



2025 top 5 trends for higher education

Looking ahead at institutional challenges and solutions



Institutions are facing challenges they can no longer afford to ignore. Economic shifts, changing student demographics and the rising costs of tuition have reshaped the higher education landscape. Even though many campuses may have seen small upticks in admissions during the fall of 2023, the total number of undergraduate students across the United States still stands at over 1 million fewer than before the pandemic¹.

In a recent report, EDUCAUSE stated that colleges and universities need to find ways to regain the public's trust and demonstrate the caring nature of a college experience². These challenges along with lowering costs have become the heart of recent trends that are expected to gain more ground in 2025 and beyond.

The following are five trends that successful institutions have adopted to demonstrate how they understand and care about students, faculty and staff. By incorporating more data and tech solutions into their daily operations, these thriving colleges and universities have also become more responsive and efficient.

¹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/646841/americans-confident-two-year-schools.aspx>

² <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2024/10/2025-educause-top-10-restoring-trust>



TOP FIVE TRENDS FOR 2025

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TREND 1: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



TAKING DIGITIZATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL

One trend that continues to beleaguer institutions is the transformation of student interactions and administrative processes through technology. While most institutions are recognizing the value of digital learning, many have not yet made the full transition of integrating physical campus spaces with new digital capabilities.

Digital transformation (Dx) is more than making hybrid, remote or online learning a reality. It's also about using technology to deliver an amazing campus experience that follows students seamlessly from administration and classrooms to research facilities and dorm rooms. Dx also includes the collection of data so administration can make more informed decisions. It requires institutions to charge tech with performing menial, repetitive tasks so staff and faculty have more time to make a bigger impact. It's the brains behind the notifications that give students, faculty and staff more attention and make them feel more appreciated.

In an Inside Higher Ed survey of chief technology officers (CTOs), almost two in three (61%) personally believe that the digital transformation of their institution is essential or at least a high priority—yet only a third (35%) say their institution has set specific goals for digital transformation³.

³ <https://www.insidehighered.com/reports/2024/10/14/2024-survey-campus-chief-technology-information-officers>



HOW INSTITUTIONS ARE MOVING FORWARD

Institutions are devoting more attention to Dx by creating a more cohesive digital universe through the cloud, enterprise resource planning (ERP) software and learning management system (LMS). By updating and unifying digital infrastructure, institutions can become more effective and efficient.

Yet much of this depends on a robust and reliable wireless network. Without dependable, always-on Wi-Fi®, college administrators cannot trust internet of things (IoT) devices to operate competently, network software to accurately collect data, or students to feel comfortably connected. A robust and reliable network is also key to the Dx mission.

HOW RUCKUS CAN HELP

RUCKUS Networks understands the importance of campus connectivity and helps colleges and universities create and maintain purpose-driven networks. From small private colleges like Butler University to large state-run universities like the Pennsylvania State University (Penn State), RUCKUS offers unequaled network solutions that create a stable foundation for Dx. Plus, with our exclusive BeamFlex and ChannelFly patented technologies and our Wi-Fi 6 and Wi-Fi 7 solutions that consistently outperform in high-density, high-capacity environments.

TREND 2: ENTRUSTING TECH

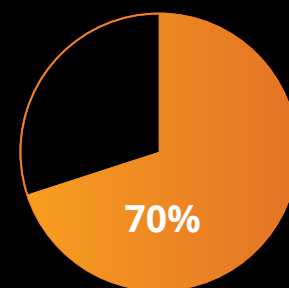


HANDING OVER THE KEYS TO TECH

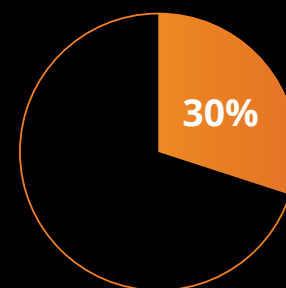
Although institutions understand the value of technology, many have yet to make the investment. For example, while more than 70% of higher education administrators hold a favorable view of AI and its potential in their professional work, fewer than a third have personally engaged with AI in their work.⁴ To allow tech to make a larger contribution, it must be entrusted with important responsibilities. It must be invited to participate in the operations.

Administrators who have taken the leap of faith and empowered technology to personalize services, automate work and reduce overhead have discovered that it not only helps cut costs and increase staff productivity—it makes their school more agile, competitive and profitable. Best of all, when deployed properly, it operates seamlessly across campus and enhances the faculty, staff and student campus experience.

INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH AI⁴

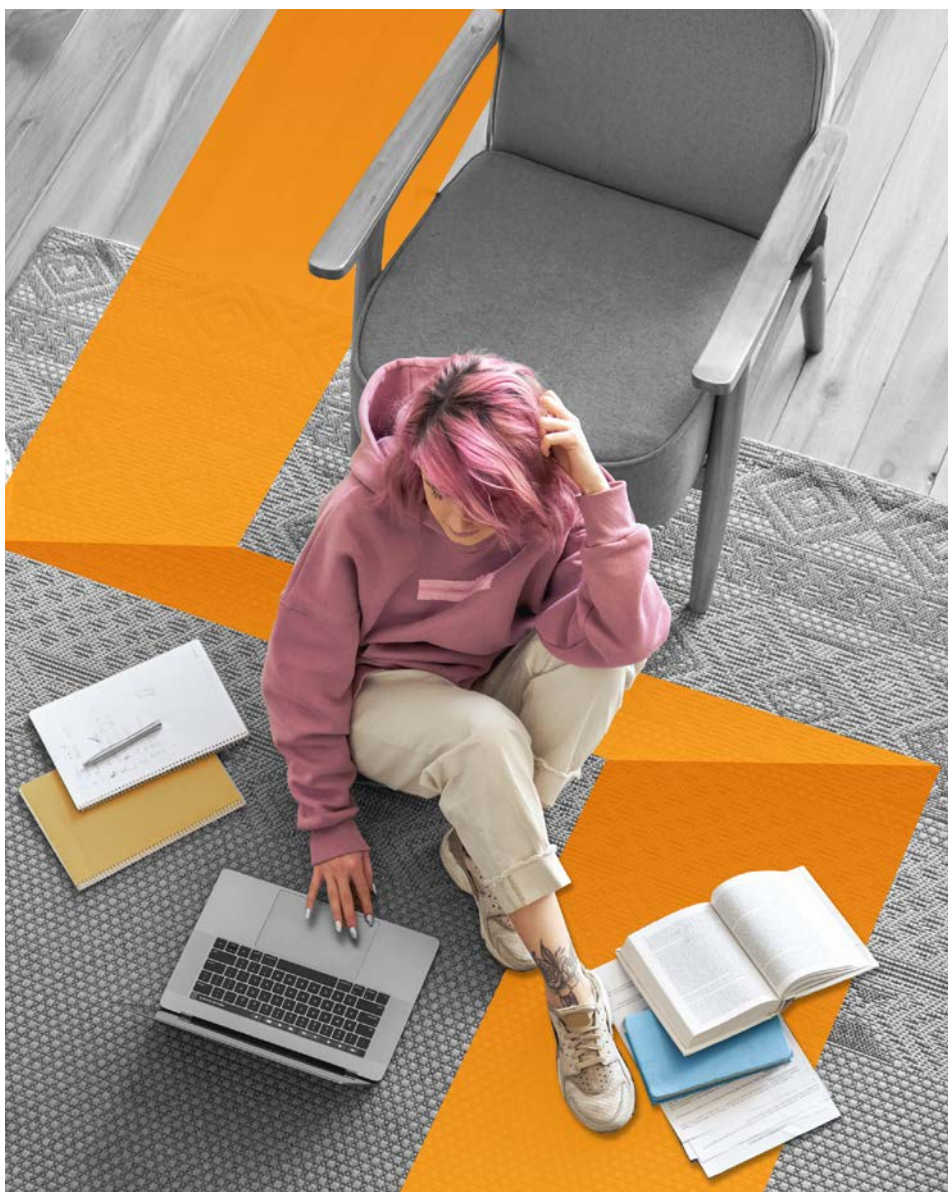


Administrators with favorable views of AI



Administrators that have personally engaged with AI in their work

⁴ <https://www.ellucian.com/assets/en/article/higher-education-leaders-eager-embrace-ai-transform-campus-operations.pdf>



HOW INSTITUTIONS ARE MOVING FORWARD

Today, many colleges and universities are using beneficial tech in a variety of forms. Through IoT devices, management software and apps, institutions are improving their overall campus experience. For example, many are discovering that ERP software can help them integrate all the functions across the entire organization to make managing operations easier and more efficient. They're also seeing how automating facility functions by deploying IoT devices can help campuses optimize energy consumption and reduce waste, which in turn increases sustainability. And this is only the start.

HOW RUCKUS CAN HELP

With RUCKUS® IoT Suite, higher ed enterprises can create an IoT access network through the reuse of LAN and WLAN infrastructure. What's more, a RUCKUS IoT network enables organizations to aggregate and backhaul IoT traffic over their new or existing Wi-Fi infrastructure. Plus, RUCKUS Networks can help create a converged edge network that brings together wireless, wired and IoT networks into a shared network architecture.

