

# Reflecting on Our Tours of Novus and Dreamscape

What struck you about these experiences?

Where do P3 and AR/VR investments make the most sense today? Where are they not worth the comparative investment?

What's the most valuable innovation or insight from these ASU experiences that you can bring back and apply at your institution?

SAVE THE DATE

# Continuing this Dialogue of Leading Research Universities

A CBO Retreat at the  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
**October 12-13, 2026**

Please join us at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for an intimate gathering of chief business and operations officers from leading research institutions. This closed-door session will offer a candid forum to discuss the most pressing challenges and emerging opportunities shaping the future of higher education.

---



# A Whirlwind of Changes Push Athletics to the Limit

3

Ongoing Volatility and Ambiguity Is Further Complicating Financials



## House Settlement

**\$246M** in new revenue-sharing costs through FY35



## Name, Image & Likeness

New **compliance**, marketing, legal costs to support athlete deals



## Transfer Portal

**Continuous recruitment** drives up travel, scouting, scholarship costs



## Title IX Compliance

Rising scrutiny, compliance, **litigation risks**



## Media Rights

Stagnant or **declining contract values** for non-SEC/Big Ten schools



## Conference Realignment

New league maps inflate **travel costs**, risk reduced fan engagement



## Staffing & Support Costs

**Escalating salaries**, added staffing needs (e.g., wellness)

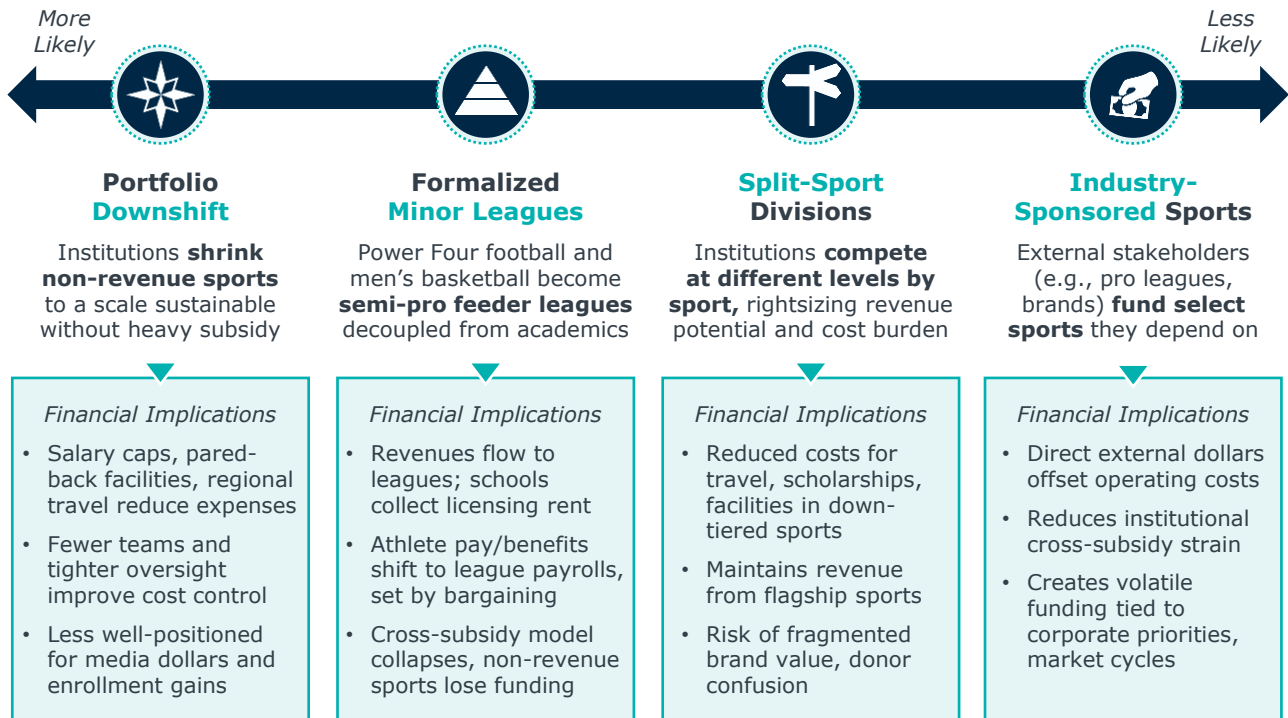


## Employee Status Debate

Athlete reclassification unresolved, creating **uncertainty over pay/benefit costs**

# Where This Is All Headed

Four Potential Futures Being Discussed—And How Likely Each One Is



# What Topics Should We Cover at Future Gatherings?

5

## Athletics

A focused retreat on athletics planning, financial consequences NIL changes, and CBO's role in sports strategy.

