

# Campus: Reboot and Redesign

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Imagine reoccupying a physical campus. It will be like trying to reboot the command module of Apollo 13, and you are [Ken Mattingly](#) (played by Gary Sinise in the movie). You are in the command module simulator on the ground. You have to decide what to turn on and in what sequence, without crashing the computer.

Everywhere teams of “Ken Mattinglys” are working on plans to reboot their campuses. Many have come to realize the campuses they have may not be the ones they need. All original design assumptions have been changed. They are now working with a new

design program suited for the [both/and world of physical and digital presence](#). This post is written for these teams.

Mattingly had a manual. He knew the amps drawn by each system and he was working on a single spacecraft. He knew how many astronauts he had to consider. You don’t have a manual. You don’t know how large the crew will be nor a time for splashdown. Academic administrators are considering a wide range of scenarios and [postponing](#) decisions as long as possible. Meanwhile, the expected number of on campus undergraduates is eroding. The uncertainties of timing and target make your challenge almost impossible.

## Scenarios

The work of Edward J. Maloney and Joshua Kim lays out [15 scenarios](#) focused on teaching and learning. UC Davis and others have published [draft plans](#) for ramping up on-campus research. [Purdue](#), [Brown](#) and many others are preparing to return to normal, albeit with enhanced health monitoring and infectious disease response programs. Even the most optimistic scenarios of “Back to Normal-Fall 2020” assume smaller incoming classes and fewer existing students returning. The only exceptions are those already in online programs. Most of the planning concepts start with assumptions that there will be fewer students on campus and more online programming than pre-pandemic levels.

An insightful [whitepaper](#) by Eliot Felix and his colleagues at Brightspot is a good starting point for everyone thinking about the post-COVID peak campus. There are links to relevant articles by other higher education experts and data on trends. Accelerating trends include the convergence of online and on-campus education. Decelerating trends include travel, particularly international. The piece concludes with recommendations including assessing how facilities are used and rethinking operations and staffing.

## Reboot

What do you turn on first? What do you leave turned off? These questions are valid if the start date is August 2020 or January 2021. Think of this as a much needed change in trajectory, an opportunity to [redesign campuses](#) for the realities of 21st century, rather than the traditions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I made 6 [recommendations](#) for the future of campuses in 2013, as I assessed the logical consequences of increased use of online learning.

- Build no net additional square feet
- Upgrade the best; get rid of the rest
- Manage space and time; re-think capacity
- Right-size the whole
- Take sustainable action
- Make campus matter

All are still valid. Managing space and time and rethinking capacity has been important for a long time. Now it is urgent. It is the first step for the teams of “Ken Mattinglys.”

### **Manage space and time; re-think capacity**

The need for social distancing requires a different set of metrics and different models of space management. The economics of the institution may be based on maximizing the number of on-campus students. Over at least the next academic year, the potential capacity of campus will be reduced. Residence hall potential capacity will be more than 50% less than pre-pandemic levels. Classroom and lab capacity will be lower still.

If enrollments are low enough, space will not be a constraint. If enrollments are high enough the changed metrics will create constraints. The answer lies in adding time to the equation. Expanding the classroom hours per week will increase potential capacity. Hybrid courses will offer the most significant opportunities. They combine online and on-campus synchronous sessions with asynchronous content. Any version will challenge pre-pandemic norms and ingrained management practices.

### **Make campus matter**

With so much of higher education available in digital and largely asynchronous forms, the justification for a campus must derive from something more than “we have always done it this way.” As the pandemic spread, instructors and administrators were forced to consider the pedagogical requirement of face-to-face classes. Many scrambled for digital alternatives, previously dismissed as substandard.

Some faculty members have found the advantages of teaching parts of their courses online. Other faculty members will not return to face-to-face teaching until vaccine protection is available. All have learned to teach with more intention. Many of their courses will not return to campus this academic year, and none will return unchanged.

Even at the most traditional institutions “on-campus time per degree” was already declining. The pandemic has dramatically accelerated this trend. This change in convention makes the support of

increasingly limited face-to-face time a strategic value, rather than an assumed byproduct of traditional campus life.

### **Sharing time and place**

There must be something significantly better about “live performance” and it needs to be more than “sense of place.” I believe it is a function of sharing time and place. Whether in the form of agenda driven or serendipitous conversation, “live” interactions among students and instructors have a bandwidth that exceeds current digital alternatives. This is a luxury, no longer to be taken for granted. To justify the expense of a campus, this luxury must be exploited to improve the value of the outcome, not simply to increase the price of admission.

The specifics of rethinking the campus will be unique for every institution, and none of it will be easy. Over time some campuses may see demand return for its residential college experience. For many others, the prospects are not rosy. Regardless of the setting, after all the layers of tradition and place are stripped away there is one irreducible condition – the campus is where students and scholars share time and place when ideas are at stake. Without this condition, the institutions would not have existed in the first place. Without this condition, there is no need for the physical campus.

*I began this post in late March as the magnitude of the threat to place-based higher education began to emerge. Since then I have had conversations with more than two dozen higher education colleagues across the country. Each added to my understanding of the challenges. I am grateful to all.*

*Michael Haggans*

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