TREND 3: MAKING DATA-BASED DECISIONS

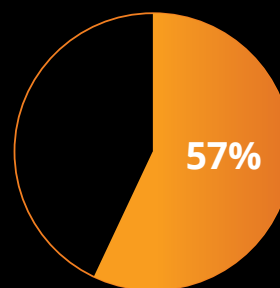


SMARTER DECISIONS COME FROM BETTER INFORMATION

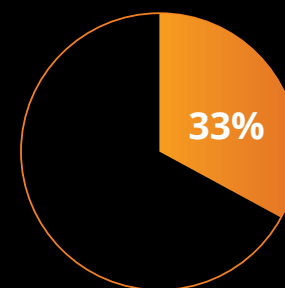
In a Inside Higher Ed survey, 57% of CTOs strongly or somewhat agree that their college or university effectively uses data to inform important decisions and improve internal processes. Unfortunately, only a third stated that their institution has a chief or senior technology officer whose primary responsibility is overseeing data and analytics.⁵

By adopting a more data-driven decision-making process, institutions can make smarter and faster judgments that are based on real-time, local statistics. Leveraging data, analytics and AI can improve student retention, support existing staff as well as help attract and retain a first-rate faculty. In addition, schools that make data a priority can utilize predictive analytics, which can help decision-makers anticipate outcomes such as enrollment forecasts, financial health and operational efficiency.

INSTITUTIONAL USE OF DATA TO INFORM DECISIONS⁵



CTOs that say their institution effectively uses data to inform decisions



CTOs that say their institution has a top level technology officer to oversee data and analytics

⁵ <https://www.insidehighered.com/reports/2024/10/14/2024-survey-campus-chief-technologyinformation-officers>



HOW INSTITUTIONS ARE MOVING FORWARD

One way to support making better decisions based off data is by having data stored in a central location. By merging data silos into data warehouses and data lakes in the cloud, institutions can use their data as a real strategic asset. Using data collected from their campus and their students can help them better understand who they really are and how they can become better versions of themselves. For colleges that need guidance with leveraging analytics from software such as the LMS, joining a consortium to share resources and knowledge has become an invaluable help in addressing this trend.

HOW RUCKUS CAN HELP

RUCKUS understands the power of using real-time data to improve existing systems. That's why RUCKUS One®, our converged network assurance and business intelligence, collects network data and uses it to optimize the wireless network. By monitoring the network and understanding how it operates, it can provide insights and analysis on the network to accurately identify future incidents before they become service-affecting problems. With AI-generated recommendations, IT departments know where to focus first in order to maintain an always-on, stable Wi-Fi network.

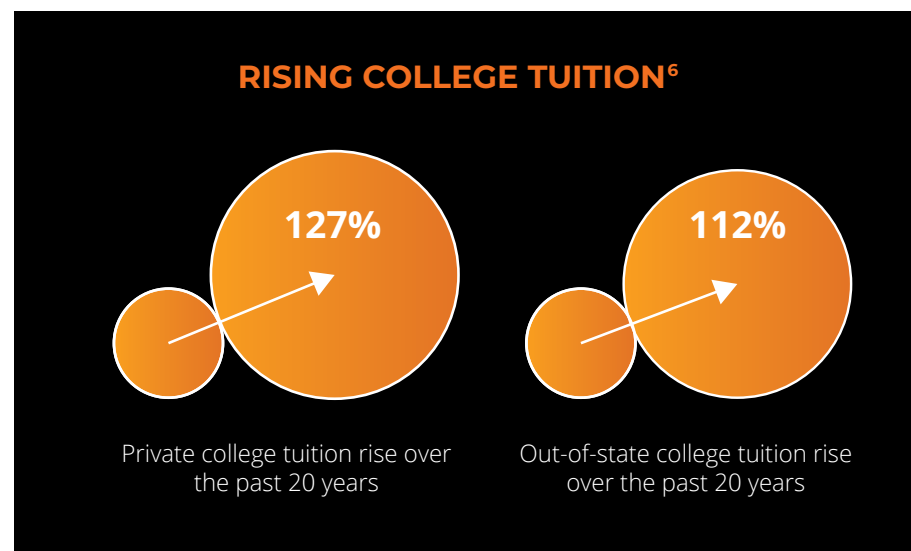
TREND 4: STREAMLINING PRODUCTIVITY



MODERNIZING ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

At first glance, streamlining administrative procedures may not seem like a trend that's new. But when viewed from the outside looking in, institutions continue to support a variety of complicated, outdated, inefficient and tedious processes. Adopting more simplified procedures is now seen as making significant improvements needed to temper rising tuition costs, reduce administration bloat and make schools feel more approachable and responsive.

