The Society for College and University Planning

Trends

FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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FALL 2022 Trends Outside Higher Education

The Society for College and University Planning

Trends Outside Higher Education

This edition focuses primarily on forces outside academe that may drive change in colleges and universities.

We've organized *Trends* using STEEP:

Social	**Technology**	**Economic**	**Environmental**	**Political**
How people think, behave, and interact, including beliefs, values, culture, and lifestyle	How people use technology (including hardware and software), how society relies on technology, and how technology affects society	Macro- or microeconomics, including global trends, anything related to jobs and skills needed for jobs, and industry shifts	Our external surroundings, including sustainability and our evolving workplaces, cities, and living spaces	Public policy, governmental systems, the people within them, and the effects of government decisions on our citizens and communities

Each trend includes a brief trend summary, a footnoted source, and discussion questions to help you and your team analyze and act on the trend.

⁂Social Trends

The Kids Aren't Alright

It seems the pandemic has exacerbated the youth mental health crisis. Seventy percent of K–12 public schools reported an increase in students seeking mental health services since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.[1] Surveyed about the status of their children's mental health, 71 percent of parents across the US indicated that the pandemic had taken a toll on their child's mental health; another 69 percent said "the pandemic is the worst thing to happen to their child."[2] These trends have spurred some states into action. Illinois passed legislation that "allows K-12 students in public schools to have five excused absences per school year for mental health reasons." Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Virginia have also implemented similar policies.[3]

◆ **For discussion**
- How might their own child's mental health crisis impact a faculty member? Fellow students? A staff member? For example, will they need flexibility in their schedules or other accommodations to address their children's mental health care needs?
- According to US government data, about 50 percent of the population lives in a "designated mental health worker shortage area."[4] How might our institution help address this shortage?
- How might students' expectations around mental health policies and services change in the next five years? How can we prepare for those changes?

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1   Institute of Education Sciences, "2022 School Pulse Panel," U.S. Department of Education, April 2022, https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/spp/#tab-7.

2   Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital, "Children's Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Lurie Children's Blog*, May 27, 2021, www.luriechildrens.org/en/blog/childrens-mental-health-pandemic-statistics.

3   Giles Bruce, "More States Are Allowing Students to Take Mental Health Days Off," *Health Shots – National Public Radio*, June 10, 2022, www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/06/10/1103939937/kids-mental-health-days.

4   Ibid.

Some People Just Want to Watch the World Burnout

Researchers at McKinsey Health Institute (MHI) observed that employee burnout is a global problem: "We are seeing persistent burnout challenges around the world." Despite employers' investments in workplace wellness programs, MHI's global survey of nearly 15,000 employees and 1,000 human resources decision makers in 15 countries found that one in four employees reported experiencing burnout symptoms, and toxic workplace behavior was the most significant predictor of these symptoms.[5]

A Deeper Dive According to the World Health Organization (WHO), burnout results from "chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."[6] Possible causes are lack of control, unclear job expectations, dysfunctional workplace dynamics, and work-life imbalance,[7] which may result in physical symptoms like insomnia, exhaustion, changes in eating habits, and headaches.[8] MHI concluded that "the most powerful drivers of burnout are systemic organizational imbalances across job demands and job resources. So employers can and should view high rates of burnout as a powerful warning sign that the organization—not the individuals in the workforce—needs to undergo meaningful systemic change."[9]

◆ **For discussion**

- Do our leaders recognize the signs of burnout? What resources have we provided to them on this critical topic?

- Based on exit interviews or other sources, to what extent can employees leaving be attributed to burnout?

- What are some of the "systemic organizational imbalances" that might lead to burnout at our institution? How can they be addressed?

5   Jacqueline Brassey, Erica Coe, Martin Dewhurst, Kana Enomoto, Renata Giarola, Brad Herbig, and Barbara Jeffery, "Addressing employee burnout: Are you solving the right problem?" McKinsey Health Institute, May 27, 2022, www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/addressing-employee-burnout-are-you-solving-the-right-problem.

6   World Health Organization, "Burn-out an 'occupational phenomenon': International Classification of Diseases," May 28, 2019. www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases.

7   Mayo Clinic Staff, "Job burnout: How to spot it and take action," MayoClinic.org, June 5, 2021, www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642.

8   Melinda Wenner Moyer, "Your Body Knows You're Burned Out," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2022/02/15/well/live/burnout-work-stress.html.

9   Jacqueline Brassey, Erica Coe, Martin Dewhurst, Kana Enomoto, Renata Giarola, Brad Herbig, and Barbara Jeffery, "Addressing employee burnout: Are you solving the right problem?" McKinsey Health Institute, May 27, 2022, www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/addressing-employee-burnout-are-you-solving-the-right-problem.

Workforce Education Needs Some Automation

Enrollment in professional, continuing, and online (PCO) education programs continues to increase. For example, the NC State Board of Community Colleges recently announced that enrollment was up at 50 percent of the community colleges in the state, attributing this growth in part to a 22 percent increase in short-term workforce education program enrollment.[10] How can institutions scale their program supports in response to this growth? According to a research report from Salesforce.org and the University Professional and Continuing Education Association, "automation was seen as a major tool that could combat inefficiencies and be employed by institutions to improve the overall student experience." Students agree. Eighty percent of students indicated additional efforts by their colleges to automate processes and anticipate their needs would greatly improve or improve their student experience—in particular, creating a user-friendly experience, career support services, and financial aid services.[11]

◆ **For discussion**

- How well are we addressing the demand for PCO education programs? Do we have a sense of our market for these kinds of programs?

- In what areas have we successfully automated processes? Which processes or functions might be good candidates for automation?

- What data have we gathered on the level of student satisfaction with our existing PCO programs?
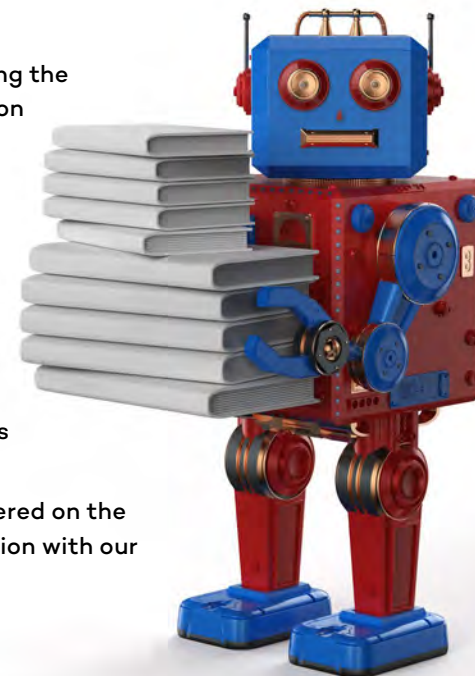
10 NCSBCC, "Enrollment Sees Comeback as More than 50% of Community Colleges Report Increases," NCCommunityColleges.edu, February 21, 2022, www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/news-center/news/enrollment-sees-comeback-more-50-community-colleges-report-increases.

11 Helen Hwang and Jim Fong, "Supporting & Retaining the New Professional Learner," Salesforce.org and UPCEA, December 2021, www.salesforce.org/blog/four-ways-support-professional-learners.

Undercover Boss Was on to Something

We've all heard the adage, "Put yourself in their shoes." Leaders' ability to do just that is more important than ever in achieving positive outcomes in the workplace, according to a new survey from Catalyst. Most people (76 percent) with highly empathic senior leaders reported often or always being engaged, compared to only 32 percent of people with less empathic senior leaders. Researchers at Catalyst concluded that "empathy is an important driver of employee outcomes such as innovation, engagement, and inclusion—especially in times of crisis. In short, empathy is a must-have in today's workplace."[12]

◆ **For discussion**

- How do we evaluate leaders? Do we consider how empathetic they are?

- How can we help our leadership learn or practice empathy? What training or resources might be helpful?

- In what ways are we fostering empathy in the work environment?

Like, Share, Buy

US consumers have grown accustomed to shopping until they drop–or lose their internet connections–right from their own homes. In fact, researchers forecast that by 2025 online shopping revenue in the US will exceed 1.3 trillion dollars.[13] Given the popularity of e-commerce, retailers want to make it even easier for consumers to shop online via social commerce or directly selling products on social media. Most social networks now incorporate in-app shopping solutions with Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest being the most popular. Market analysts project social commerce will be close to an $80 billion industry in the US by 2025.[14] According to Hootsuite: "81 percent of shoppers were already using social media to discover new brands and research products before the pandemic. Many businesses have figured out that letting these users check out in the same app just makes sense."[15]

◆ **For discussion**

- How might the rise of social commerce impact how we currently leverage our social media platforms and channels?

- Are there any risks associated with social commerce that we should be aware of or monitor?

- Thinking more broadly, what does the rise of social commerce mean for student expectations, both before and after they enroll?

12 Tara Van Bommel, "The Power of Empathy in Times of Crisis and Beyond," Catalyst.org, 2021, www.catalyst.org/reports/empathy-work-strategy-crisis.

13 Statista Research Department, "Retail e-commerce revenue in the United States from 2017 to 2025," January 3, 2022, www.statista.com/statistics/272391/us-retail-e-commerce-sales-forecast.

14 Sara Lebow, "U.S. retail social commerce will reach nearly $80 billion by 2025," *eMarketer*, August 17, 2021, www.insiderintelligence.com/content/us-retail-social-commerce-will-reach-nearly-80-billion-by-2025.

15 Shannon Tien and Konstantin Prodanovic, "The 9 Most Important Social Media Trends for 2022," Hootsuite.com, May 25, 2022, blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-trends/#3_Shoppers_will_want_expect_to_buy_your_products_directly_on_social_media.

