



MHEC 7th Annual Policy Summit
Ready or Not Here They Come
Ensuring the College Success of All Students

Summary of Aligning Teaching, Information Gathering, and Learning to Promote Student Success

November 14-15, 2011, Iowa City, Iowa

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Mark Hudson of Dell, Inc., delivered this plenary session focused on how changes in the methodology of accessing information are influencing teaching and learning. Hudson addressed the ways in which new technologies have necessitated a variety of changes in the 21st Century classroom and contrasted those to the legacy that is the “traditional learning environment.” He then illustrated his point through a number of multi-media and collaborative (web 2.0) technologies that “wired” participants utilized during his presentation.

Hudson began by soliciting the participants to define 21st Century learning. Answers included descriptors such as: collaborative, problem-solving, experiential, active learning, video, and Wikipedia. Wired members were actually encouraged to post their responses to a “back channel” he created for the session (todaysmeet.com/mhec). Using these answers, Hudson argued for the betterment of the teaching and learning environment through a seamless integration of technology. Citing the skill sets promoted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Hudson argued that employers in the global economy are demanding innovative learning environments that produce students who are multi-faceted and adaptive.

The overwhelming message of Hudson’s presentation was that learning environments can no longer be static because the learners who participate in them are not. Various statistics presented during the presentation illustrate this point. Hudson noted that Project Tomorrow’s annual Speak Up Survey reported that nearly 50% of middle school and high school students said they carried some type of smart phone in late 2010, a nearly 47% increase from fall 2009. Hudson followed this by rhetorically questioning the audience, “What does it mean when everyone can access information by their phones?” He then highlighted four relevant and obvious implications for the teaching and learning environment with this type of access to technology, including the following: a) Information is accessed much faster; b) More information is accessible; c) The likelihood that information is consumed before it is vetted increases; and d) Fewer barriers prevent the access to information. Hudson presented a fifth and more sophisticated complication by introducing a film clip featuring Eli Pariser, an Internet activist who researches filter bubbles (2011 Recording, TED Conference). These filter bubbles used by mega search engine providers can impose unrequested filters on what a search user consumes.

Major themes during the discussion included students’ ability to critically evaluate information, collaborative platforms for information like Wikipedia, and the need for triangulation of information from sources other than those available through the Internet.