## Cost Management

Amidst external scrutiny, tactical discussion of rising benefits, energy, and vendor costs.



## Deferred Maintenance

Detailed discussion of funding, planning, and execution of capital renewal work.

## Generative AI

A hands-on working retreat to identify and plan the deployment of new Gen AI opportunities.

**Which of these resonate most?  
What other ideas should we consider?**



EAB

# Sustaining Innovation in Administrative Functions

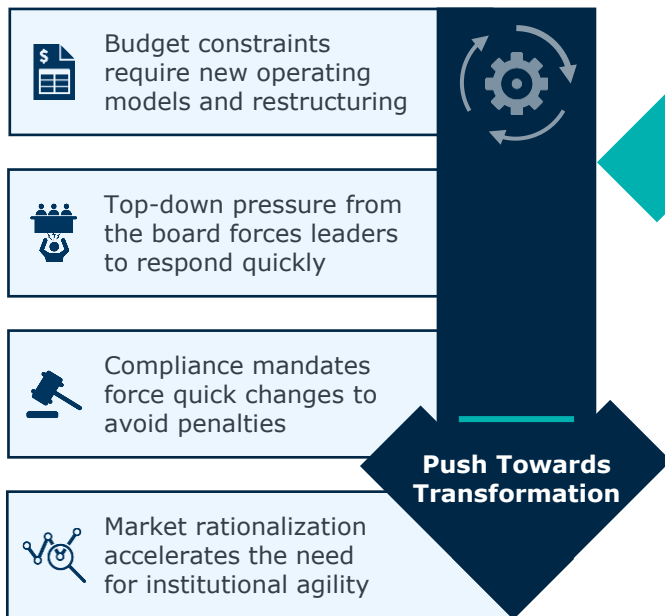
Unpack The Lessons Learned From Changing And Maintaining  
Innovations In Back-office Function Redesign

Strategic Advisory Services

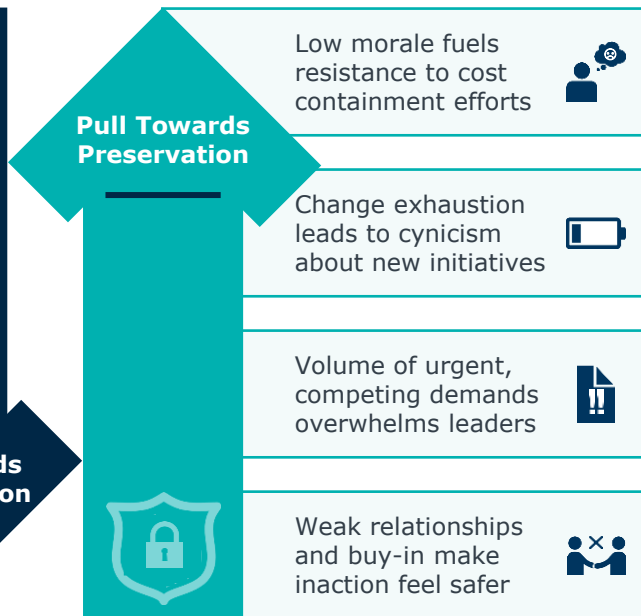
# Change Necessary—But Not Always Welcomed



## Financial and Market Pressures Demand Bolder, Faster Changes...



## ...At the Same Time That Campus Constituencies Crave More Stability



# Six Attributes of a Thriving Institution





# Unpacking the Attributes of a Thriving Institution

---

SECTION

1

# Six Attributes of a Thriving Institution



# Can We Make Smart Decisions Fast Enough?



## Historic Tendencies

### Committee Sprawl

Standing committees with broad or overlapping charges muddy responsibility and delay action.

### Unclear Decision Authority

Authority is fragmented across schools, departments, and senates, leading to blurred accountability and stalled decisions.

### Repetitive Deliberation Cycles

Decisions are revisited across multiple forums or semesters, resulting in continuous re-litigation.