Over the River and Through the Woods

According to a new survey from the Pew Research Center, Americans like having their extended families nearby . . . and many choose to live near them. Fifty-five percent of US adults reported living within an hour's drive of at least some of their extended family members, which the survey defined as "children, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, and in-laws who don't currently live with the respondent."[16] Research shows that living near extended family can be beneficial. Extended families have two great strengths, according to *Atlantic* contributing writer David Brooks: resilience and socializing force. Brooks writes, "Extended families have more people to share the unexpected burdens—when a kid gets sick in the middle of the day or when an adult unexpectedly loses a job. . . . Multiple adults teach children right from wrong, how to behave toward others, how to be kind."[17]

◆ **For discussion**

- What role do extended families play in the lives of our students? How do students' extended families support them, and how are students supporting their extended family (e.g., financial support, childcare, elder care, etc.)?

- People with the highest education levels are least likely to have extended family nearby.[18] How might distance from extended family impact faculty and staff?

- What steps could we take to encourage and facilitate extended family members' involvement with our campus community?

- How much do we know about which of our students serve as caregivers to family members? What kind of support or services might we offer to them?

Reducing Gun Violence

If it feels like there have been more mass shootings this year in the US . . . that's because it's true. According to the nonprofit organization Gun Violence Archive, as of July 25, 2022, 369 mass shootings had already taken place. Compare that to 2019, when there were 417 mass shootings over the entire year, or 2020, when there were 611.[19] Analysts believe these data suggest "the United States is on pace to match or surpass its worst year on record for the number of mass shootings."[20] What's the solution? Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions found that "handgun purchaser licensing laws and bans of large-capacity magazines were associated with significant reductions in the incidence of fatal mass shootings."[21] As the center's co-director Daniel Webster told NPR, "A licensing process requires someone to, you know, directly apply and engage with law enforcement, sometimes there's safety training and other requirements."[22]

◆ **For discussion**

- What can our institution do to reduce the rate of gun violence—e.g., research, advocacy, etc.—in our community? In the US?

- How aware are students, staff, and faculty of our current policies and procedures governing gun safety (e.g., campus carry regulations, active shooter drills)?

- How effective are our current safety policies and procedures? How regularly are they reviewed and updated?

16 Kiley Hurst, "More than half of Americans live within an hour of extended family," Pew Research Center, May 18, 2020, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/05/18/more-than-half-of-americans-live-within-an-hour-of-extended-family.

17 David Brooks, "The Nuclear Family Was a Mistake," *The Atlantic*, March 2020, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/03/the-nuclear-family-was-a-mistake/605536.

18 Kiley Hurst, "More than half of Americans live within an hour of extended family," Pew Research Center, May 18, 2020, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/05/18/more-than-half-of-americans-live-within-an-hour-of-extended-family.

19 Gun Violence Archive 2022, July 25, 2022, www.gunviolencearchive.org.

20 Priya Krishnakumar and Dakin Andone, "US mass shootings are on pace to match last year–the worst ever, Gun Violence Archive data show," CNN.com, June 7, 2022, www.cnn.com/2022/06/07/us/2022-shootings-pace-worst-ever/index.html.

21 Daniel Webster et al., "Evidence concerning the regulation of firearms design, sale, and carrying on fatal mass shootings in the United States," *Criminology & Public Policy*, February 2020, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1745-9133.12487.

22 Nell Greenfieldboyce, "Research shows policies that may help prevent mass shootings–and some that don't," Health Shots – National Public Radio, May 26, 2022, www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/05/26/1101423558/how-can-mas-shootings-be-prevented-definitive-answers-are-hard-to-come-by.

Food for Thought

Leaving Loneliness Behind

Global health services company Cigna reports that loneliness is at epidemic levels in the United States. According to new data commissioned by the company in December 2021, more than half of US adults (58 percent) are considered lonely, which is consistent with pre-pandemic research that showed 61 percent of adults experienced loneliness in 2019. The most current data also confirmed that some people are affected by loneliness more than others. Younger adults aged 18 to 24 are twice as likely to be lonely than seniors aged 66 and older. Further, more than two in five adults (42 percent) aged 18 to 34 report "always" feeling "left out," compared to just 16 percent of people aged 55 or older who feel the same. Lack of connectivity with family, friends, and colleagues as well as poor physical and mental health, both reinforced during the pandemic, remain key indicators of loneliness.[23]

One of the important recommendations outlined in "Loneliness in America: How the Pandemic Has Deepened an Epidemic of Loneliness and What We Can Do About It," a report from the Making Caring Common Project of Harvard Graduate School of Education, was the importance of "providing people with information and strategies, including public education campaigns, that can help them cope with loneliness." [24]

Fortunately, work was already underway on a public health awareness campaign to promote understanding of loneliness and social isolation. In May 2020, Humana Inc. in partnership with Uber Health, Papa, Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness, and the Translational Research Institute for Space Health launched "Far from Alone."

FarFromAlone.com offers resources that address loneliness at home and work as well as content tailored to specific groups, such as seniors, parents, and veterans. These resources include toolkits, infographics, and programs (virtual and in-person), and are designed "to help you and your loved ones feel more socially connected (and less lonely), which can ultimately improve your overall health."

In June 2022, Far from Alone hosted several events in honor of Global Loneliness Awareness Week, including "Conversations on Belonging, Connection, and Wellbeing" in Washington, DC, featuring US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. The guiding philosophy behind the campaign's ongoing efforts is "building a community and, consequently, driving more conversations that create greater comfort in talking about feelings of loneliness, helping to better identify the root causes and key issues that get to the core of the challenges many people face today."[25]

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23 Cigna Corporation, "The Loneliness Epidemic Persists: A Post-Pandemic Look at the State of Loneliness among U.S. Adults," December 2021, newsroom.cigna.com/loneliness-epidemic-persists-post-pandemic-look.

24 Richard Weissbourd et al., "Loneliness in America: How the Pandemic Has Deepened an Epidemic of Loneliness and What We Can Do About It," Making Kindness Common Project of Harvard Graduate School of Education, February 2021, mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/loneliness-in-america.

25 "About Us" and "Resources," Far from Alone, farfromalone.com. Accessed July 25, 2022.

◆ **For discussion**

- **How much of an issue is loneliness on our campus? How can we tell? Does it affect some groups more than others?**

- **How could we change our policies, programs, and practices so they encourage social connectedness? What else do we need to change?**

- **As a campus community, are we having conversations about how best to foster connections among and between different groups of stakeholders—staff, faculty, and students? In what ways can we continue to build and reinforce an environment that is open to meaningful dialogue and understanding, one that is safe and welcoming for everyone?**

Technology Trends

Virtually Inclusive

Scientific conferences are important to a scientist's professional development, so it's critical that these events are as inclusive as possible. That's why Dr. Marie A. Bernard, the National Institutes of Health Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity (COSWD), decided to host "COSWD seminars, conferences, and meetings entirely online throughout 2022." Bernard referenced the growing body of research on the positive impacts of virtual scientific convenings as the reasoning behind her decision. She noted that one study found "a significant increase in attendees from underrepresented groups at the virtual events" and observed that "those who find in-person conferences unwelcoming or intimidating may feel more comfortable contributing to discussions at virtual convenings by using the chat or comment features."[26]

A Deeper Dive Another study that focused specifically on gender and attendance at STEM conferences found there was significant increases in women's participation when these events were offered online. For example, at the annual conference of the North American Membrane Society, 3 out of 10 online participants were women versus a 26-percent female share of in-person attendees. The study's lead researcher Manish Kumar, an associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin, indicated that "women are often primary caregivers, and when they don't have to travel or pay large amounts to attend a conference, they are more likely to participate."[27]

• How has our return to in-person learning and working impacted diversity, equity, and inclusion?

• How much of a barrier are in-person departmental or subject area conferences to our faculty, particularly those from underserved groups? How might we mitigate those barriers to support the growth of these faculty members?

• What guidelines does our institution have in place to encourage diversity in attendance at various meetings and events held virtually and in-person?

26 Marie Bernard, "How Virtual Convenings Can Enhance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility," National Institutes of Health, February 24, 2022, diversity.nih.gov/blog/2022-02-24-how-virtual-convenings-can-enhance-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility.

27 Michelle Russell, "More Women Participated in Virtual Than In-Person Events," Professional Convention Management Association, May 17, 2022, www.pcma.org/more-women-participate-virtual-than-in-person-events.

Not Very App-ealing

Just because there's an app for that doesn't mean employees will use it. Despite the shift to remote work during the pandemic, only one in five workers considers themself to be a digital technology expert since COVID-19, and just more than half consider themselves proficient.[28] "Very few organizations actively promoted digital dexterity until the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, workforces haven't unanimously displayed an ambition or ability to work with technology," said Gavin Tay, research vice president at Gartner. According to Tay, IT departments have developed a reputation for "delivering applications that are similar, but not identical to tools workers prefer to use, leading employees to shy away from them and avoid greater digital proficiency." To address the issue, he urged organizations to engage in robust evaluations of digital tools before implementing them to determine "how well the tool will address the varying needs of a global hybrid workplace, and support employee digital dexterity."[29] A recent survey of 9,000 workers worldwide underscores his point with findings that 9 in 10 employees are frustrated by their workplace technology, and nearly half report that their "time spent dealing with technology issues has increased since the beginning of the pandemic."[30]

◆ **For discussion**

- What is our process for getting stakeholder input when evaluating potential technology tools? Do we need to expand this effort?

- Have we fully assessed employees' digital proficiency to determine in which areas they may need additional training?

- How do we help faculty and staff navigate technology tools in our institution? Would additional support services be helpful?

Signing Off

Today's IT professionals are challenged to keep up with the pace of employee turnover in their organizations. In particular, high rates of employee turnover have led to offboarding risks, especially when the process takes place remotely. Consider the employee who has access to sensitive materials, gives two weeks' notice, but decides to email documents to a personal email account. Experts say "the consequences to the organization could be considerable if the documents contain sensitive or proprietary information or data. IT and security leaders need a scalable way to prevent such a scenario. The key is to only continue providing access, following the employee's resignation, to what's pertinent to employees' needs in their remaining time."[31]

◆ **For discussion**

- What is our current offboarding process (or processes)? What additional steps might we take to ensure access to resources is managed appropriately during offboarding?

