



## THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

# Digital Transformation is Critical to Learner and Institution Success

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# Methodology

This white paper examines the process of digital transformation (DX) for higher education as a response to current trends and market forces. It was developed using existing content from ongoing research in IDC's worldwide and regional Education Digital Transformation Strategies practice, including several global surveys of educational institutions completed in 2019 and 2020. In addition, IDC conducted phone interviews with key Salesforce staff and the digital transformation leaders at Arizona State University (ASU), BI Norwegian Business School, Monash University, and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

*Note: All numbers in this document may not be exact due to rounding.*

# Accelerating Digital Transformation in Higher Education

**Market forces have shifted the expectations and needs of learners today. Digital-native students expect a personalized and connected learning experience that delivers value. They want their higher education experience to give them the skills needed in the workplace. Nontraditional students, those who may be employees or have family obligations, need flexible options as they refresh existing skills or learn new skills to keep pace with employment opportunities.**

The existing business model of higher education has lacked midmarket, affordable options and often relies on scarcity to drive value. Tier 1 universities are either very expensive, especially for students studying abroad, or highly competitive, while tier 2 and 3 universities have seen their costs rise dramatically as well. This is a mismatch for the needs of upcoming digital-native and nontraditional students, who question the high costs of education and the labor market, in which employers place a premium on employees who have higher education degrees or specialized certificates and training. At the same time, IDC surveys show that 70% of companies have difficulty sourcing digitally savvy workers.

As a result, there has been a rapid growth in online learning, often provided by private, new market entrants. IDC predicts that without a change from existing higher education institutions, over the next five years, tertiary institutions without digital learning and online accreditation will lose 5% of their student enrollment numbers each year to online learning platforms.



**70% of companies have difficulty sourcing digital-savvy workers.**

The COVID-19 crisis has further exposed existing business model and services delivery challenges, highlighting the need for greater flexibility in offering remote or online services and the need for agility to respond quickly to a major crisis. Higher education institutions need to reassess now how they can deliver on their institutional mission in light of these new realities and continue to impact the world.

There is a response to these pressures — accelerate the digital transformation (DX) of higher education. IDC defines DX as “a means of applying new technology to radically change processes, customer experience, and value.” DX implies a journey of large-scale change that helps institutions become enterprises that manage and embrace innovation and digital disruption, as opposed to merely updating or enhancing existing processes, technologies, and models.

## A Framework for DX Success

**DX in higher education is a fundamental way to ensure learner and institutional success, as well as prepare for the future, in which further change and disruption are certain.**

DX incorporates changes to governance, staff and faculty skills, processes, the creation and improved use of data, and the implementation of new technology. This includes addressing common challenges in higher education operations, such as functional and departmental silos, and shifting to an enterprise-wide operating model. And while DX encompasses much more than technology, technology is the underpinning of DX as new digital services and products are developed. DX is a digital-first mentality but always keeps the student’s needs at the center of decision making.

## COVID-19 Highlights the Need for DX

**The impact of COVID-19 is a defining moment for DX in higher education, in which institutions have been forced into the rapid delivery of online learning, remote work, and online processes.**

Digitally determined institutions with some form of DX, especially cloud platform capabilities, were able to respond faster and easier to provide constituent service, help desk support, personalized communications, and online tools. These capabilities go beyond the pandemic and offer a view

**“Higher education is at a turning point. First, we simply can’t assume that the traditional models of delivering education are sustainable without adaptation. Second, today’s students are demanding an educational experience that is flexible, personalized, and real time. If we are to thrive and deliver on our mission, we’ll need to innovate.”**

Donna Kidwell  
CTO of EdPlus, ASU

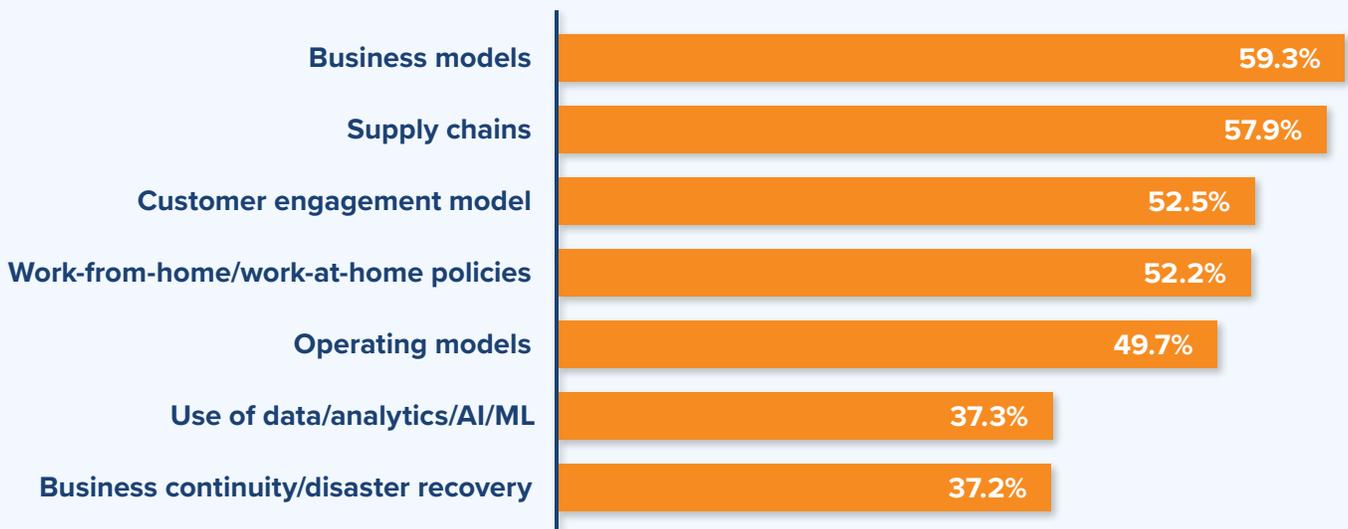
into how institutions can respond to emergencies such as public health crises and severe weather events.