### Consensus-Seeking Culture

An expectation of near-unanimous agreement on major decisions extends deliberation and weakens outcomes.

## New Capabilities

### Clearly Scoped Mandates

Structure committees to tackle narrowly defined questions and deliver decisions or recommendations in a set timeframe.

### Transparent Decision Rules

Publicly assign ownership for final calls so it is clear who is responsible for moving initiatives forward.

### Tripwires for Action

Set clear deadlines for input and predefined thresholds (e.g., market signals) that auto trigger decisions.

### Constructive Conflict

Structure forums to surface opposing views, weigh tradeoffs, and secure explicit group commitment to the decision.



# Not All Mandates Look the Same

*Mandate Fluidity...*

*....Bolstered by Transparent, Multi-Leader Involvement*

**OHIO**  
UNIVERSITY

## Presidential Support Changes Approach

- President's support for service center essential following two failed attempts
- Presidential transition requires reframing of mandate



## Senior Leadership Mandate for Public Champion

- Vice-Chancellor, Board provide mandate to COO, supported by peer-comparison data
- Public, unwavering support allows transformation to weather pushback



## Cross-Cabinet Consensus, Joint Leadership

- President, Provost, CFO communicated joint support for reorganization across institution
- Transformation continues even after Provost departs



## Board-Backed, Provost-Directed Restructuring

- Provost applies board mandate for initial restructuring on his own office
- Deans inspired to take up mandate and lead changes within own colleges

# Six Attributes of a Thriving Institution



# Do Our Structures Enable—Not Stifle—Innovation?

## Historic Tendencies

### Continuity Bias

Structures and incentives emphasize continuity, discouraging experimentation and limiting organizational progress.

### Tradition Loyalty

Campus stakeholders default to legacy practices, limiting change and slowing necessary transformation.

### Ad Hoc Proposals and Approvals

One-off decisions and a lack of standardized processes create inconsistency and limit scalability.

### Fixed Cost Rigidity

High expenses in facilities, staffing, and infrastructure limit flexibility and trap resources in outdated commitments.

## New Capabilities

### Innovation-Linked Incentives



Tie faculty and staff recognition and advancement to experimentation, risk-taking, and forward progress.

### Change-Ready Leadership Pipelines



Prepare future leaders to champion transformation and guide stakeholders through uncertainty.

### Innovation Incubators



Create centralized teams, funds, and processes for approving and quickly testing innovative ideas.

### Adaptive Cost Structures



Keep costs variable through shared space, flexible staffing, and modular services that adjust with demand.

# Create a Culture for Continuous Improvement



## Four Steps to Integrate Innovation into Your Campus

**Train** faculty and staff on CI<sup>1</sup> culture, methods, and tools

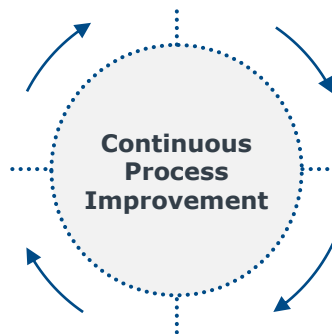


*CI workshops and Lean Six Sigma practitioner training increase knowledge about CI methods*

**Facilitate** connections between departments engaging in CI efforts



*Michigan Tech's Lean Community of Practice connects campus members driving CI efforts*



**Empower** leaders with hands-on support using CI frameworks to determine next steps



*Indiana University's "Just Do It" initiative offers guidance and advice for staff implementing small improvements*

**Evaluate** CI effectiveness with assessments and cataloging systems



*UC Berkeley's maturity assessments investigate the optimization status of existing processes*

1) Continuous Improvement.

# Six Attributes of a Thriving Institution



# Are We Prepared to Act Now for Outcomes Years Away?

## Historic Tendencies

### Near-Term Planning Cycles

Institutional processes focus on urgent needs, neglecting long-term financial sustainability.

### Reactive Governance Cycles

Decision-making bodies react episodically, undermining sustained long-term direction.

### Crisis Response Hiring

Leadership appointments are made reactively to plug gaps, sacrificing alignment and long-term needs.

### Annual Goals and Performance Metrics

Executive incentives tied to one-year benchmarks discourage bold bets and progress toward long-range outcomes.