- What policies and training do we offer to educate faculty and staff about keeping sensitive information secure?

- Within our current technology infrastructure, is our offboarding process sufficiently scalable and automated? Or does it rely heavily on manual tasks?

28 "Gartner Survey Finds 1-in-5 Workers Consider Themselves Digital Technology Experts Since COVID-19," April 26, 2021, www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021-04-26-gartner-survey-finds-1-in-5-workers-consider-themselves-digital-technology-experts-since-covid-19.

29 Gavin Tay, "5 employee preferences application leaders must address in 2022," *IDG Connect*, www.idgconnect.com/article/3649668/gartner-5-employee-preferences-application-leaders-must-address-in-2022.html. Accessed June 14, 2022.

30 "Nine in 10 Employees are Frustrated by their Workplace Technology," GlobalNewswire, June 9, 2022, www.globenewswire.com/en/news-release/2022/06/09/2459628/0/en/SURVEY-Nine-in-10-Employees-are-Frustrated-by-their-Workplace-Technology.html.

31 Cyberark, 4 *Global Workforce Trends Influencing Identity and Access Management Strategies*, 2021, https://www.cyberark.com/resources/secure-workforce-access/4-global-workforce-trends-influencing-identity-and-access-management-strategies.

The Internet's Meta-Morphosis

Immersive. Embodied. Multidimensional. Interconnected. All these terms have been used to describe the metaverse, but thus far industry analysts have not been able to reach consensus on its exact meaning: "Unsatisfyingly, the metaverse is a squishy concept. An evolution of the internet, it's often described as online spaces where people can socialize, work, and play as avatars."[33] Nonetheless, major brands have launched efforts to monetize the metaverse: "Companies including Gucci, Forever 21, Coca-Cola, Chipotle, and others have ventured into the realm, making connections between virtual worlds and the real one."[34] Still some technology experts call for more discussion and dialogue to ensure safety and inclusivity: "An engaged public discourse is crucial for innovating and regulating any emerging technology. Developing a clear and concise definition of the metaverse and related technologies might help foster productive stakeholder discussions and craft regulatory alternatives. The metaverse is still at foundational stages, and a clear definition might go a long way toward building a decentralized metaverse in which everyone can safely participate."[35]

◆ **For discussion**

• How might the metaverse affect our institution?

• What is our overall approach to monitoring emerging technologies?

• Are there opportunities for us to facilitate or participate in the ongoing dialogue about the metaverse? For example, through research and/or academic programs?

We're Only Human

The human element continues to be the largest contributing factor in data breaches, according to Verizon's most recent report on data breach investigations: "This year 82 percent of breaches involved the human element. Whether it is the use of stolen credentials, phishing, misuse, or simply an error, people continue to play a very large role in incidents and breaches alike." The report identified four primary "pathways" for breaches: credentials, phishing, exploiting vulnerabilities, and botnets, noting that "no organization is safe without a plan to handle them all."[32]

◆ **For discussion**

• How do we currently prevent data breaches? Do our plans and policies address the four "pathways"?

• What mechanisms do we have in place to identify and mitigate data breaches?

• In what areas do we need to further educate students, faculty, and staff about preventing data breaches?

33 Andrew Morse and Scott Stein, "The Metaverse Is on the Way: Here's What You Need to Know," CNET, March 27, 2022, www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/the-metaverse-is-on-the-way-heres-what-you-need-to-know.

34 Mark Hamstra, "How to Monetize the Metaverse: Big Brands' Tech Partners Share Tips," *Good Company*, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, June 20, 2022, www.uschamber.com/co/good-company/launch-pad/tips-for-monetizing-the-metaverse.

35 Swaptik Chowdhury and Timothy Marler, "The Metaverse: What It Is and Is Not," Rand Corporation, June 20, 2022, www.rand.org/blog/2022/06/the-metaverse-what-it-is-and-is-not.html.

32 Verizon, *Data Breach Investigations Report 2008-2022*, ww.verizon.com/business/resources/reports/dbir. Accessed July 27, 2022.

Automation at Hyperspeed

Identified among Gartner's top strategic technology trends for 2022, hyperautomation is "a business-driven, disciplined approach that organizations use to rapidly identify, vet, and automate as many business and IT processes as possible" through "the orchestrated use of multiple technologies, tools, or platforms."[36] Robotic process automation, intelligent document processing, artificial intelligence, and machine learning are some of the technologies implemented during hyperautomation. By 2024, it's estimated that use of these technologies will replace almost 69 percent of the manager's workload: "AI and emerging technologies will undeniably change the role of the manager and will allow employees to extend their degree of responsibility and influence, without taking on management tasks."[37]

◆ **For discussion**

• In what ways have we explored automation? What are the potential benefits? Consequences?

• What areas of our institution already have automated tasks? What areas might benefit most from automation?

• How do we determine which processes are good candidates for automation?

A Deeper Dive
A case in point is the hyperautomation initiative undertaken by Reckitt, a producer of health, hygiene, and nutrition products. The company has automated more than 20 percent of processes within IT operations, from service desk to end-user computing. The initiative also resulted in the establishment of a new functional area devoted to service modernization and automation called NextGen IT Ops. According to Prashant Arora who heads the area, "[It] owns the entire digital transformation of IT operations using a mix of long-term employees, automation experts, support, and external partners. The team is responsible for scaling automation quickly and effectively as well as up-skilling and cross-skilling. It serves as a group of evangelists to educate the wider employee base and garner support, but also to ensure staff acquire the skills needed to continuously innovate."[38]

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38 Keri Allan, "Hyperautomation in action: The most exciting examples," *IT Pro*, April 12, 2022, www.itpro.com/business-strategy/automation/367382/hyperautomation-in-action-most-exciting-examples.

36 "Hyperautomation," Gartner Glossary, www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/glossary/hyperautomation. Accessed June 14, 2022.

37 "Gartner Predicts 69% of Routine Work Currently Done by Managers Will Be Fully Automated by 2024," Gartner Newsroom, July 23, 2020, www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2020-01-23-gartner-predicts-69--of-routine-work-currently-done-b.

Podcasting a Wide Net

According to a January 2022 survey of digital media consumer behavior in America, 62 percent of people 12 years and older had "ever listened to a podcast," up from 57 percent the previous year. Among weekly podcast listeners (26 percent of those surveyed), 75 percent listened most often on their smart phones.[39] Conal Byrne, CEO of iHeartMedia Digital Audio Group, attributes the increase in listeners in part to our desire to consume content off-screen: "It used to be that consumers would listen to podcasts during downtime, particularly their commutes to and from the office," he wrote. "But as the Covid-19 pandemic stretches into its third year, more and more consumers are experiencing screen fatigue and looking for ways to multitask while working around the house."[40]

◆ **For discussion**

• What would be the pros and cons of launching an institution-sponsored podcast? Are there podcasters among our faculty, staff, and/or students?

• How are podcasts being incorporated into instruction? To what degree does our community value the perspectives offered via this medium?

• Do podcasts provide a potential avenue for facilitating discussions about issues critical to our community?

Pump Up the (Sales) Volume

"Through voice marketing, searching for information has never been [simpler]. No more having to stop driving, cooking, or whatever you're doing. We can now search for anything effortlessly by just speaking."[41] This is the appeal of voice-controlled devices like Amazon Alexa, Microsoft Cortana, and Google Home, and their use is rising. According to recent research, e-commerce transaction values via voice assistants will reach $19.4 billion by 2023, rising from just $4.6 billion in 2021. In addition, forecasts indicated that the global installation of smart speakers would increase more than 50 percent between 2021 and 2023.[42] Among current smart speaker owners, they rely on their devices to make buying decisions (47 percent), compare product prices (32 percent), or add items to their shopping cart (43 percent).[43]

◆ **For discussion**

• How are voice-controlled devices currently used on campus? What are the benefits? Drawbacks?

• What opportunities could the growth of voice-controlled devices present for our institution? For example, are there ways they could be used to improve student success?

• How are voice-controlled devices changing the way people access information? What does that mean for teaching and research?

39 Edison Research, *The Infinite Dial*, 2022, www.edisonresearch.com/the-infinite-dial-2022.

40 Conal Byrne, "Four Podcast Predictions for 2022," Forbes.com, March 1, 2022, www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2022/03/01/four-podcast-predictions-for-2022/?sh=34ca23ed4088.

41 "Voice Marketing: The Latest Marketing Trend," Profiletree.com, 2019, profiletree.com/voice-marketing-the-latest-marketing-trend.

42 "Forecast Summary," Juniper Research, February 8, 2021, www.juniperresearch.com/researchstore/devices-technology/voice-assistants-market-research-report.

43 Asavari Sharma, "How Voice Technology Will Influence Marketing in the Future?" Geekflare.com, April 7, 2022, geekflare.com/voice-tech-influencing-digital-marketing.

Food for Thought

And Websites for All:
ADA and Internet Accessibility

This July marked the 32nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To commemorate this milestone, the Biden-Harris Administration highlighted its recent efforts to advance equity for Americans with disabilities, such as expanding access to broadband through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which provides "$14.2 billion to develop a robust, longer-term broadband affordability program." The program may provide much needed assistance to the "more than 66 percent of people with disabilities who live below the federal poverty threshold and do not have internet access in their homes despite the internet being a vital platform for people with disabilities."[44]

However, accessibility advocates indicate that the last three decades have not brought significant improvements in the accessibility of websites, which the pandemic underscored: "It's been 30 years since lawmakers passed the Americans with Disabilities Act to make the country—and later, some argue, the internet—more accessible. But now, as we shift to working, schooling, shopping, and communicating virtually, the pandemic is showing how many holes remain in digital accessibility."[45] According to research the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation conducted to test all 50 state unemployment websites at the height of the pandemic, "86 percent of state government unemployment websites fail[ed] at least one basic test for mobile page load speed, mobile friendliness, or accessibility."[46]

Continued

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44 "The Biden-Harris Administration Marks the Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act," The White House Briefing Room, July 26, 2022, www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/26/fact-sheet-the-biden-%E2%81%A0harris-administration-marks-the-anniversary-of-the-americans-with-disabilities-act.

