Budget cuts, a skeptical public, uncertain enrollments, new competitors—higher education faces so many challenges these days, and isn’t known for responding nimbly. But the changing landscape could also offer new opportunities for colleges—to experiment with how students learn, find new ways to reach more-diverse students, and maybe even save money.

How can college leaders tell a passing trend from what’s important, while continuing to do their day-to-day jobs? This trends report for 2015 describes 10 key shifts in higher education. You’ll find cutting-edge solutions being tried by other colleges, expert commentary, data, and more. Think of it as an essential road map to help navigate campus change.

10 Key Shifts in Higher Education

Spotlight on Retention

Your students can’t graduate if they don’t return.

- One university demonstrates the link between grades and graduation rates.

Career Competence

Colleges need to offer job guidance long before students graduate.

- Four employers describe the qualities they seek when hiring new graduates

Board Battles

Conditions are ripe for the rise of the rogue trustee.

- Terrence MacTaggart, a consultant for governing boards, writes about "taming the toxic trustee."
- Anthony P. Lubrano describes the challenging oversight role of serving on Penn State's board.
Social-Media Skirmishes

More colleges are deciding how—and whether—to regulate faculty speech online.

- At the U. of Kansas, a new social-media policy leads to new conflicts.

College à la Carte

With more choices in the academic marketplace, higher education has begun to "unbundle."

- For one student, an online "microdegree" was the right credential at the right time.

Adjunct Advocacy

Contingent faculty are demanding better working conditions—and getting them.

- Data tables reveal a new pattern of change in the faculty work force.

Team Science

Cooperation may be one of the few benefits of a gap in research funding.

- A data table shows how universities are making up that gap.

Focus on Teaching

A renewed emphasis on the classroom may actually stick this time.

- The U. of Michigan puts money—lots of it—behind a promise to improve teaching.

Dialing for Millennials

Colleges are wooing recent grads in hopes that they will one day become donors.

- Key statistics on giving by millennials.

Managing Change

Successful colleges know a passing trend from a true opportunity.

- A new book describes the traits of "a leader in balance."
Additional higher education materials submitted to the SPDT by Lisa Zurk

I wondered if we want to spend some time in our SPDT meeting discussing how the new OR funding model effects us (see http://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/2015/04/oregon_commission_votes_to_fun.html#incart_river)? There have also been some very good pieces in the NYT about potential long-term changes to higher education (for example, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/10/opinion/joe-nocera-college-for-a-new-age.html) and some articles in the Chronicle on effect of changing roles of non-tenured faculty (for example, http://chronicle.com/article/Who-Gets-a-Vote-in/190499?cid=megamenu). Now that we’ve done so much classic strategic planning, perhaps we can use some meeting time to discuss nationwide and statewide trends in higher education? Just a thought...