## New Capabilities

### Long-Range Financial Forecasting



Use forward-looking projections to guide investments and anticipate emerging fiscal pressures.

### Cascaded Strategic Goals



Translate institutional priorities into aligned objectives that guide decisions across all levels.

### Vision-Driven Talent Recruitment



Intentionally select leaders for mission alignment and future readiness, not just near-term operational needs.

### Future-Focused Compensation Plans



Reward leaders for driving initiatives that create durable value and advance institutional transformation.

# Auckland's Long-Term Commitment to Change



18



## Standardized Faculty Administration



- Changed **reporting lines** to clarify career paths
- **Communities of Practice** maintain new structure across faculties

## Position Management Sprint



- Taxonomized activities to **identify similar roles**
- Created **common job descriptions** and titles across university

## Established Shared Transaction Center



- High volume, transactional **activities centralized**
- **Specialist roles** created to deliver transactional services

# EAB's Six Attributes Infographic Available Now

## The Six Attributes of Agile Institutions

Assess your institution's readiness to respond to mounting sector pressures—and pinpoint the capability gaps that matter most.

Intensifying financial and market pressures are pushing colleges and universities to make faster and bolder decisions. Increasingly, campus leadership teams are recognizing that traditional approaches to decision-making and cross-campus coordination cannot keep pace with the current environment.

This infographic outlines six attributes of agile institutions and the core capabilities associated with each one. Rate how consistently your institution exhibits each capability using the scale below. Enter your ratings in the teal boxes, then total them to calculate your overall score for each attribute. Higher scores indicate areas of strength, while lower scores highlight priority areas for improvement.

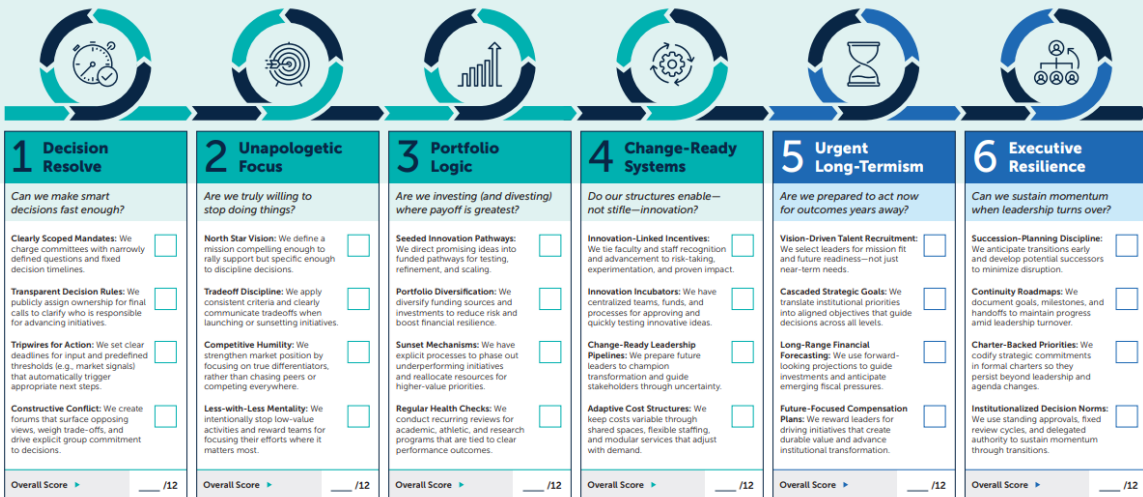
### Operating Capabilities

The structures and processes that enable institutions to act quickly and effectively

### Endurance Capabilities

Leadership practices that sustain momentum through upheaval and change

**Rating Scale:** **1** We do not or very rarely demonstrate this capability **2** We sometimes demonstrate this capability, but not in a consistent or repeatable way **3** We consistently demonstrate this capability across our campus



Contact your EAB Strategic Leader to request a board or cabinet briefing on the major pressures reshaping the higher education sector.



# Wrapping Things Up

---

# Evaluations and Takeaways

What's your most important takeaway or valuable insight you have gained over these past two days?

# Tell us about your experience!



6-minute survey.

Your input helps us tailor implementation support and simplify next steps.



[eab.com/cbo-retreat-asu](https://eab.com/cbo-retreat-asu)



202-747-1000 | [eab.com](http://eab.com)

 @eab    @eab-    @WeAreEAB