45 Sarah Katz, "The Inaccessible Internet," Slate.com, May 20, 2022, slate.com/technology/2020/05/disabled-digital-accessibility-pandemic.html.

46 Michael McLaughlin and Daniel Castro, "Most State Unemployment Websites Fail Mobile and Accessibility Tests," Information Technology & Innovation Foundation, April 15, 2020, itif.org/publications/2020/04/15/most-state-unemployment-websites-fail-mobile-and-accessibility-tests.

Government leaders have acknowledged their role in mitigating these issues and ultimately improving the accessibility of state and local government websites as well as those maintained by businesses open to the public. Of note are recent actions taken by the Department of Justice (DOJ). In March, the DOJ issued updated *Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA*: "Inaccessible web content means that people with disabilities are denied equal access to information. An inaccessible website can exclude people just as much as steps at an entrance to a physical location. Ensuring web accessibility for people with disabilities is a priority for the Department of Justice."[47]

According to legal analysts, while the guidance does not have the force of a rulemaking, it does affirm that the DOJ prioritizes ensuring web accessibility for people with disabilities and "comes on the heels of years of relative silence from the DOJ on the subject." In the future, the guidance may be cited by private plaintiffs in federal website accessibility lawsuits, "which rose by 14 percent in 2021, reaching a record high of 2,895 cases filed in federal courts across the country."[48]

◆ **For discussion**

- When reviewed comprehensively, how accessible are our institution's websites?

- Is there an opportunity for us to work with other institutions and/or organizations to increase website accessibility in our local community?

- To what degree have we evaluated our level of adherence to the most recent website accessibility best practices: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Section 508 Standards, etc.?

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47 "Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA," Department of Justice, March 18, 2022, beta.ada. gov/resources/web-guidance.

48 James L. Rockney, Angela Matney, and Gregory D. Vose, "Digital accessibility: new guidance and enforcement trends," Reed Smith LLP, May 17, 2022, www.reedsmith.com/en/ perspectives/2022/05/digital-accessibility-new-guidance-and-enforcement-trends.

<img> Economic Trends

A-"gas"-t

If you ask most Americans, sticker shock is putting it mildly when it comes to how they feel about the impact high gas prices are having on their everyday lives. According to a June 2022 Gallup survey, 67 percent of Americans say gas prices cause financial hardship, 62 percent report driving less, and 55 percent are altering summer vacation plans.[49] Researchers understand their concern. "How much pain at the pump can consumers take?" asked Edward Yardeni. According to Yardeni's research, US households are spending almost twice as much on gas annually this year as they did last year, $5,000 compared to $2,800.[50]

◆ **For discussion**

• How have higher gas prices impacted purchasing? Are we at risk for incurring higher costs from any of our vendors or suppliers?

• How might high gas prices affect students, faculty, and staff? For example, will prices hamper their ability and willingness to return to campus as we offer more in-person activities?

• How do fluctuations in commodity prices impact our planning and decision-making? How do we monitor those fluctuations?

49 Lydia Saad, "Gas Prices Squeezing Americans as More Rate Economy 'Poor,'" June 28, 2022, news.gallup.com/poll/394190/gas-prices-squeezing-americans-rate-economy-poor.aspx.

50 Edward Yardeni, Yardeni Research Quicktakes (#consumer #energy), May 17, 2022, www.linkedin.com/posts/edward-yardeni_consumer-energy-economy-activity-6932489160150708224-BrE0/?_source=linkedin_share&_medium=member_desktop_web.

A Home of Their Own

Which generation represents the largest share of recent homebuyers? According to the National Association of Realtors Research Group, it is millennials. This generation, ages 23 to 41, makes up the largest share of home buyers at 43 percent.[51] However, millennials—who already have lower rates of homeownership than previous generations had[52]—are entering the housing market at an incredibly challenging time. Housing supply is down, and prices have risen by almost 20 percent between 2021 and 2022.[53] That said, there are signs the market is slowing down.[54]

◆ **For discussion**

- What is our area's housing market like? How does the availability of housing to purchase or rent impact our students, faculty, and staff?

- How might we support new or potential homebuyers? For example, do we have existing resources or programming we may be able to make available?

- When selecting a home, convenience to their job and commuting costs were the most important factors to younger millennials.[55] In what ways might these preferences influence our local community?

Take This Job and Love It

Who doesn't remember their first "real" job? According to Wallethub's analysis of the "first-timer job market," those memories will be better or worse depending on your career choice. A comparison of 108 entry-level positions based on 12 key metrics, including average starting salary, projected job growth by 2030, and median tenure with an employer, indicated that the best first-time jobs come from the field of engineering, with software engineer, electronics engineer, and engineer receiving the highest total scores.[56]

◆ **For discussion**

- **What qualities are important to our graduates when they're looking at entry-level jobs? How can we help them evaluate different career opportunities against these qualities?**

- **How do we advise students with majors that are not immediately aligned with a career field (for example, liberal arts)?**

- **How many entry-level employment positions do we offer at our institution? What feedback have entry-level employees given about our institution's onboarding process and other aspects of working here?**

51 https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2022-home-buyers-and-sellers-generational-trends-03-23-2022.pdf.

52 Yana Davidovich, Cecilia Herrick Reynolds, Ning Kang, and KT Thomas, Millennials and Housing: Homeownership and Demographic Research, Freddie Mac, 2021. https://sf.freddiemac.com/content/_assets/resources/pdf/fact-sheet/millennial-playbook_millennials-and-housing.pdf.

53 Tristan Bove, "Millennials have aged into the housing market at the worst possible time," Fortune.com, March 24, 2022, fortune.com/2022/03/24/millennials-biggest-homebuying-demographic-while-home-prices-soar-worst-time-compete-boomers-aged.

54 Lance Lambert, "Something big is happening in the housing market," Fortune.com, May 11, 2022, fortune.com/2022/05/11/housing-market-home-prices-something-is-happening-mortgage-rates.

55 https://cdn.nar.realtor/sites/default/files/documents/2022-home-buyers-and-sellers-generational-trends-03-23-2022.pdf.

56 John S. Kiernan, "Best & Worst Entry-Level Jobs," Wallethub.com, April 11, 2022, wallethub.com/edu/best-entry-level-jobs/3716.

Leave Dinner on the Doorstep

Driven largely by the pandemic, more Americans than ever are using food delivery apps to put dinner on the table for their families. The number of smartphone food delivery app users is forecasted to be 53.9 million by 2023.[57] The food delivery app industry's market size is expected to reach $320 billion by 2029.[58] Despite these projections for growth, some economists observe that while "many Americans have prioritized convenience over cost for the past two years, [and] food-delivery was a big beneficiary . . . accelerating inflation, combined with easing fears about eating in restaurants as Covid cases drop, threaten to deflate the delivery boom."[59] Others advocate for more closely regulating the business practices of food delivery apps, citing their potentially negative economic impact on local restaurants. Uber Eats, DoorDash, and Grubhub charged restaurants up to 30-percent commissions per order, which led cities like San Francisco to enact emergency orders capping delivery-app fees for restaurants at 15 percent.[60]

◆ **For discussion**

- What trends are we seeing in the usage of food delivery apps on campus? Are students dining out more? Using on-campus dining facilities?

- In what ways has the use of food delivery apps affected local restaurants? What can we do to support these restaurants?

- How have increases in food delivery impacted our campus? For example, is there more traffic around residence halls at certain times of day?

Employee Feedback and the Bottom Line

According to a recent employee experience research study, there is a direct relationship between employers' revenue growth and how often they solicit and act on employee feedback. Organizations that provide good employee experiences (based on employee satisfaction, retention, and perception about whether the company is viewed as a great place to work) "are 12 times more likely to indicate revenue growth of more than 20 percent over the last year." Most of these organizations "survey or interview employees monthly, if not more frequently." Acting on employees' feedback is important in shaping their overall view of their workplace; more than 75 percent of frontline employees were extremely likely to recommend their company as a place to work if the company asked for and acted on their feedback. The study concluded that "listening once a year through annual employee engagement surveys is not enough. Organizations that aren't listening to their employees frequently and consistently, especially when employees want to voice their feedback, run the risk of being surprised by emerging trends or using outdated information to make decisions."[61]

◆ **For discussion**

- How often do we solicit feedback from faculty and staff? In what formats (e.g., email, survey, focus groups)?

- How often do we act on this feedback? In what ways are we measuring and communicating about instances when we take direct action based on employee feedback?

- What are the potential benefits of seeking more frequent feedback from faculty and staff? What are the potential drawbacks?

57 S. Lock, "Amount of smartphone food delivery app users in the U.S. 2019-2023," Statista, September 6, 2021, www.statista.com/statistics/1189404/food-delivery-app-users-us.

58 David Curry, "Food Delivery App Revenue and Usage Statistics (2022)," *Business of Apps*, July 18, 2022, www.businessofapps.com/data/food-delivery-app-market.

59 Andrea Felsted and Tae Kim, "Food-Delivery Services Will Struggle to Outrun Inflation," Bloomberg.com, March 23, 2023, www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-03-23/food-delivery-services-will-struggle-to-outrun-inflation.

60 Helen Rosner, "The Fight to Rein in Delivery Apps," *The New Yorker*, October 5, 2021, www.newyorker.com/culture/q-and-a/the-fight-to-rein-in-delivery-apps.

61 Meike Eilert, "Employee Experience Best Practices: Is Your Organization a Leader or a Laggard?" Medallia Research, November 3, 2021, www.medallia.com/blog/employee-experience-best-practices/?source=Marketing%20 %20 Website&_campaign=FY22Q4_NA_DeloitteEXFireside_Webinar&_source=medallia.com&_medium=blog&_content=blog/elevating-humanexperience&_term=ex_deloitte-fireside-chat-webinar_012722.