Students have taken notice how tuitions and administrative offices have grown exponentially. A recent U.S. News & World Report (USNWR) discloses that tuition at private U.S. universities has jumped about 126% over the past 20 years, while out-of-state tuition has risen 112%⁶. In addition, recent articles have divulged how large schools like Yale now have more administrators and managers on campus than undergraduate students⁷. Relying on technology to cut down overly complex operations and admin bloat seems to be the real solution in helping institutions become competitive and affordable again.



⁶ <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/see-20-years-of-tuition-growth-at-national-universities>

⁷ <https://students.bowdoin.edu/bowdoin-review/features/death-by-a-thousand-emails-how-administrative-bloat-is-killing-american-higher-education/>



HOW INSTITUTIONS ARE MOVING FORWARD

By updating school processes and integrating cutting-edge technology like AI, colleges and universities can do more with existing administrative staff and even improve the quality of the enrollment and class scheduling process. Today's new generation of ERP systems can only help simplify procedures if existing policies first are modernized and streamlined. Institutions that are making tech investments now are not only seeing immediate benefits, but are also poised to keep up with future tech advancements.

HOW RUCKUS CAN HELP

RUCKUS understands an institution's need to provide the very best connectivity using existing staff and infrastructure. That's why we've created our AI-driven cloud platform for service assurance and business intelligence. Powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning (ML) algorithms, the RUCKUS AI™ platform simplifies IT by automatically classifying service incidents by severity—tracing root causes and recommending steps for remediation. This cloud service also enables line-of-business stakeholders to define and monitor business key performance indicators (KPIs) for better business outcomes.

TREND 5: ENRICHING THE CAMPUS EXPERIENCE



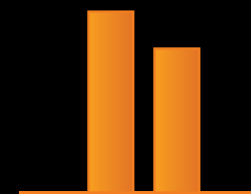
USING TECH SHOWS YOU CARE

While courting, recruiting and retaining students has always been a priority for institutions, more colleges and universities today are fighting over fewer potential students. What makes this even more troubling is that birth rates in the U.S. and the projected number of high school graduates are expected to drop further in the future⁸.

To create a friendlier environment, institutions are exploring non-traditional ways to make the campus experience feel more caring and engaging. From hybrid classes and online labs to student services that include mental health apps, colleges and universities are leveraging more tech in everyday interactions to help make students feel welcomed and comfortable.

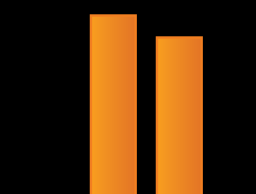
Innovative institutions are also implementing more personalized student communications through automated email or location-based, geofenced text messages to make students feel seen and valued. Since most of today's students are glued to their smartphones, many schools are also modernizing their student-facing programs so they can be easily viewed on smaller mobile devices.

Higher education institutions are fighting over fewer potential students.⁸



21% less students

The number of full-time undergraduates fell by 21 percent in the last five years.



About 13% less students

Birth rates in the U.S. are projected to drop further drop the pool of candidates by 11 to 15% by the mid 2020s.

⁸ <https://hechingerreport.org/colleges-face-reckoning-as-plummeting-birthrate-worsens-enrollment-declines/>



HOW INSTITUTIONS ARE MOVING FORWARD

Creating a more attentive environment for students means meeting them at their level. Smart administrations are now looking at ways to help new students transition to college life. One method that has seen a lot of success is utilizing predictive models to reach out to first-year students who are the most at risk of dropping out. Whether it's providing financial aid or an on-campus tutor, schools that take a more vested interest in their students reap bigger rewards.

HOW RUCKUS CAN HELP

Today's digital natives expect instant connectivity no matter where they go. But they also expect it to be secure. RUCKUS has created the Cloudpath® Enrollment System that works behind the scenes to allow students, faculty and staff to use any of their personal devices anywhere without constantly requiring permission from IT. By creating personalized login credentials for each BYOD user, students can roam anywhere on campus and connect seamlessly.

Integrating tech into traditional college and university processes isn't a trend or fad; it's the new reality. As fresh students, staff and faculty come on campus, they're bringing with them the high expectations of having instant access to everything. New students are expecting all the comforts of home in their dorm rooms. And if a school can't keep up with their demands, they'll seek their college experience elsewhere.

RUCKUS Networks can help your institution become more efficient, agile and scalable. Our wireless network solutions have appeared all around the world—from five-star hotels and professional basketball arenas to apartment high-rises and smart cities. Our portfolio features an array of solutions that can accommodate any institution, no matter what size. [To learn more, contact us today.](#)

www.ruckusnetworks.com

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