking and matchmaking system
- Adopt a 'headhunter' or placement model for freshman year
- Train local mentors or Teaching Assistants to be career coaches (in exchange for course classes or credit)

## CUT COSTS

- Eliminate most freshman year content, courses and services (replaced by online content to support the discovery process and a Facebook-like community of students with occasional meet ups)
- Cut staff (fewer freshman courses = fewer professors needed)

## GENERATE REVENUE

- Earn revenue for those students' work (or a percentage thereof) and apply those wages to reduce tuition

# LEARNING DASHBOARD

Create a beautiful, simple learning portal accessible through a computer, Kindle or PDA.

Provide curriculum, classes, content and advice from students, alumni, business people and professors including “trade secrets” to help each other navigate the system.

A matchmaker algorithm matches students with the right cohorts, classes, professors and the right university for the right reasons. Also allows students to try some online courses for free.

Promote formal or informal study group meet ups, pop-up classrooms and other activities.

Students manage their personal advisory board of alumni, professors, students and real world professionals, as well as participate in national communities of interest.

Visualize milestones: “you have just two more credits to achieve Sophomore status.”

# CHARGE LESS, EARN MORE

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Design, develop and launch the dashboard

## CUT COSTS

- Marginally cut the cost of “hand-holding” and other administrative services, including admissions

## GENERATE REVENUE

- More students take more courses
- More students stay in and complete a degree
- More students stay on for life-long learning (multiple degrees)
- Increasing the number of students in school means costs amortize over more people and cost of tuition can be cut while earning more

# CAUSE CENTRIC EXPERIENCE

Create the college experience and degree paths around real world causes. Themes may include environmentalism, globalization, mobility, safety, family or other things students simply care about.

The cause is the “lens” for every experience at the university including curriculum, classes, activities and a thesis.

Enable students, mentors and activists to meet, support each other and make recommendations for classes, curriculum, internships and portfolio work.

Tap into communities of interest related to specific challenges and causes. Create solutions and content to publish together.

Create a “clubhouse” or “embassy” for each cause in the way that fraternities have frat houses.

# BANK ON ROI AND VISIBILITY

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Partner with companies and foundations
- Hire curriculum advisors
- Create curriculum with students to solve problems
- Invest in (or find companies) to invest in solutions
- Visible platform to promote students and solutions

## CUT COSTS

- Self-service model transfers work from staff to students

## GENERATE REVENUE

- Generate and syndicate content and courses
- Create and patent prototypes
- Invest in and share IP for market development



# FAILURE LAB

It's good to fail in the Failure Lab! Re-brand failure as a great learning experience. Students explore and understand past failures, experiment and intentionally take "risky" courses they are likely to fail, like an English major taking quantum physics or an art student taking statistics. This is a safe-for-failure environment.

All students should be required to take Failure Lab for a semester during their tenure at the university. The earlier the better.

Failure Lab could be sponsored or branded by innovative companies like 3M that appreciate failure for its creative advantage in the surprises.

Create the "redemption course" for people who have failed classes to understand what they could have done differently. They can provide insight for future students on how to prepare for successful completion of that course.

# PREVENT DEFEAT

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Partner with innovative companies and foundations
- Develop failure curriculum
- Develop physical failure lab
- Develop specific courses on failure

## CUT COSTS

- Doesn't cut costs for the university, but enables students to avoid paying multiple times for the same challenging course

## GENERATE REVENUE

- Generate and syndicate failure content and courses

# 1 POP-UP CLASSROOMS

Learning happens. It happens wherever and whenever people are open to it. Decentralized learning makes it easily accessible and exciting. Ad hoc classrooms can pop up in movie theaters in off hours, empty lots, break rooms at grocery stores, laundry rooms, at Starbucks, on treadmills at gyms, at child care centers, on roof tops, parks, in abandoned storefronts and more.

The enticing business model is to pay by the class, as you go, rather than by the semester. Use platforms like iTunes to sell lessons, like selling songs versus albums.

Classes can be provided via “jukeboxes” playing video lectures where people already are with free time on their hands.

Classes can pop-up when the right number of the right students seem to be in close proximity. GPS technology with some logic about profiles can identify opportunities that make sense for a pop-up classroom to appear and engage students.