Everything Everywhere All on Sale

Too much of everything could be a good thing for consumers as major retailers offer discounts and sales to reduce inventory on their overstocked shelves. "In an attempt to escape the unpredictability of shipping last year, many retailers ordered even more aggressively to meet robust consumer demand. Then, as port bottlenecks began to ease, it started to catch up with them—leaving them with a glut of inventory." While consumers shouldn't expect "a widespread comeback of the days of mega-deals and promotions just yet," shoppers should see some "relief from rising prices."[62]

◆ For discussion

- Are there areas in which we have "overstocked" on supplies or other items? How are we monitoring trends in our inventory?

- What potential sales or discounts might our purchasing departments take advantage of while retailers are trying to make room on their shelves for new products?

- Looking more broadly, are there habits or processes that we adjusted in response to COVID-19 that need to be re-examined?

Betting on Blockbusters

After dealing with months of closures during the pandemic, movie theater owners are optimistic about their industry making a comeback this year, and "the industry's summer, spanning an 18-week period (May through Labor Day), is traditionally responsible for about 40 percent of the domestic box office."[63] These are the months when summer blockbusters or franchise films are usually released in theaters, such as *Spider-Man: No Way Home* with a $260 million debut and *The Batman* with a $134 million debut.[64] While domestic ticket sales for the first quarter of the year were still down about 40 percent compared with 2019 pre-pandemic levels, box office analysts and movie theater owners "are estimating around $8 billion in ticket sales, with franchise films acting as the catalyst."[65] Americans feeling more comfortable going to the theater will be another important driver of movie theater revenue. There's cause for optimism on that front as well with more than three in five Americans (62 percent) indicating that they are comfortable going to a movie theater. However, among infrequent moviegoers, 50 percent said the major reason they don't regularly go to see movies in theaters is "it's too expensive."[66]

◆ For discussion

- How well do we understand the types of in-person activities people want to engage in? How well do we understand the barriers to participating in in-person activities?

- Does our community have a movie theater? What is its role in the community? How might a partnership with a theater benefit the community?

- What kind of training, resources, or services can we provide local business owners to help them weather these ups and downs?

62 Dominick Reuter, "Discounts and sales that disappeared last year amid the supply-chain crisis may soon make a comeback as retailers suddenly find themselves with excess inventory," *Business Insider*, May 29, 2022, www.businessinsider.com/discounts-may-make-comeback-thanks-to-return-of-overstock-2022-5.

63 Sarah Whitten, "Movie theater owners are optimistic ticket sales can continue to recover as the key summer season approaches," CNBC.com, April 24, 2022, www.cnbc.com/2022/04/24/movie-theater-owners-optimistic-about-2022-box-office-before-cinemacon.html.

64 Rebecca Rubin, "Box Office Comeback: Why Movie Theaters Are Finally Feeling Optimistic," *Variety*, June 27, 2022, variety.com/2022/film/news/box-office-top-gun-elvis-pandemic-return-1235303574.

65 Sarah Whitten, "Movie theater owners are optimistic ticket sales can continue to recover as the key summer season approaches," CNBC.com, April 24, 2022, www.cnbc.com/2022/04/24/movie-theater-owners-optimistic-about-2022-box-office-before-cinemacon.html.

66 Sarah Shevenock, "The Pandemic Isn't Why Americans Are Still Hesitant to Go Back to the Movies," *Morning Consult*, May 5, 2022, morningconsult.com/2022/05/05/return-to-movie-theaters.

A Deeper Dive

As seniors travel in large numbers, the US hotel industry is stepping up its efforts to appeal to this key market segment. "With many hotel companies going above and beyond to support and accommodate senior travelers across the board, enhancing cleaning protocols and offering discounted rates have been a great incentive to stimulating business across hotels," observed Dorothy Dowling, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of Best Western Hotels & Resorts. "With data showing high positive sentiment among travelers aged 65+, seniors will play an integral role in driving higher occupancies . . . for hotels across the country."[68]

68 Laura Koss-Feder, "Hotel Marketing Focuses on Seniors, the Most Widely Vaccinated Group of Travelers," CoStar.com, June 18, 2021, www.costar.com/article/1225819431/hotel-marketing-focuses-on-seniors-the-most-widely-vaccinated-group-of-travelers.

Seniors Are on the Road Again

According to AARP's 2022 Travel Trends study, 67 percent of 50-plus Americans plan to travel in 2022, and on average, they are willing to allocate a little over $8,300 toward this expense. Most are planning to travel domestically, with only 17 percent indicating that they had booked international travel. Still, safety is a big concern—over two-thirds of survey respondents say they remain concerned about the spread of COVID–19.[67]

◆ **For discussion**

• What opportunities might there be for our institution to leverage this desire for travel? For example, short-term contract opportunities geared to recent retirees, partnering with a cruise or travel company on educational tourism, etc.?

• How have staff expectations around paid time off changed since the pandemic? Is there an opportunity for us to increase staff recruitment and retention?

• How much does our local community's economy rely on tourism? In what ways could we support the local tourism industry?

67 Vicki Levy, "Domestic Travel Is Bouncing Back for Many 50-Plus Americans," AARP Research, March 2022, www.aarp.org/research/topics/life/info-2022/2022-travel-trends.html.

Food for Thought

Not What the Doctor Ordered

Some of us may give only a passing glance to the fine print on medical bills indicating that nonpayment will result in referral to collections agencies, but to the approximately 20 percent of US households that report having medical debt, the practice can be devastating.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has expressed concern about the practice of reflecting medical debt in credit reporting. "When it comes to medical bills, Americans are often caught in a doom loop between their medical provider and insurance company," said CFPB Director Rohit Chopra. "Our credit reporting system is too often used as a tool to coerce and extort patients into paying medical bills they may not even owe."

Past-due medical debt being reflected on credit reports "can result in reduced access to credit, increased risk of bankruptcy, avoidance of medical care, and difficulty securing employment." To ensure that the consumer credit reporting system is not used coercively against patients and their families to force them to pay questionable medical bills, the CFPB intends to hold credit reporting companies accountable, work with federal partners (such as the Department of Veterans Affairs) to reduce coercive credit reporting, and determine whether unpaid medical billing data should be included in credit reports.[69]

◆ **For discussion**

- What resources might we make available to our stakeholders to assist them in resolving issues related to medical debt?

- In what ways is medical debt affecting our students and their families? Is medical debt a factor in their decisions to enroll or remain enrolled at our institution?

- What are potential long-term effects of medical debt appearing on credit reports? Has it ever factored into our hiring decisions?

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69 "CFPB Estimates $88 Billion in Medical Bills on Credit Reports," Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, March 1, 2022, www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/newsroom/cfpb-estimates-88-billion-in-medical-bills-on-credit-reports.

Environmental Trends

I Shall Bid You ADU

According to a new survey conducted by Zillow covering 26 metro areas, there is broad support for allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in residential areas, with 69 percent of residents surveyed supporting them versus 23 percent opposing them.[70] Growing acceptance of ADUs is welcome news to affordable housing advocates, who believe increasing the inventory of these units is a viable alternative for making more affordable housing available. Sometimes referred to as granny flats, in-law suites, and garage apartments, listings for ADUs have grown an estimated 8.6 percent year-over-year between 2009 and 2018, according to Freddie Mac.[71] "The nation's affordable housing crisis has intensified in this turbulent economic environment, and ADUs are increasingly providing a viable affordable housing option for people of all ages," said Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist.[72]

A Deeper Dive

In 2020, Freddie Mac researchers identified 1.4 million ADUs in the US. Demand for accessory dwellings is highest in the states of California, Florida, Texas, and Georgia, which accounted for half of the 1.4 million ADUs identified. [73] Dan Immergluck, a Georgia State University urban studies professor, supports efforts to make ADUs more available: "I applaud [Atlanta's] effort to reduce zoning barriers, including permitting ADUs more broadly," he said, ". . . there is a need for more options in housing development. Ideally, [Atlanta] will create programs to combine efforts to expand ADUs with measures to combine them with housing vouchers and other subsidies so that some of the new rental units might serve those with the greatest housing needs."[74]

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70 Manny Garcia, "Across 26 Metro Areas, Residents Largely Support Allowing Missing Middle Homes in Residential Neighborhoods," Zillow.com, April 11, 2022, www.zillow.com/research/modest-densification-zhar-30934.

71 "Granny Flats, Garage Apartments, In-Law Suites Gaining in Popularity," Freddie Mac, July 16, 2020, freddiemac.gcs-web.com/news-releases/news-release-details/granny-flats-garage-apartments-law-suites-gaining-popularity.

72 The Single-Family Team, Freddie Mac, "ADUs Offer Promise as a Viable Affordable Housing Supply Solution," December 30, 2021, sf.freddiemac.com/articles/insights/adus-offer-promise-as-a-viable-affordable-housing-supply-solution.

73 "Granny Flats, Garage Apartments, In-Law Suites Gaining in Popularity," Freddie Mac, July 16, 2020, freddiemac.gcs-web.com/news-releases/news-release-details/granny-flats-garage-apartments-law-suites-gaining-popularity.

74 Sean Keenan, "To accommodate population boom, Atlanta must learn to use space smarter," Atlanta Civic Circle, March 19, 2021, atlantaciviccircle.org/2021/03/19/to-accommodate-population-boom-atlanta-must-learn-to-use-space-smarter.

In This Section:

- Accommodating accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- Evaluating energy benchmarking ordinances and policies
- Optimizing office spaces
- Repositioning public transportation
- Connecting climate change and contagious disease
- Building for resilience
- Going gardening
- Taking stock of the tree canopy
- Sidebar: Shopping sustainably

◆ **For discussion**

- What is the inventory of ADUs in our community? What are the local laws and ordinances that govern these types of structures?
- Are ADUs an affordable housing option for students, staff, and faculty?
- In what ways are organizations in our local area working to address the lack of affordable housing? How can we be a part of the discussion about this critical issue?