COVID-19 is a wake-up call. According to IDC’s *COVID-19 Impact on IT Spending Survey*, conducted in April 2020, over 28% of education respondents indicated that their 2020 revenue would decrease by 10–20%, while 22% believed the impact on revenue would be a 20–50% decrease. Not a single respondent indicated that revenue or budgets would increase. These are staggering figures and demonstrate the deep impact COVID-19 is having on higher education and the essential need for innovative responses from institutions. Some areas, in fact, are not expected to return to how they were before, leading to the “next normal.” What will the next normal look like? For higher education, business models, customer engagement models, supply chains, and operations may all be permanently changed (see Figure 1).

The crisis also pushed institutions to consider where their need areas are for accelerated transformation. In the same survey from April 2020, higher education institutions responded that “strengthening software capabilities for digital innovation” was the first priority, and “exploring new business models and growth areas” and “creating new remote office and enterprise-wide collaboration systems” were the next priorities. These are key areas to address in order to enable long-term resiliency to future crises. Furthermore, in IDC’s May 2020 *COVID-19 Impact on IT Spending Survey*, education institutions indicated that many of areas of operations will be permanently changed by the pandemic.

**FIGURE 1**  
**COVID-19 Changes Expected to Be Permanent**  
 (% of respondents)

**Q. Which of these areas will likely be permanently changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?**



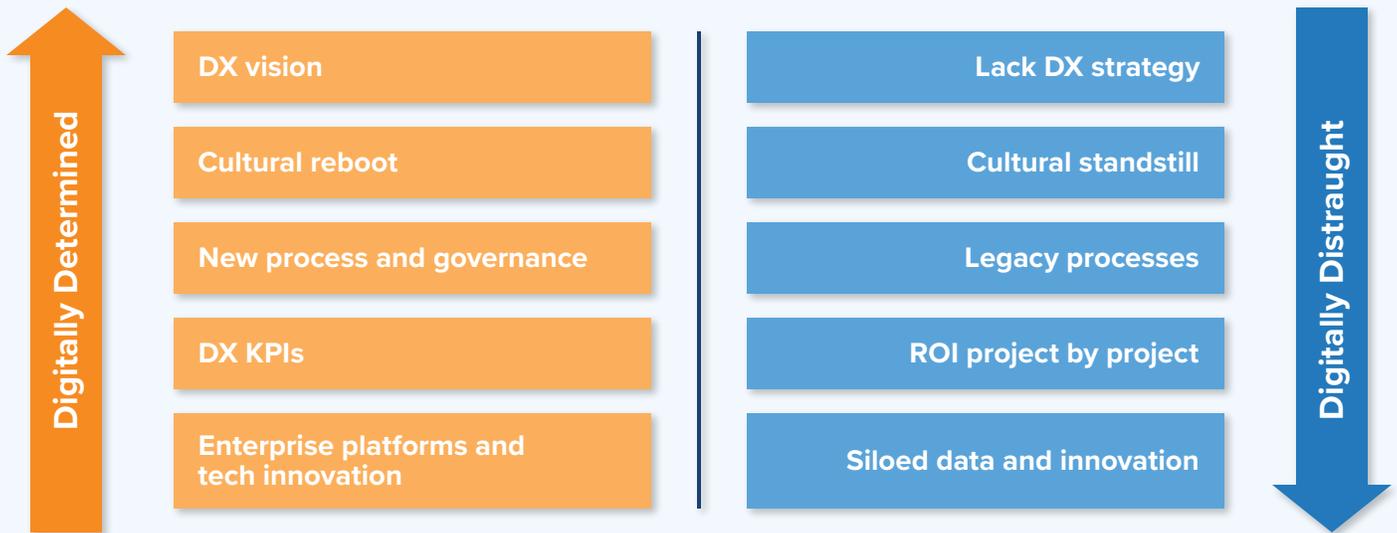
n = 67 | Source: IDC’s *COVID-19 Impact on IT Spending Survey*, May 2020

# Transforming from Digitally Distraught to Digitally Determined

IDC’s ongoing research has discovered that institutions can be grouped into two categories: “digitally determined” and “digitally distraught” (see Figure 2).

