Environmental Scanning Summary Report

INTRODUCTION
Higher education in 2024 continues to navigate significant challenges and transformations stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and other societal shifts. The landscape is rapidly evolving, shaped by political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors [PESTLE Analysis].

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND FUNDING
Government priorities and funding decisions significantly impact higher education. Recent trends show a mixed picture, with potential cuts to federal and state funding posing threats to many institutions. However, there's also growing advocacy for increased public investment in higher education as a driver of economic growth and social mobility [PESTLE Analysis: Political Landscape].

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are increasingly affected by political polarization. Some institutions face increased government scrutiny, while others position themselves as bastions of free speech and inquiry [Chronicle of Higher Education Review].

ECONOMIC FACTORS AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
Rising costs and concerns about the value of higher education are reshaping the market. The traditional tuition model is increasingly unsustainable, with many institutions facing enrollment declines and financial instability [State of the Discipline Report, p.9-10]. Innovative pricing strategies, such as income-share agreements and lifetime learning subscriptions, present opportunities for schools to address affordability concerns [PESTLE Analysis: Economic Factors].

Many institutions face significant financial pressures, exacerbated by demographic shifts and increased competition. In response, they are exploring new revenue streams, including corporate partnerships, expanded continuing education offerings, and commercialization of research [Alliant International University, Touro University].

SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND STUDENT EXPECTATIONS
Changing student demographics are reshaping higher education. The traditional college student profile is evolving, with many institutions struggling to adapt to the needs of more diverse, often non-traditional students [Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education Report].

Students increasingly seek programs that are affordable, flexible, and directly connected to career outcomes. There's growing demand for shorter, more targeted educational experiences, including certificates and micro-credentials that can stack into full degrees [National Louis University, PESTLE Analysis: Social Dynamics].

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS AND INNOVATION
Online and hybrid learning models are reshaping educational delivery. The growth of digital learning options offers opportunities for increased access, flexibility, and engagement [State of the Discipline Report, p.13-14].

Artificial intelligence and automation are beginning to transform both instruction and operations. While there are concerns about AI replacing certain teaching functions, forward-thinking institutions are leveraging AI for personalized learning, improved efficiency, and

enhanced student support [Western Governors University, PESTLE Analysis: Technological Advancements].

Data analytics is becoming increasingly sophisticated in decision-making. Institutions that invest in analytics capabilities can gain competitive advantages in recruitment, retention, and operational efficiency [State of the Discipline Report, p.15].

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The regulatory landscape for higher education is becoming more complex. Evolving accreditation standards and compliance requirements pose challenges for many institutions [State of the Discipline Report, p.18-19].

Institutions face ongoing legal challenges related to student safety and rights, with high-profile incidents increasing scrutiny of campus safety policies [PESTLE Analysis: Legal Considerations].

External accountability pressures continue to intensify, with policymakers and the public demanding greater transparency around outcomes and return on investment. This includes increased scrutiny of graduation rates, employment outcomes, and student debt levels [Walden University].

AGILITY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The perceived return on investment in higher education faces growing scrutiny. This criticism impacts both enrollment rates, as prospective students internalize these messages, and tuition rates, as institutions struggle to demonstrate value while facing pressure to reduce costs.

Institutional agility is becoming a key differentiator in navigating these challenges. Only the most adaptable institutions are likely to successfully navigate through these pressures. There is a high need for quick divestment and reinvestment in new directions without disrupting enrollment pipelines.

Capital investments require careful consideration, as they typically present the greatest challenge when pivoting is necessary. Institutions need to "travel light" and maintain flexibility in their strategic planning and resource allocation.

DECISION-MAKING AND ADAPTATION

The rapidly evolving landscape necessitates that institutions become nimbler in their approach to decision-making and resource management. The ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances while maintaining educational quality and financial stability is crucial for the survival and success of higher education institutions.

