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Advertising 3rd part plan an advertising campaign for universities keeping in mind the pandemic scenario.

Much of the discussion so far applies widely—to private-sector organizations, governments, and higher-education institutions alike. But because universities have unique characteristics, four additional guiding principles should inform how they use the nerve center and make decisions.

Bring an equity lens to every decision. Many of the actions universities take to slow the spread of the virus and safeguard health will likely have a disproportionate effect on already vulnerable populations. For example, lower-income students may not have the devices or internet speed at home to get set up for online coursework. They are also more likely to depend on campus employment for living expenses. For students who were struggling academically, the transition to online learning could be incredibly disruptive and threaten completion. Some international students may not be able to get home, and if they do, may not have access to the internet; others may not be able to stay in the country given visa and work-authorization rules. Some students may have no home to go to.

In terms of the staff, many of those who provide the operational backbone of the campus—everyone from faculty to janitors and food-service workers—may lack a financial cushion if they are laid off or go unpaid during campus closure. Local vendors may depend on university business. Universities have their own financial concerns, but to the extent possible, they must nevertheless incorporate a sense of equity—favoring the more vulnerable over the more affluent—into how they make decisions.

Stay in close touch with students, faculty, and alumni. As COVID-19 spread, universities had to act quickly, focusing largely on health and safety. As the consequences linger on, universities need to understand the concerns of their students and other stakeholders—and then respond effectively. Both academic and nonacademic concerns are important; for example, plans for commencement and for supporting graduating seniors as they enter an uncertain employment market. Part of this effort needs to be directed at supporting the mental health of students and faculty who are now spread out, and possibly dealing with loss, shock, isolation, and difficult family situations. Engagement doesn’t stop with current students. Alumni will be critical to bouncing back from the financial stress of the outbreak. If there is a recession, alumni donations might falter, but an “early and often” approach to alumni communication might pay dividends down the road—both financial and nonfinancial.

Think beyond your walls. No university is alone in coping with COVID-19. Peer institutions are grappling with the same issues at the same time. This represents a unique opportunity to learn from each other in real time, and to collaborate. One example might be to create educational partnerships, such as small colleges banding together to provide online learning, or piggy-backing off a larger institution’s capabilities. There may also be a way to create strategic partnerships—joining together to advocate certain policies or to coordinate communications or workforce initiatives. This is a time for universities to embrace the idea of being peers in a common educational mission—not just as competitors for students and staff and for athletic glory. Finally, it is important to remember the role of the university in the broader community. As campuses go quiet, universities are sitting on physical assets that could prove critical in helping local governments and healthcare workers respond.

Act with urgency, but with perspective. The immediate focus will of course be safety and operations, and with good reason. But it is important not to stop there. While the immediate issues can easily consume senior-leadership bandwidth, equally important to the success of the response will be longer-term planning for recovery.

There are two elements to bringing in a longer-term view to decision making. First, institute in-depth scenario planning around what different epidemiological outcomes would mean for the resumption of in-person classes—and the subsequent implications for teaching, enrollment, faculty, staff, operations, and infrastructure. Nerve centers can act as a catalyst for long-term planning by driving scenario-planning exercises with senior leaders and by encouraging workstreams to map out what decisions need to be made in the next 15 days, 30 days, 60 days, and 90 days.

Second, there needs to be a way to reflect on how the COVID-19 crisis could and should change how universities operate in the future. A crisis can provide an opportunity to think anew—perhaps to reassess elements of the student experience, admissions, graduation requirements, testing, and more. 