Digitally determined institutions have involved leadership, key staff, and stakeholders to develop a DX vision and strategy, which they understand will involve changes in culture, processes, and policies, as well as investment in new technical capabilities, such as data management and analytics and digital skills. Digitally distraught institutions may try one or two of these areas (such as upgrading to a new platform), but they don’t connect data and/or process silos to bring together all the new digital capabilities needed to deliver transformative value.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Key Areas to Address for DX Success:**  
**Digitally Determined Versus Digitally Distraught Institutions**



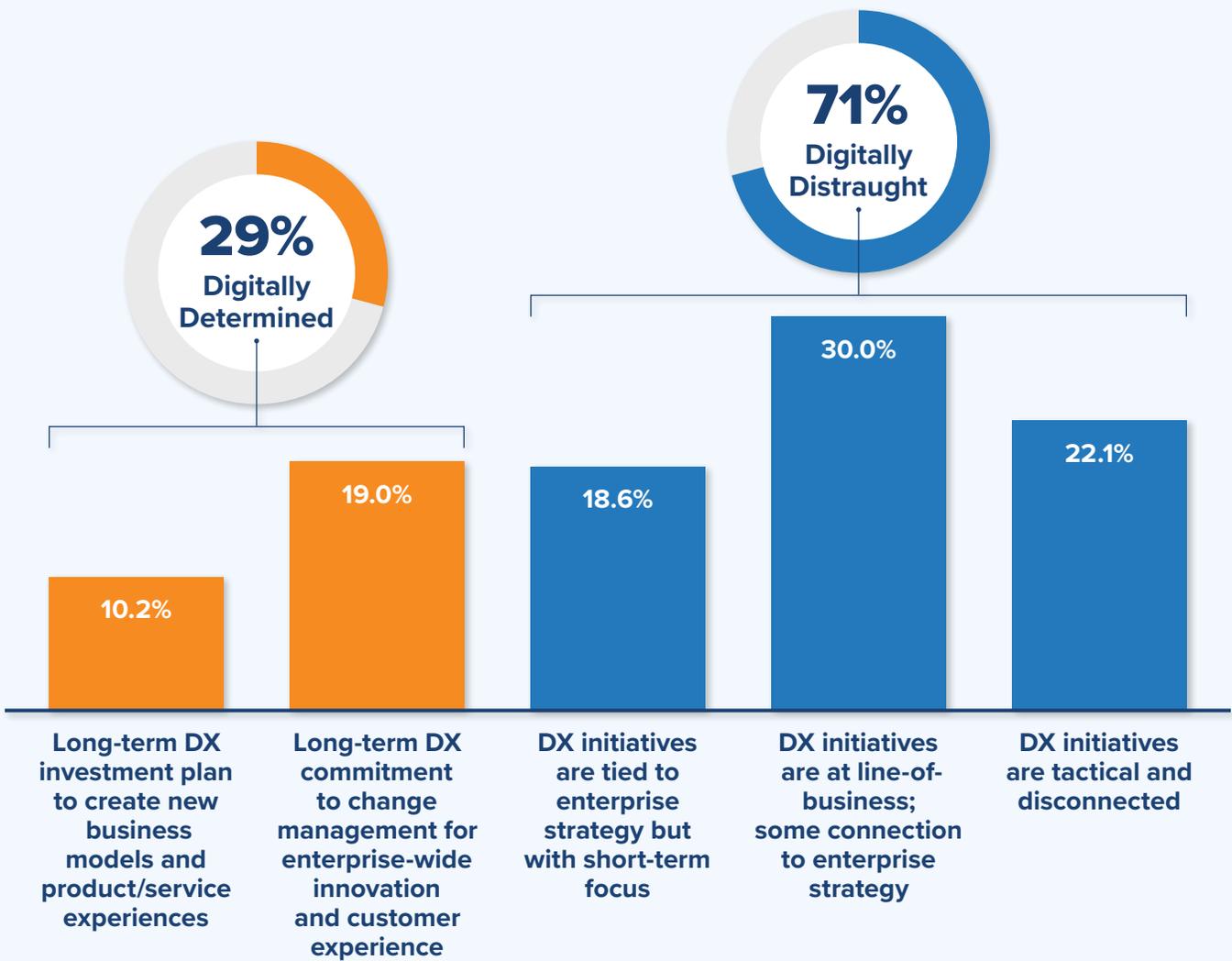
Source: IDC, 2020

Globally, 71% of higher education institutions can be considered digitally distraught, according to IDC's 2019 *Global DX Leaders Survey*. These institutions have DX initiatives, but they are tactical, short term, and siloed, as opposed to a long-term commitment to change management and enterprise-wide change (see Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3**  
**Approaches to DX in Higher Education**

(% of respondents)

Q. What is your institution's approach to DX efforts?



n = 150 higher education respondents | Source: IDC's *Global DX Leaders Survey*, 2019

## Prepare Now for the Future of Continuous Disruption and Innovation

What does the future look like for higher education? It is a hybrid model of campus based and online, virtual experiences that students of all ages and types navigate seamlessly and over the course of a lifelong relationship with an institution. This is likely the way tertiary educational institutions — whether public or private, large or small — must operate to meet their mission and stay solvent.

To do this, universities and colleges must become digitally determined and embrace the development of new digital capabilities. Real results in key areas can be achieved, as the case studies in this white paper demonstrate. Education institutions around the world report benefits in revenue from new and existing products and services, increased loyalty, retention and acquisition, and productivity improvements as a result of DX strategy and investment (see Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4**  
**Benefits of DX in Higher Education**

(% of respondents)

Q. Where have you achieved the biggest benefits from your current DX programs/projects?



n = 150 higher education respondents | Source: IDC's *Global DX Leaders Survey*, 2019

# A Deeper Look at Key Challenges and Success Factors

Digital transformation requires a commitment to change over the long term and resiliency to turn challenges into opportunities. Higher education institutions face challenges on multiple fronts and will need to address them (see Figure 5).