Institutions that can effectively balance agility with strategic long-term planning are better positioned to thrive in this challenging environment. This may involve developing modular academic programs, embracing flexible learning models, and creating more responsive governance structures.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AND SUSTAINABILITY

There's growing pressure for institutions to address environmental concerns. The costs of transitioning to sustainable operations can be significant, but leadership in sustainability can

attract environmentally conscious students and partners while generating long-term cost savings [PESTLE Analysis: Environmental Factors].

Climate change is affecting campus operations and planning. Extreme weather events and long-term climate shifts pose risks to physical infrastructure and operations. However, opportunities exist for schools to lead in climate resilience research and education [State of the Discipline Report, p.17-18].

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING
Higher education institutions are intensifying efforts to create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments. This includes initiatives to increase diversity in student recruitment and retention, faculty hiring and promotion, and leadership positions [Alliant International University].

There's growing recognition of the need to address systemic barriers and create truly inclusive campus cultures. Institutions are increasingly using data to track progress on DEI initiatives and holding themselves accountable for measurable improvements [Walden University].

In conclusion, higher education faces a complex and rapidly changing environment shaped by various political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors. Success in this landscape will require institutions to be adaptive, innovative, and deeply committed to serving the evolving needs of students and society while addressing broader societal challenges [PESTLE Analysis].

References

1) List each schools reviewed
    a. Alliant International University
    b. Touro University
    c. National Louis University
    d. Western Governors University
    e. Walden University
2) List sources for gray literature – PESTLE ANALYSIS
    a. Chronicle of Higher Education Review
    b. Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education Report
    c. ACE Report
3) Internal Reports
    o State of the Discipline Report
    o Job Outlook reports, Competitor Analysis reports, and Program specific State of the Discipline reports
        ▪ Applied Behavioral Analysis
        ▪ Business Psychology
        ▪ Clinical Psychology
        ▪ Counseling Psychology
        ▪ Counselor Education School Counseling and Guidance
        ▪ Educational Psychology
        ▪ Forensic Psychology
        ▪ General Psychology
        ▪ Health Services
        ▪ International Psychology
        ▪ Marriage and Family Therapy
        ▪ Nursing
        ▪ Organizational Leadership
        ▪ Psychopharmacology
        ▪ Public Health
        ▪ School Psychology

Methods

Our environmental scan involved a review of various sources to identify themes and trends relevant to higher education. The process included the following steps:

1) Professional Gray Literature Analysis
    a. Sources: Chronicle of Higher Education, American Council on Education
    b. Method: AI analysis of titles and brief descriptions of articles published in the last 12 months
    c. Outcome: Identification of common topics and themes
    d. Verification: Manual review of titles and descriptions
2) Specialized Report Review
    a. Source: Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education report
    b. Method: Manual review
    c. Purpose: Deemed particularly helpful for our analysis

3) Political Climate Assessment
    a. Sources: Published political platforms of the four major parties in the presidential race
    b. Method: AI-assisted theme analysis

      c. Purpose: To understand potential political influences on our strategic plan

4) Internal Program Review
      a. Sources: Relevant sections of various program reports within The Chicago School
      b. Method: Manual review for themes and then sorting conducted using AI.
      c. Purpose: To capture program-specific influences and future-oriented thoughts

5) Competitor Analysis
      a. Sample: Six universities commonly considered similar to The Chicago School
      b. Method: Manual and AI-assisted review of their strategic plans
      c. Purpose: To understand the strategies of recognized and potential competitors across our various markets

6) College of Osteopathic Medicine Analysis
      a. Sources: Three major professional journals in the field
      b. Method: Theme analysis (due to lack of a program-specific report)
      c. Purpose: To identify themes that may influence the future of our university and necessary in the absence of any internal report or presence in the State of the Discipline report

7) Internal Report Review
      a. Source: State of the Discipline report produced within The Chicago School
      b. Method: Manual theme extraction

8) Data Consolidation and Verification
      a. Method: AI-assisted consolidation of all themes and descriptions
      b. Verification: Review by the team for accuracy