Share How You Use Those BTUs

Across the US, more local governments are using "benchmarking and transparency ordinances—policies that require buildings to track, report, and share energy use."[75] According to the Institute for Market Transformation, 35 US jurisdictions have passed these policies, resulting in the benchmarking of billions of square feet of real estate.[76] The City of Seattle is one of them: "Seattle's Energy Benchmarking Law requires owners of non-residential and multifamily buildings (20,000 square feet or larger) to track energy performance and annually report to the City of Seattle." The primary rationale behind the annual benchmarking requirement is reduction of energy use and greenhouse emissions from existing buildings, which account for more than one third of Seattle's core greenhouse gas emissions. Almost a decade ago, the City of Seattle adopted a Climate Action Plan to achieve zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.[77]

◆ **For discussion**

• What trends or patterns are we observing in efforts to codify energy benchmarking and transparency in the surrounding communities?

• In what ways are we benchmarking and reporting on energy usage in our institution's facilities?

• How can we encourage local building owners to implement building energy benchmarking and transparency? What kinds of support, resources, or training can we provide?

Open Office Hours

Despite the overwhelming shift to remote work during the pandemic, companies aren't dumping their office space at the high rates some analysts originally forecast. According to US Bureau of Labor Statistics data on private-sector businesses, only 5.5 percent have reduced office space while 3.6 percent have acquired more. More than 90 percent plan to stay the same size in the next 12 months.[78]

A Deeper Dive A recent survey suggests that employers are cutting days rather than square footage: ". . . high density at the office is uncomfortable. Many workers dislike crowds around their desks, much more so now that infection risks are top of mind. . . . The only sure-fire way to reduce density is to cut days on-site without cutting square footage as much." Further, "the office of the future must be more inviting. Tightly packed cubicles are out. Spacious, lounge-style, open seating plans are in. So are meeting rooms that accommodate a mix of in-person and remote participants."[79]

◆ **For discussion**

• Have we had staff return to the office? How are we evaluating the effectiveness of our current return-to-office policies?

• How have faculty and staff expectations around office space changed since the pandemic? How have they remained the same?

• How are we managing the resources (utilities, furniture, technology) associated with our remaining office space?

75 Caroline Keicher and Minna Toloui, "How cities are centering equity in energy benchmarking policies to address climate change," The Kresge Foundation, May 10, 2021, kresge.org/news-views/how-cities-are-centering-equity-in-energy-benchmarking-policies-to-address-climate-change.

76 Building Performance Policy Center, Institute for Market Transformation, July 2022, www.imt.org/public-policy/building-performance-policy-center.

77 "Energy Benchmarking," Seattle.gov, July 2022, www.seattle.gov/environment/climate-change/buildings-and-energy/energy-benchmarking.

78 Alcynna Lloyd and Madison Hoff, "Businesses aren't actually ditching the office, despite remote work," *Business Insider*, February 10, 2022, www.businessinsider.com/businesses-arent-ditching-offices-office-space-bls-pandemic-data-2022-2.

79 Jose Maria Barrero, Nicholas Bloom, and Steven J. Davis, "Why Companies Aren't Cutting Back on Office Space," *Harvard Business Review*, January 25, 2022, hbr.org/2022/01/why-companies-arent-cutting-back-on-office-space.

Transit in Transition

According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), "public transit has experienced drops in demand across the board, while continuing to be a lifeline for those who must travel."[80]An analysis from the APTA indicated that white men were more likely to have given up transit during the pandemic while people of color, people who spoke Spanish, and women did not. Some local transit authorities like the Pittsburgh transit agency acted to better address the needs of their existing riders: ". . . officials moved resources away from 'commuter' routes—those serving people who worked traditional office jobs on traditional schedules, who now were mostly at home—and toward lower-income neighborhoods, those with larger shares of people of color and households without cars. They added more weekend and off-peak service." Transportation equity expert Alex Karner, an assistant professor at the University of Texas at Austin's School of Architecture, observed that "the pandemic really exposed the truth that there are people for whom public transit is a vitally important public service."[81]

◆ **For discussion**

- In what ways has access to public transportation changed in the local community since the pandemic?

- How might we assist the community in exploring the future of public transit in our local area?

- Do we have any insight into how the availability of public transportation affects our students, faculty, and staff, both personally and professionally?

80 "APTA Ridership Trends," American Public Transportation Association, transitapp.com/APTA. Accessed July 31, 2022.

81 Aarian Marshall, "Public Transit Systems Refocus on Their Core Riders," *Wired*, January 3, 2022, www.wired.com/story/public-transit-systems-refocus-core-riders.

Climate Change Contagions

According to scientists, "climate change is making outbreaks of disease more common and more dangerous."[82] One way the warming of the climate influences infectious disease is loss of species diversity. The Center for Biological Diversity warns that "our planet now faces a global extinction crisis never witnessed by humankind," with more than one million species on track for extinction in the coming decades.[83]As a case in point, "migratory birds have become less diverse, and the threat posed by West Nile encephalitis has spread. It turns out that the birds that host the disease happen to also be the tough ones that prevail amid a thinned population. Those survivors have supported higher infection rates in mosquitoes and more spread to people."[84]

◆ **For discussion**

- How prepared are we for future pandemics? Future outbreaks?

- How can we help more people understand the many ways climate change will impact us in the coming decades?

- What is the state of biodiversity in our region? What efforts are underway to preserve or improve biodiversity?

82 Abrahm Lustgarten, "How Climate Change Is Contributing to Skyrocketing Rates of Infectious Disease," ProPublica, May 7, 2020, www.propublica.org/article/climate-infectious-diseases.

83 "Halting the Extinction Crisis," Center for Biological Diversity, www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/elements_of_biodiversity/extinction_crisis. Accessed July 31, 2022.

84 Abrahm Lustgarten, "How Climate Change Is Contributing to Skyrocketing Rates of Infectious Disease," ProPublica, May 7, 2020, www.propublica.org/article/climate-infectious-diseases.

Blown Away

According to global engineering firm Arup, designers and building owners can prepare homes and businesses to better withstand extreme windstorms. The firm recently released resilience-based design guidelines that focus on building, site, and operational resilience: "Site resilience requires looking at what's surrounding a building, and what in the immediate area could pose a threat during an emergency." Arup's guidelines are part of a body of knowledge focused on improving "the way buildings withstand the threats posed by climate change."[85] This growing collection of guidelines is maintained under the auspices of the Resilience-based Design Initiative (REDi). According to the organization's website: "Modern building codes focus on life-safety, not resilience–the ability of an organization to quickly recover in the aftermath of a hazardous event. We developed REDi as a stretch code to address the gaps in the traditional design approach."[86]

◆ **For discussion**

• How might our institution benefit from evaluating campus buildings using resilient design principles?

• To what degree is our deferred maintenance attributable to damage caused by hazardous events?

• Do our current risk management practices and policies take climate change into consideration?

Growing Once, Growing Twice

Gardeners are planning to spend more time and money in 2022. According to Axiom's Annual Garden Insights Survey, 44 percent indicated they plan to spend more hours gardening this year than they did last year, and more than 28 percent said they will spend more money on their garden in 2022. What's driving interest in gardening? Among survey respondents, the top three reasons were lowering stress and creating an overall sense of health and well-being, spending more time with family outdoors and spending more time at home, and creating a beautiful outdoor space and growing food.[87]

◆ **For discussion**

• Are there outdoor spaces we could allocate for gardening on or near campus?

• In what ways can we encourage staff, students, and faculty to engage in healthful leisure activities?

• How might the growth of gardening impact teaching and learning (e.g., program enrollment, extension agency offerings, etc.)?

85 Nate Berg, "Climate change is blowing down houses. This could save them." *Fast Company*, May 31, 2022, www.fastcompany.com/90755925/climate-change-is-blowing-down-houses-this-could-save-them.

86 "About REDi," www.redi.arup.com/about. Accessed August 1, 2022.

87 Kathleen Hennessy, "Axiom Gardening Insights Survey: Growing More in 2022," Axiom.com, October 11, 2021, axiomcom.com/axiom-gardening-insights-survey-growing-more-in-2022.

A Fair Share of Trees

There's a new tool available to aid local government employees, community activists, urban foresters, and others in making the case for planting more trees in their neighborhoods. A year ago, American Forests, a nonprofit conservation organization, launched Tree Equity Score, an online tool that "calculates scores based on how much tree canopy and surface temperature align with income, employment, race, age, and health factors in the US. Scores are available for 150,000 neighborhoods and 486 urbanized areas (places with at least 50,000 residents)."[88] The tool gives communities—large and small—equal access to this important data: "By democratizing this public health, surface temperature, socioeconomic, and tree canopy data into a clean user experience, even smaller communities that couldn't afford the expense of an urban tree canopy analysis are able to tell their own data-driven story to decision makers."[89]

◆ **For discussion**

- What are our current practices for the removal and replacement of trees on campus?

- In what ways could we contribute to increasing the size of the tree canopy for the local community?

- How can we support the development of tools that democratize public health and sustainability data?