**FIGURE 5**  
**DX Challenges in Higher Education**



### **Siloed DX initiatives or organizational structure.**

**39% of higher education institutions** treat DX as a special project or run it out of a special department, which limits DX from being perceived as part of everyone's job. A DX strategy should have leadership involvement and a coordinating, central decision-making authority that works across the institution.



### **Lack of digital integration.**

**43% of institutions** reported that digital innovations have not been brought together across the institution into a single platform. Higher education institutions have multiple systems; these systems need to be connected or integrated into a platform with a consolidated view of operations.



### **Short-term, tactical plans.**

**54% of institutions** reported that the digital road map focuses on the short term and does not factor in the long-term transformation of the higher education industry. The first step is to create an explicit DX strategy that outlines initiatives over time (see the Create a DX Strategy and Road Map section). This should provide a single digital road map for the enterprise, centrally led with a clear mission and formal accountability.



### **Outdated KPIs.**

**28% of institutions** reported that they are using the same KPIs to measure digital efforts that are used for manual and paper-based processes. New KPIs for measuring DX success are needed, such as targets for how much of revenue is platform driven, the percentage of repetitive enterprise interactions that are augmented by AI each year, or the increase in self-service processes.



### **Limited DX capabilities.**

**30% of institutions** reported that they have not developed the new capabilities required to run a digital enterprise. For example, an institution with multiple, siloed CRM platforms needs to consider platform capabilities to drive data-related IT investments and APIs to reduce data acquisition and sharing costs.

n = 150 higher education respondents | Source: IDC's *Global DX Leaders Survey*, 2019

## Become a Digitally Determined Institution

As higher education institutions become digitally determined and build new business models and new sets of IT capabilities, those capabilities should center around a culture of innovation and data use, which would enable the following:

→ **Blending the digital and physical in student and constituent engagement.**

This includes the student experience for a long-term relationship with an institution for lifelong learning, including online classes, in-person events, and engagement that is personal and convenient.

→ **Using data to create new digital services and products that bolster a new business model for universities.** This includes understanding what different learners need and how they define value. This requires consolidated data for a holistic and detailed view of students and prospects and a single version of data truth for analytics and dashboards. Data also needs to be understood and used by staff and faculty in order to understand how programs, courses, and faculty are meeting the learner's needs.

→ **Delivering personal and cost-effective services.** This includes the ability to automate and scale personalization. It also relies on holistic data sets of each learner and the ability to segment learners to understand their needs. It includes self-service tools such as chatbots or online forms for cost-effective services at scale.

We know that change will be a process made up of projects and initiatives. It is important to consider each of these areas for each project and create a DX road map that provides cohesion across projects.

“Think about where you want to go— eyes on the horizon. You don’t need to know the exact path to get there, or exactly how it will look, but you should know where you want to be.”

Mike Page, Head of Enterprise CRM, LSE

## Create a DX Strategy and Road Map

DX cannot happen without a vision of where you want to go in your transformation and what initiatives need to be modernized to fulfill your institution's mission and strategic priorities. This means that there has to be a strategy that looks at the next 10 years with a road map that is modular, scalable, and extensible.

### Ask yourself the following questions:

→ **How is the higher education industry going to change in the next decade given what we know about market trends?**

→ **How will your institution adjust to the future and create the needed new business models and services?**

IDC has developed a DX taxonomy that provides a framework of use cases that will be important for the future of higher education. This taxonomy identifies the strategic priorities of higher education, the programs that are being developed to meet these priorities, and the specific projects that are being implemented within those programs (see Figure 6, next page).