# GENERATE REVENUE EVERYWHERE

## UPFRONT INVESTMENT

- Develop online content (TED-talk like lectures)
- Develop online testing
- Develop relationships with businesses and cities for locations
- Develop a mobile unit or education “jukebox” to broadcast classes
- Develop a key card to recognize and track student activities
- Develop awareness of locations (“meet ups” are critical)

## CUT COSTS

- Cut cost of real-estate
- Cut cost of teaching and lecturing

## GENERATE REVENUE

- Generate and syndicate content and courses
- Pay-by-the-class makes classes accessible to more people and increases revenue, even hobbyists
- Provide courses through employers in workplaces
- Right place, right time classes create more value and generate more revenue

# COLLABORATORS



Lumina Foundation for Education is committed to enrolling and graduating more students from college — especially low-income students, students of color, first-generation students and adult learners. Our goal is to increase the percentage of Americans who hold high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina pursues this goal in three ways: by identifying and supporting effective practice, through public policy advocacy, and by using our communications and convening power to build public will for change.

*The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of Lumina Foundation for Education, its officers or employees.*

## CEOs FOR CITIES

CEOs for Cities is a national cross-sector network of urban leaders from the civic, business, academic and philanthropic sectors dedicated to building and sustaining the next generation of great American cities.

We support the development of next generation cities by:

- Identifying first-look trends and circumstances that represent the best opportunities for cities and the people who live in them to succeed
- Connecting urban leaders to powerful ideas and each other
- Articulating the value to cities and the nation of improving performance on key urban success measures
- Mobilizing new urban activists to execute real change in cities
- Telling powerful stories about the potential of cities to solve our most pressing problems

CEOs for Cities works with its network partners to develop great cities that excel in the areas most critical to urban success: talent, connections, distinctiveness and innovation.

## KvJ & Company

KvJ & Company helps companies link emerging and established trends to bold opportunities for growth, innovation and leadership. Our work identifying tomorrow's unsolved needs has led companies to reset strategic priorities, reinvent business models, develop new products and solutions, revise marketing and sales approaches, and rethink organizational models.

Taking a holistic approach to innovation KvJ & Company reveals opportunities that matter. Our team adapts fluidly to provide the most value to organizations given the tough demands of the marketplace. Our greatest concern is enabling our clients to create their smartest and healthiest business for today and tomorrow.

# PROJECT LEADS

## CEOs for CITIES

### **Carol Coletta**

*President and Chief Executive Officer*

Carol Coletta is President and CEO of CEOs for Cities and host and producer of the nationally syndicated public radio show Smart City [www.smartcityradio.com](http://www.smartcityradio.com).

Previously, she served as president of Coletta & Company in Memphis. In addition, she served as executive director of the Mayors' Institute on City Design, a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, U.S. Conference of Mayors and American Architectural Foundation.

Carol was a Knight Fellow in Community Building for 2003 at the University of Miami School of Architecture. She is a highly sought after speaker on the success formula for cities and creative communities and is frequently interviewed as an expert on urban issues by national media.

In 2008 she was named one of the world's 50 most important urban experts by a leading European think tank. Most recently, she was named the recipient of the Lamda Alpha International 2009 International Journalism Award for her work with CEOs for Cities and Smart City, and as one of the top 50 urban thinkers of all time by readers of [PLANetizen.com](http://PLANetizen.com).

## **KvJ & Company**

### **Katherine von Jan**

*Managing Partner and Chief Creative Officer*

An innovation advisor with over 15 years experience and travel to more than 40 countries, Katherine blends seasoned industry perspective and cultural insight with a fresh outlook on uncovering new and meaningful opportunities. Her work for her clients is wide-ranging and has

delved deep into the future of cities, energy, healthcare, media, mobility, motherhood, plastic, retail, work and more. Katherine is an avid speaker on culture, and her views have been shared on the BBC, MSNBC, NPR, O Magazine, Wired Magazine and more. In addition, she is a guest lecturer at universities including Columbia, Harvard and MIT. She is currently focused on developing opportunities in higher education, and writing her book describing the post-consumption customer.

### **Courtney Dubin**

*Innovative Strategist*

A cultural investigator and innovation consultant, Courtney Dubin specializes in revealing and maximizing unexpected relationships in the market place. Her professional experience spans over 10 years of growth strategy in interactive and traditional media working in London, Sydney, and New York City. She applies her unique perspective and insight across industries to produce meaningful impact including the recent launch of the FOX Business Network, advising major health-care providers on opportunities for reinvention in the emerging marketplace and developing Discovery Communication's Global Education Partnership to enhance elementary education in the classroom.

### **Mike Youngblood**

*Cultural Anthropologist*

Mike Youngblood is a cultural anthropologist who works at the intersection of ethnography and design. As a consultant, he studies human interaction with information, products, services, and environments in order to help organizations develop solutions that are more satisfying, usable, useful, and sustainable. His clients represent a broad range of industries, including financial services, transportation, education, social services, telecommunications, food and nutrition, and health-care. Mike holds a PhD in cultural anthropology from the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

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