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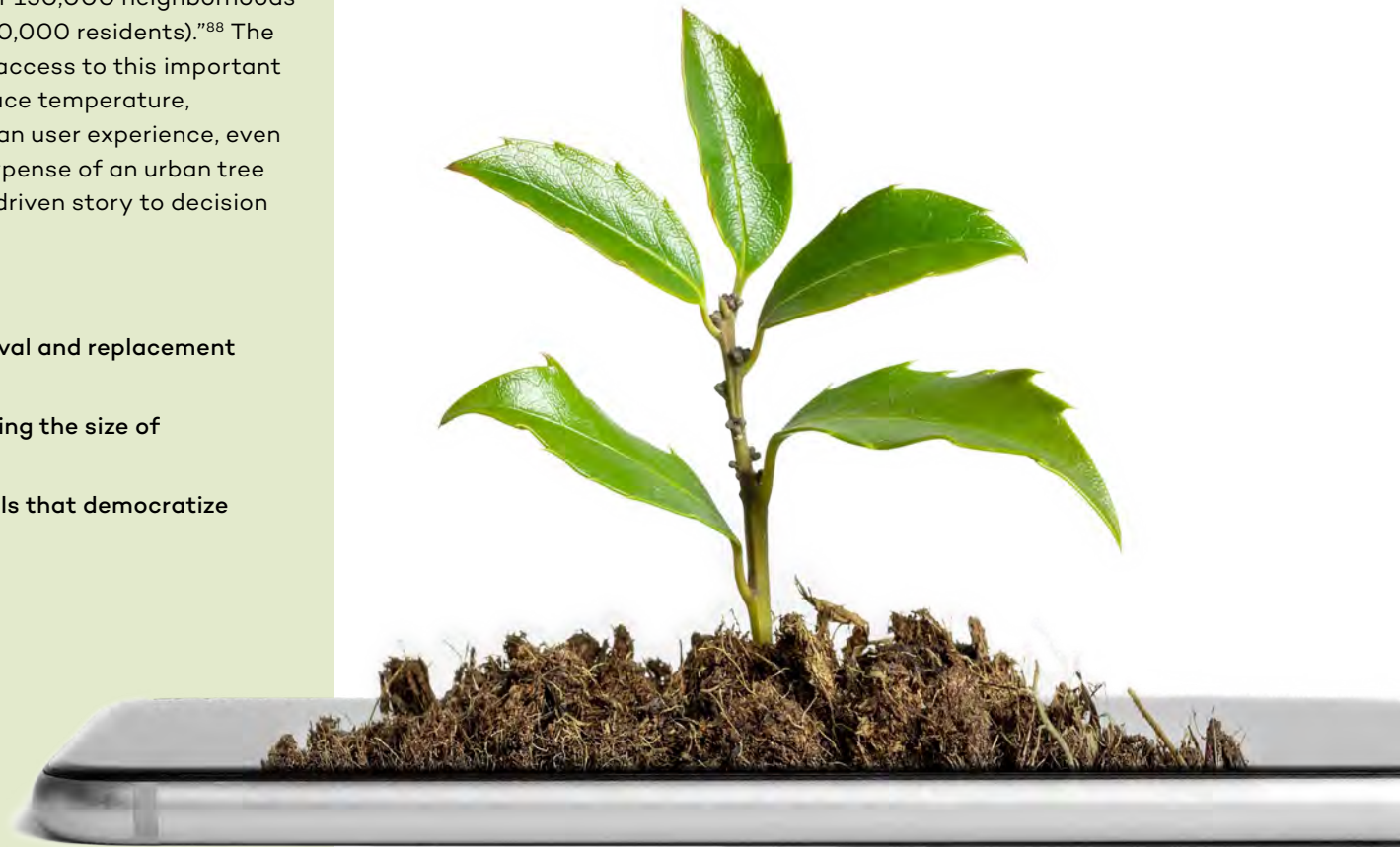
88 "About Tree Equity." TreeEquity.Score.com, treeequityscore.org/about. August 1, 2022.

89 Ian Leahy, "Tree Equity Score: One Year Later," AmericanForests.org, June 22, 2022, www.americanforests.org/article/tree-equity-score-one-year-later.

Food for Thought

Shop Until You Drop .5 Celsius

From bringing our own reusable bags to stores to researching retailers' packaging practices, Americans are interested in shopping sustainably. "Our latest research shows that despite current world events and inflation, consumers are more willing than ever to shop sustainably," said Paul Magel, president of the Business Applications division, CGS.

According to CGS's 2022 Retail and Sustainability Survey, 79 percent of consumers rate sustainability as "somewhat important" to "very important" when purchasing apparel and footwear products. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents were willing to pay more for sustainable products. Among Gen Z shoppers, two-thirds were willing to pay an additional fee for sustainable products.

In general, consumers want more transparency from brands about their sustainability initiatives. Younger people want to go further: 60 percent of Gen Z and 59 percent of millennials support establishing a national/global sustainable law that mandates sustainable practices.[90]

◆ **For discussion**

- When considering existing and potential vendor relationships, how do we evaluate their sustainability?

- How do we communicate about our institution's sustainability efforts? Are our efforts effective?

- Thinking big picture, how much of an impact does sustainable consumerism have on climate change? How can we help our community understand the actions needed to halt climate change?

90 "Third Annual CGS Survey Reveals Sustainability Resurgence After Popularity Waned During the Pandemic," CGS.com, April 12, 2022, www.globenewswire.com/en/news-release/2022/04/12/2421065/0/en/Third-Annual-CGS-Survey-Reveals-Sustainability-Resurgence-After-Popularity-Waned-During-the-Pandemic.html.

Political Trends

Lobbying to Discriminate Against LGBTQ People

According to a CNN analysis of data compiled by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), state legislators have introduced at least 162 bills targeting LGBTQ Americans this year through July 1, which is more than double the amount considered in 2020.[91] Like the ACLU, Freedom for All Americans tracks these bills and categorizes them as follows: anti-gender, anti-LGBTQ, school policy, and youth health care and sports bans.[92] Why so many? It's not public will. In fact, most voters want the exact opposite: according to a recent survey, nearly 8 in 10 Americans support laws that protect LGBTQ people from discrimination. Instead, this uptick is due more to "lobbying on behalf of conservative and religious groups" than public sentiment. [93]

◆ **For discussion**

- **What LGBTQ legislation is being considered in our state? Have any bills already passed?**
- **What are potential long-term effects of the bills being considered? How can we protect and shield LGBTQ people in our community and on our campus from these effects?**
- **How much does lobbying affect our local and state politics?**

91 Priya Krishnakumar and Devan Cole, "2022 is already a record year for state bills seeking to curtail LGBTQ rights, ACLU data shows," CNN.com, July 17, 2022, www.cnn.com/2022/07/17/politics/state-legislation-lgbtq-rights/index.html.

92 "Legislative Tracker: All Anti-LGBTQ Bills," FreedomForAllAmericans.org, July 2022, freedomforallamericans.org/legislative-tracker/anti-lgbtq-bills.

93 Matt Lavietes and Elliott Ramos, "Nearly 240 anti-LGBTQ bills filed in 2022 so far, most of them targeting trans people," NBCNews.com, March 20, 2022, www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-politics-and-policy/nearly-240-anti-lgbtq-bills-filed-2022-far-targeting-trans-people-rcna20418.

Allowing Teachers to Carry

Will allowing teachers to carry guns in class make K–12 schools safer? Ohio Governor Mike DeWine is among those who believe the answer to this much-debated question is yes. In June, despite opposition from students, teachers, and local law enforcement, DeWine signed legislation allowing teachers to carry guns in class after 24 hours of training instead of the more than 700 hours of training that's currently required.[94] According to data from the National Council of State Legislatures, DeWine signing the bill into law adds Ohio to the list of 20 states that allow "anyone with permission from school authority" to carry firearms on K–12 school grounds.[95]

◆ **For discussion**

- How many K–12 schools are near us? What kind of relationship do we have with them? Do we know if they support allowing their teachers to carry firearms in the classroom?

- Have we considered what role we might play in educating the community about gun safety? About solutions to gun violence?

- What type of gun legislation is being discussed in our area? How might potential legislation impact our campus? Our community?

Hot-Button Issue

Prohibiting Home Depot employees from displaying the message "Black Lives Matter" on their aprons does not violate their rights, according to a ruling from the US National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). NLRB's prosecutors brought the complaint on behalf of the company's employees, alleging that Home Depot had violated federal law. However, in his ruling, administrative law judge Paul Bogas asserted that "Black Lives Matter messaging lacked 'an objective, and sufficiently direct, relationship to terms and conditions of employment' to be legally protected."[96] The 1st US Circuit Court of Appeals gave similar reasoning in its ruling against Whole Foods employees, who alleged racial bias "after being sent home without pay or disciplined for wearing Black Lives Matter face masks on the job." The court said it was "'pure conjecture'" to suggest that racial bias drove Whole Foods into selectively enforcing its dress code, which also covered visible slogans, logos, and ads unrelated to the company.[97]

◆ **For discussion**

- While we may not have a formal dress code, what guidelines are in place? Do we have specific policies around employees wearing clothing that bears political statements or slogans?

- What are our values as an organization? Does the way we dress reflect those values and the image we want to project as an institution?

- Have we considered implementing a dress code or appearance policy? Why or why not?

94 Bill Chappell, "Ohio Gov. DeWine signs a bill arming teachers after 24 hours of training," NPR.org, June 14, 2022, www.npr.org/2022/06/13/1104570419/ohio-dewine-guns-teachers.

95 "School Safety: Guns in Schools," National Council of State Legislatures, NCSL.org, May 30, 2022, www.ncsl.org/research/education/school-safety-guns-in-schools.aspx.

96 Josh Eidelson, "Home Depot Wins Ruling Rejecting Right to Wear BLM at Work," Bloomberg.com, June 10, 2022, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-10/home-depot-wins-case-rejecting-right-to-wear-blm-at-work#xj4y7vzkg.

97 Jonathan Stempel, "Whole Foods workers lose appeal over 'Black Lives Matter' masks," Reuters.com, June 28, 2022, www.reuters.com/business/whole-foods-workers-lose-appeal-over-black-lives-matter-masks-2022-06-28.

Get Their Minds on Their Money

When the National Endowment for Financial Education polled them in March, 88 percent of US adults said "their state should require a semester- or year-long financial education course for graduation."[98] Recent trends suggest that state legislatures concur. According to the *2022 State of Financial Education Report* produced by Next Gen Personal Finance, "momentum for financial education continued in state capitol buildings in 2022, with twenty-six legislatures introducing sixty different bills to expand access to personal finance instruction." As of July 14, 15 states had guaranteed all their high schoolers will take at least one semester of personal finance before graduation, with Florida, Georgia, Michigan, and South Carolina passing laws this year. "Our 2022 report shows tremendous momentum across the country as more states recognize the importance of guaranteeing this course for high school students," said Tim Ranzetta, co-founder of Next Gen Personal Finance. "Significant gaps remain, however, that must be addressed by educators, lawmakers, and state departments of education to continue to increase access for all students."[99]

◆ **For discussion**

- How do our students rate their level of financial literacy? What steps can we take to find out?