**FIGURE 6**  
**Tie Initiatives to DX Strategy**

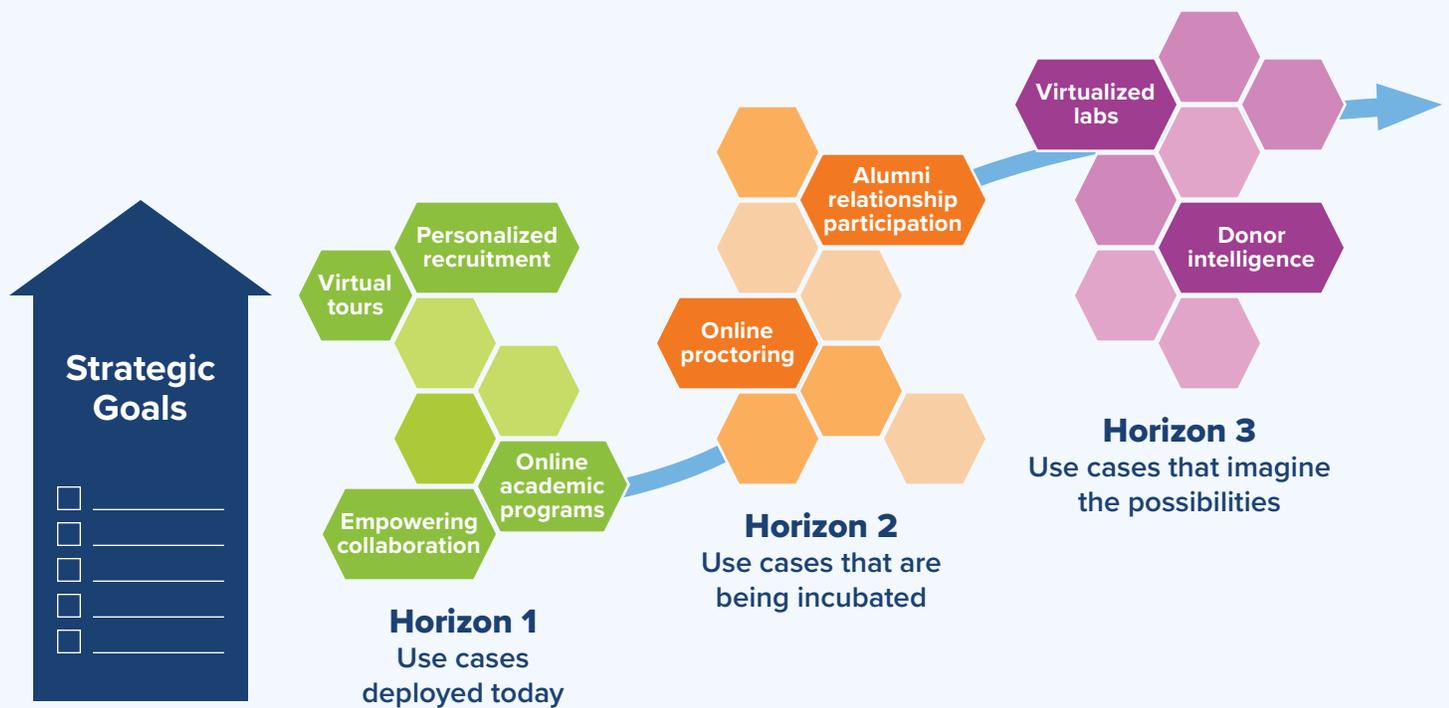
Strategic Priorities	Programs	Use Cases				
 <b>Lifelong student engagement</b>	Modernized recruitment and admissions	Omni-channel marketing	Personalized recruitment	Virtual tours and extended reality engagement	Digital admissions	Smart financial aid and compliance
	Student administrative tools	Student portals	Self-service and crowdsourced student support	Communications platforms	Onboarding services	
	Modernized learning	Online education programs	Virtualized student workspace	Digital inclusion and accessibility	Collaborative library	
	Student success tracking	Integrated planning, mentoring, and advising	Engagement tracking and analysis	Online and digital proctoring	Data-driven career services	
 <b>Optimized student health</b>	Telehealth	Student health and wellness	Virtual care	Digital behavioral health therapy	Secure clinical messaging	
	Clinical outcomes	Passive student mental health assessment and monitoring	Embedded public health disaster guidelines	Proactive health education	Symptom checker	
 <b>Faculty empowerment</b>	Research amplification	Research at scale	Empowering collaboration			
	Optimized research administration	Optimized research fund management	Research publication support	Publications bibliometrics	Grants and funding management	
	Modernized teaching	Classroom of the future	Maker spaces and virtual labs	Teaching impact analytics	Curriculum and class development for hybrid learning	Digital grading and assessment tools
 <b>Next-generation administration</b>	Advanced human resources	HR services delivery	Comprehensive onboarding	DX technology literacy	Adaptive workforce planning	Integrated employee communications
	Enterprise resource management	Data platform management	Generative planning and budgeting	Predictive supply chain management	Real estate analytics	
 <b>Funding and partnership enhancement</b>	Lifelong alumni and donor relationship	Functional donor intelligence	Alumnae relationship management	Intelligent alumni event management		
	Corporate and nonprofit relationship enhancement	Corporate partnership development	Entrepreneurial partnership incubators/ COEs	Extended student programs		
 <b>Campus of the future</b>	Intelligent campus security	Next-generation emergency management	Secure facility access			
	Intelligent facilities	Intelligent space planning	Smart buildings	Connected maintenance		
	Smart stadiums and arenas	Intelligent event management	Smart concessions	Smart parking		

Source: IDC, 2020

These projects need to be prioritized to scale across the institution rather than by individual departments or functional areas. A use case road map helps an institution see relationships between projects as well as determine an executable timeline for implementation (see Figure 7). The key, too, is to understand the technology capabilities currently available in the market. DX does not require developing one’s own custom apps; it requires just the opposite—using an ecosystem that rests on a common, enterprise-wide platform.

**FIGURE 7**  
**Time Horizon and Road Map for Initiatives**

A digital road map should be aligned with the overall digital strategy and contain concrete goals in Horizon 1 and more abstract and aspirational goals in Horizon 3.



Source: IDC, 2020

## Track Success with Digital KPIs

Key factors for success in DX are measuring the right outcomes and using the right KPIs to track progress. IDC research shows that almost 30% of institutions are using outdated KPIs. While existing metrics such as recruitment, admission, and graduation rates will remain important, some may be reliant on new digital processes. For example, as seen with ASU, if you are looking to expand your recruitment and acceptance rates, you may need to start measuring the level of personalization of communications, how many channels you are using to reach prospective students, the open rate and click-through rates of emails, and the time spent on web pages.