- What kinds of financial literacy resources do we make available to students, staff, and faculty? How often do we review and update them?

- In what ways could our institution support financial literacy efforts at local high schools?

98 "Poll: Most Adults Support Financial Education Mandates," National Endowment for Financial Education, April 25, 2022, www.nefe.org/news/2022/04/financial-education-mandates.aspx.

99 Next Gen Personal Finance, *2022 State of Financial Education Report*, April 21, 2022, d3f7q2msm2165u.cloudfront.net/aaa-content/user/files/Files/NGPFAnnualReport_2022.pdf.

Distrust in the Process

According to an ABC News/Ipsos poll conducted in January, only 20 percent of Americans feel "very confident" about the integrity of the US election system. Why is this number so low? "Widespread distrust in our electoral system overlays deep divisions over our democracy. Republicans lack confidence, in no small part, because of lies propagated by their leaders. And Democrats lack confidence because of ongoing efforts by Republicans to politicize the administration of elections. This is a bad equilibrium," said William Howell, professor of political science at the University of Chicago.[100] This distrust can chill democratic participation, according to Jessica Huseman, editorial director for Votebeat. "I think that you can only tell people for so long that the system is flawed before they choose to stop participating in it."[101]

◆ **For discussion**

- What potential risks does lack of confidence in elections pose for our institution? How might it affect the laws and regulations that we are subject to?

- In what ways could our institution facilitate education and discussion about the US election system?

- How can we support local and state election efforts?

100 Brittany Shepherd, "Americans' faith in election integrity drops: POLL." *The Washington Post*, January 6, 2022, abcnews.go.com/Politics/americans-faith-election-integrity-drops-poll/story?id=82069876.

101 "How controversial new voting laws are impacting 2022 elections," PBS Newshour, May 24, 2022, www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-controversial-new-voting-laws-are-impacting-2022-elections.

A Fair Chance

Eighty percent of US workers would approve of their employers hiring people with conviction histories (fair chance hiring), and approximately 63 percent of executives say that they have hired people with conviction histories in the past year, according to *The Fair Chance Hiring Report* from HR technology company Checkr.[102] This sentiment among workers and their employers is reflective of state legislatures acting to eliminate criminal history as a barrier to employment. According to the National Employment Law Project, 37 states have adopted "ban the box" laws that require employers to consider a job candidate's qualifications first—without the stigma of a conviction or arrest record.[103]

◆ **For discussion**

• How can we help local employers and community leaders adopt fair chance hiring?

• What is our approach to considering formerly incarcerated candidates for employment? For admission? How have we adopted—or can we adopt—fair chance hiring practices?

• How can we support formerly incarcerated individuals in our community? What local organizations could we partner with?

Hearing Is Believing?

Americans tuned into the January 6th Hearings, but many seem to doubt the hearings will have any real impact. According to an NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist National Poll, 50 percent of Americans think former President Donald Trump should be charged with crimes based on evidence presented at the hearings, but only 28 percent think he will actually face charges. The hearings don't seem to be impacting the upcoming election. Only 9 percent indicated the hearings would be an issue "as they think about November's midterm elections." Top-of-mind issues for registered voters, according to the poll, are inflation (37 percent), abortion (18 percent), guns (10 percent), and health care (10 percent).[104]

◆ **For discussion**

• "Fifty percent of Americans consider the events of January 6, 2021, to be an insurrection and a threat to democracy."[105] How can we help our community make sense of January 6th and its implications for the future of our democracy?

• How can we encourage healthy political discussion while we also address authoritarian and fascist threats to our democracy? How can we prevent "both sidesism"?

• What is our role in preventing future politically violent or insurrectionist actions?

102 "Four in Five U.S. Workers Want Employers to Hire People with Conviction Histories [New Checkr Report]," Checkr.com, December 15, 2021, checkr.com/blog/fair-chance-hiring-report.

103 Beth Avery and Han Lu, "Ban the Box: U.S. Cities, Counties, and States Adopt Fair Hiring Policies," NELP.org, October 1, 2021, www.nelp.org/publication/ban-the-box-fair-chance-hiring-state-and-local-guide.

104 "NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist National Poll: The January 6th Hearings, July 2022," MaristPoll, July 21, 2022, maristpoll.marist.edu/polls/npr-pbs-newshour-marist-national-poll-the-january-6th-hearings-july-2022.

105 Ibid.

Food for Thought

Black Moms Matter

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than white women. Variation in quality health care, underlying chronic conditions, structural racism, and implicit bias are among the factors that contribute to this disparity.[106]

Both the public and private sector are taking action to address the Black maternal health crisis.

A provision in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 giving states the option to extend Medicaid postpartum coverage to 12 months via a state plan amendment took effect on April 1, 2022. The provision was put in place to "help improve maternal health and coverage stability and to help address racial disparities in maternal health." As of this writing, 23 states (including the District of Columbia) had implemented the Medicaid Postpartum Coverage extension.[107]

As part of its One Million Black Women initiative, a $10 billion commitment to narrow opportunity gaps for Black women over the next decade, Goldman Sachs recently led a $9.2 million Series A funding round closed with Mahmee, a six-year-old maternal health care startup.[108] Mahmee is "a comprehensive maternity and infant care management platform." Mahmee's goal is to partner with providers "to create care programs that make it easy for all families to receive comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care."[109]

Health policy analysts say a multi-pronged approach is needed to address the US maternal health crisis: "Improving maternal health will require increased coverage, improvements in the perinatal workforce, and changes in the health care delivery and financing system."[110]

◆ **For discussion**

• How do we support maternal health? How do our parental leave policies impact Black parents among our faculty and staff?

• What role does the campus health center have to play in encouraging Black maternal health? How do we ensure it is providing equitable care to Black people who are pregnant?

• In what ways has education about implicit bias in the medical field been incorporated into our curriculums?

106   Office of Minority Health & Health Equity, "Working Together to Reduce Black Maternal Mortality," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 6, 2022, www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/maternal-mortality/index.html.

107   "Medicaid Postpartum Coverage Extension Tracker," Kaiser Family Foundation, July 28, 2022. www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/medicaid-postpartum-coverage-extension-tracker.

108   Nicole Goodkind, "The United States is in a maternal health crisis, Goldman Sachs wants to change that," CNN.com, May 8, 2022, www.cnn.com/2022/05/08/business/mahmee-goldman-sachs-maternal-health/index.html.

109   "FAQs," Mahmee.com, www.mahmee.com/faq. Accessed June 15, 2022.

110   Maggie Clark and Kay Johnson, "Policymakers Have More Work to Do to Address the Black Maternal Health Crisis," Center for Children and Families – Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, ccf.georgetown.edu/2022/05/12/policymakers-have-more-work-to-do-to-address-the-black-maternal-health-crisis. Accessed June 15, 2022.

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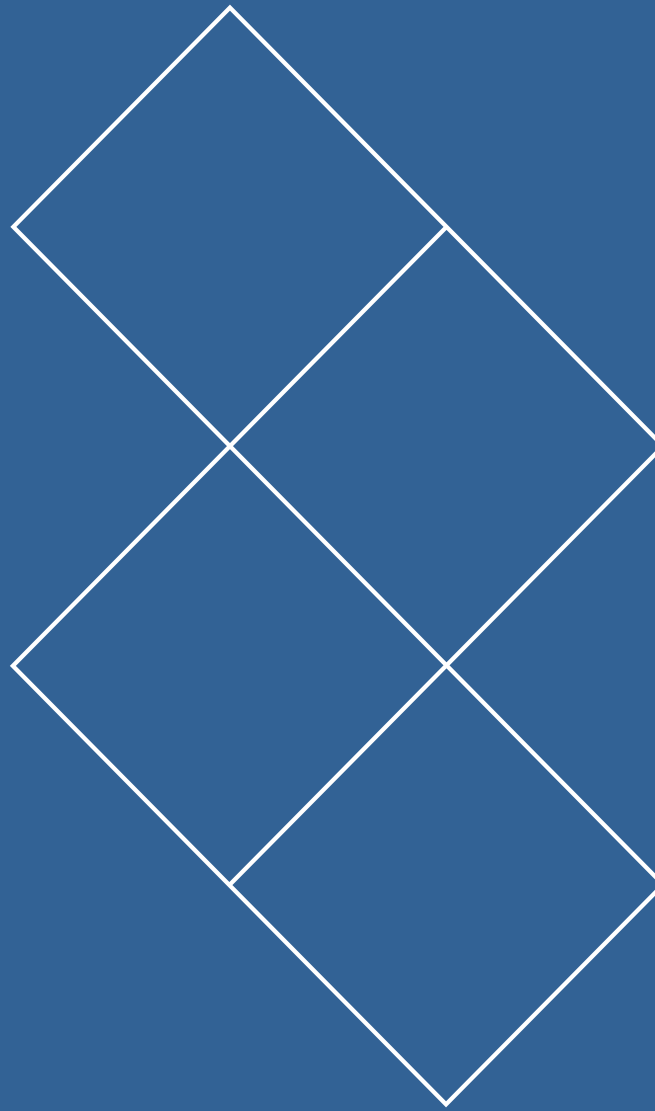- Help develop new curricula

About the Author

A graduate of the College of William & Mary and Howard University, Apryl Motley, CAE, SASM, is a CRLA-certified master tutor at Howard Community College where she assists students with their writing. Additionally, she was an associate faculty member at the University of Phoenix Online for 15 years. Motley covered higher ed business issues for NACUBO's _Business Officer Magazine_ for close to a decade. She is a member of the National Tutoring Association, Women in Film & Video, and the American Society of Business Publication Editors.

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