### IDC recommends a DX performance scorecard that covers the following KPI categories:

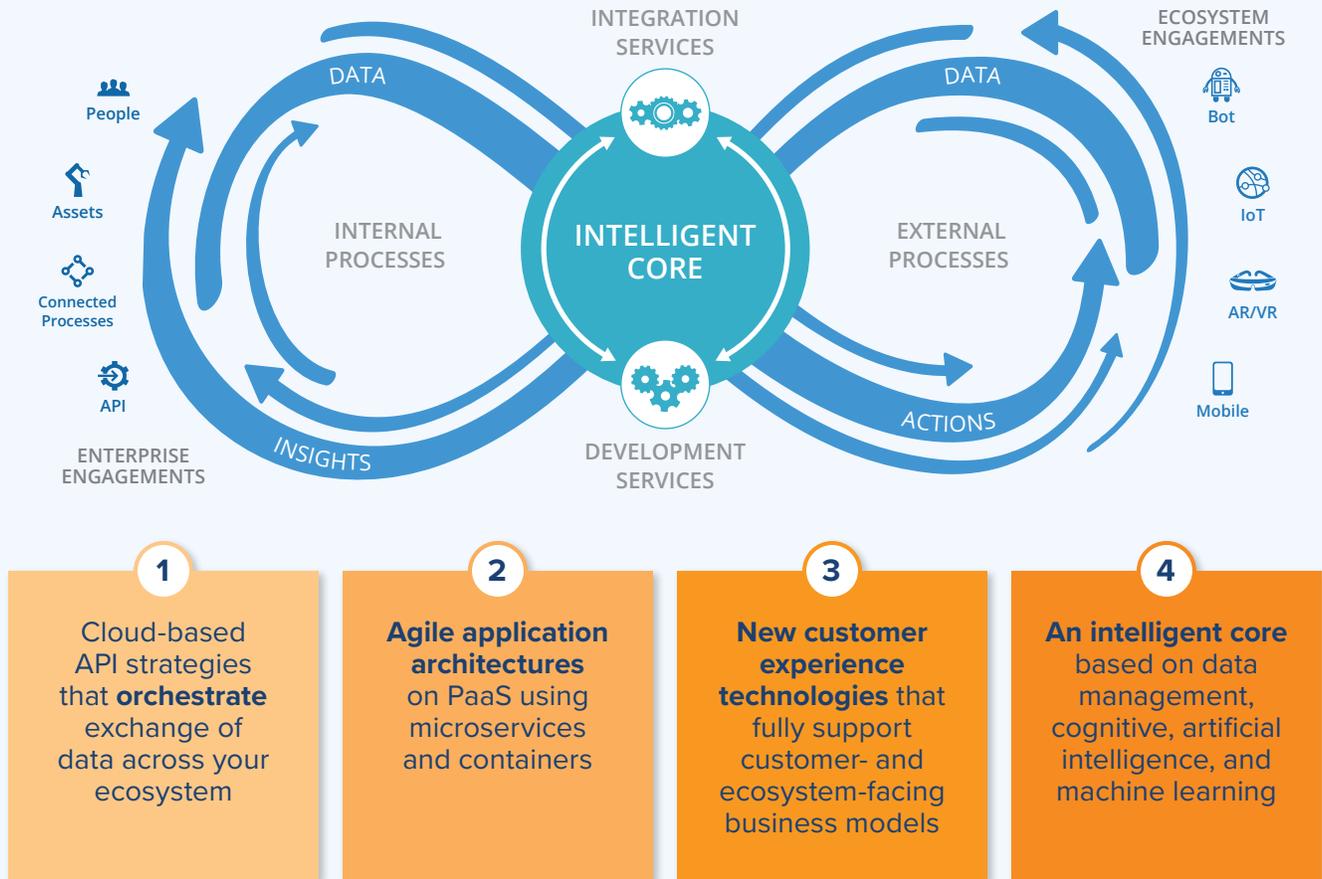
- **Leadership:** KPIs associated with innovation rates
- **Constituent engagement:** KPIs focused on customer advocacy
- **Information monetization:** KPIs focused on data capitalization by organizing, maintaining, and refining data sets and data processes
- **Operating model:** KPIs focused on business operations
- **Workforce transformation:** KPIs focused on the skills, engagement, and experience of the workforce

## Develop a Digital Platform

The underlying technology that supports all of these metrics is a digital platform that can connect back-end and front-end processes with common applications and shared data. The platform can connect disparate applications, enable the creation of new applications, integrate data sources for analytics and decision-making support, and offer new capabilities via ecosystem partners. There are many approaches an institution can take, but evolving toward an embedded digital model is key to maintaining digital transformation.

Figure 8 (next page) shows a digital platform. Data is at the center of the platform and spans IT and departments. Start with an intelligent core that holds the code that enables using data for insights and tools; this core is based on data management, analytics, AI, and machine learning. Institutions will need to use cloud-based API strategies that orchestrate data exchange across the ecosystem. Data by itself has limited value—it's what an institution does with the data that will be important. And while data is the core, data and IT governance, architecture, integration, and development services are the enablers of the platform.

**FIGURE 8**  
**The Key Elements of a Digital Platform**



Source: IDC, 2020

## Proactive Institutional Change

A fundamental challenge of DX is the need to change legacy culture and processes, which are embedded in the institutional structure. Academia is notoriously siloed with faculty operating independently and schools and departments having autonomy. Siloed technology and business structures often mean resistance to platforms enabling DX, although IDC believes that many higher education institutions have a real desire to evolve their culture and business model.

There are multiple areas of change management that are important for successful DX. The first area is often a lack of internal capabilities and skills to develop a DX platform, including initial architecture and design skills; other areas include application management, development, and integration skills. Staff need to be able to manage the platform and cloud vendor relationships, have the skills to adopt and take advantage of the platform, and absorb the user specifications and help translate them into new service.

**“Build capabilities in-house by empowering your teams to grapple with the problems. Give them the opportunity to learn and grow with the new technology.”**

Josh Teichman  
Group Manager, Digital Transformation, Monash University

Investing in existing employees to teach them new skills can be a strategy that helps by reducing the need to look for expensive and scarce outside hires and by offering valuable employees, who have institutional knowledge and historical background on legacy systems, a way to obtain new skills and work on cutting-edge projects. Skills in DevOps and DevSecOps, data management, cybersecurity, and managing hybrid cloud technologies are key areas of investment, as well as certifications on specific solutions.

Change management is also important around process redesign and adoption. Separate from technical skills, organizational design and communications skills are also needed to help the entire institution learn and adapt to a new platform and understand its capabilities. This requires a strong manager who can lead in governance and project management to maintain momentum of DX initiatives over time. A DX platform is not a one-shot implementation. Platforms will be continuously updated with new releases, new functionalities, and new modules, so users and managers need to be constantly trained as well. IDC surveys show that 70% of DX initiatives are led by the CIO, CTO, chief digital officer, or head of digital transformation.

## CASE STUDY

## London School of Economics and Political Science

## Salesforce Platform Supports DX Strategy

Digital transformation is part of LSE's 2030 strategy and LSE360 vision to improve services to constituents by making engagement with the institution easier and more personalized. This includes replacing legacy technologies and workflows with digital processes and technology that provide a better understanding of students, prospects, alumni, donors, sponsors, and researchers. The DX strategy, as defined by LSE360, uses the Salesforce platform to maintain a lifelong relationship between LSE and its students and alumni.

In 2016, the Student Marketing and Recruitment team upgraded its CRM system to the Salesforce Education Cloud platform with the goals of understanding prospective students more deeply and delivering a personalized applicant experience via an easy-to-use, unified experience.

### LSE started with:

- **Personalized recruitment information** for events, courses, and offerings
- **A better registration and attendee experience** for 200+ events a year with an ability to track student participation
- **Enhanced outreach for its Widening Participation program** to reach underrepresented populations in schools that send fewer students to college, typically in lower income areas
- **Online applications review and admissions processing**, with a multidepartment dashboard for reviewing applications and graduate admissions using a portal built on Salesforce Community Cloud

### Quick Stats:

**Founded in 1895**

**12,000 students**

**140 countries represented**

**150,000 alumni**

## Training and Upskilling — A Key Success Factor

LSE used a variety of methods to help train existing staff to use Salesforce to maximum value and adopt new processes. The solution delivery itself was mostly achieved using internal staff, including former students. Since no LSE staff members had existing Salesforce experience, the university relied heavily on Salesforce tools to train and upskill on the platform, learning via Trailhead and other online materials. LSE also invests in courses, certifications, and events for employees, and proactively leads and participates in Salesforce events.

## The Results and Impact

	Personalized recruitment	Improved event registration and attendance	Online applications and admissions for widening participation
Legacy system	LSE had a one-size-fits-all method for contacting and communicating with students about classes, events, and offerings.	Siloed event registration and tracking with a less streamlined and user-friendly experience. No personalized communications.	Manual application processes and no personalized outreach to schools from lower income areas.
With Salesforce	Using Education Cloud’s advanced segmentation capabilities, LSE migrated data, email communications, and events to the Salesforce platform for student recruiting.	Event registrations, ticketing, and mobile app to track attendance data provided a touch point with prospective students, executive learners, and alums and an ability to feed data into a 360-degree student view.	Enhanced Widening Participation with online application forms that feed directly into Salesforce via AppExchange. Students get automated email updates and can track progress online.
Outcomes	Personalized emails showed results going from a 25% open rate to 40% and the click rate rising from 2.9% to 11–23%.	Attendees who rated the registration process “very good” rose from 61% to 75%. The rate of those registered who attended the event grew from 75% to 89%.	Widening Participation applications increased by 200. With GDPR, student records are more secure and protected.

Following the success of these initiatives, and after determining the business case, LSE began to consolidate CRM functionality and CRM systems onto the enterprise platform. Today, the Salesforce platform provides a set of core services using Education Cloud, Service Cloud, Marketing Cloud, and Community Cloud.

### These services are available across the institution and include:

- Platform deliverables — backup and architecture
- Events
- Service desks, including live chat
- Contact management, including opportunity pipelines
- Online forms and workflow, including online applications
- Mass communications

There is also a program delivering across the following areas (with many already live): Widening Participation, Student Marketing and Recruitment, Undergraduate and Graduate degree online selection, Summer School, Student Services, Student Fees, Research Ethics and Commercialization, Careers, and Philanthropy and Global Engagement (including Alumni). Today, LSE has over 1,100 users and Community licensing for external users and students.

## Why Salesforce?

### LSE chose Salesforce for:

- **Extensibility and the ability to create generic solutions** for multiple areas and uses
- **Rapid development** of new features and functionality
- **AppExchange** and the available apps in the broader ecosystem
- **A low-code/no-code** environment
- **Data sharing features** that allow granular options of what data is shared and what is not
- **Trailhead** and the training materials and peer community

## Next Steps

Salesforce has become a foundational element in LSE's delivery on the 2030 strategy by providing a lifelong connection with students that is personalized and proactive. The use of the platform continues to develop as services expand across divisions, offering the agility to provide services both onsite and online.

Next on the agenda is a focus on student health and well-being and alumni and looking at how Salesforce Einstein Discovery can help uncover deeper insights into the student journey.

## Institutional Resilience in Response to COVID-19

The Salesforce platform plays a key role in LSE's ability to quickly provide online student services in response to COVID-19. The platform offered a form of business continuity as everything moved remote and online. With digital processes rapidly put in place, the summer assessment period could be conducted and supported off campus. LSE plans to keep many of these support processes in perpetuity.

## CASE STUDY

## Arizona State University

## Enterprise-wide Platform Creates a Unified Student Experience

At Arizona State University, technology is viewed as the catalyst for access to education, and flexibility for learning options gives access to people who have families or full-time jobs. This means the whole design of services is different. For example, ASU offers six enrollment periods: two in the summer, two in the fall, and two in the spring. ASU also tracks additional metrics beyond the traditional and uses deep analytics via its in-house Action Lab to track student achievement and make constant improvements.

ASU's mission to improve access and student success in higher education is supported by EdPlus, the university's central enterprise unit focused on the design and scalable delivery of digital teaching and learning models aimed at increasing student success and reducing barriers to achievement in higher education.

ASU works with Salesforce as a strategic partner to use Education Cloud as a comprehensive set of solutions for the university. The Salesforce platform integrates systems from over 32 colleges and departments to create comprehensive constituent profiles. This enables ASU to provide unified students services, personalized messaging, scaled automation and self-service, and a single view for deep analytics and performance tracking.

### ASU uses a broad portfolio of Salesforce products, such as:

- **Service Cloud** to provide unified student services via the My ASU portal
- **Marketing Cloud** for email management and tailored communications to students, alumni, and donors
- **Einstein Analytics** for performance analytics
- **Heroku and Salesforce Lightning** for application development
- **Commerce Cloud**, which connects marketing information with payment pages that can process online transactions

## Change Management Is Critical for Success

Donna Kidwell, CTO of EdPlus at ASU, is “very intentional” about designing teams for DX. Kidwell said that managing DX at a university is like ultimate frisbee, where there is no referee and growth happens by doing. Teams are created to include

### Quick Stats:

**120,000 students**

**EdPlus, the university's central enterprise unit that serves 60,000 online students with more than 200 online degree programs**

**Ranked #1 for innovation by U.S. News and World Report**

experts in the tools and data along with functional and business staff to break down silos. The teams collaborate without a heavy top-down structure, similar to how agile software development teams work.

This includes actively encouraging staff to learn new skills by taking advantage of ASU’s own programs, as well as codeveloping solutions with Salesforce. ASU works to provide unique work opportunities to compensate for a lower pay scale compared with the private sector for skilled Salesforce developers and helps existing staff develop new skills using Trailhead.

## The Results and Impact

	Streamlined Enterprise Services	Personal Marketing and Recruitment
<b>Legacy system</b>	Fragmented systems for student services were difficult to navigate without robust self-service. Difficulty in real-time tracking and analysis meant that service improvements were delayed.	ASU sent 91 generic emails per year via 13 mass email systems. 14 separate colleges managed recruitment differently and without a complete view of each prospective student.
<b>With Salesforce</b>	Over 32 colleges, departments, and offices use one system to provide unified students services through the “My ASU” portal via its Service Center of Service Cloud. It provides self-service articles and phone and online chat support, with all interactions tracked in a single system.	Email systems were migrated to Marketing Cloud for current and prospective students, parents, alumni, and other partners. 14 colleges and schools were migrated to track 1.1 million leads for recruiters with one view of all communications.
<b>Outcomes</b>	There was a 1.3 percentage point increase in the student retention rate in the first year. Over 1 million cases were solved in Salesforce, and over 1,000 knowledge articles were published. Real-time service adjustments were made by tracking and analyzing service goals and metrics by department.	The total number of emails to students was reduced by 16%. Email open rates increased by 7% and nonsubscriber rates decreased by 90%.

## Why Salesforce?

Salesforce has supported ASU in realizing its mission and goals through iterative teamwork. The partnership is driven by the customized innovation that Salesforce supports. For example, the teams are working on blockchain and education credentialing so that ASU can reduce barriers to communicate with community colleges about shared students.

## Next Steps

Salesforce is integral to ASU, and there are many next steps for the partnership. The university is looking to use Salesforce to manage events, support students in career advancement, and foster closer corporate relationships in the near future.

## Navigating a New Reality with COVID-19

ASU was in a strong position to help its students navigate changes because of COVID-19, and the university had a very clear understanding of the student issues and behaviors during the crisis. ASU teams could see which students were engaged, logged on, and completing learning modules, and the teams could engage if there were issues or flags. Their success coaches used real-time information from the Salesforce platform to help students navigate tough decisions during COVID-19.

# Key Actions for Progress

While this white paper provides a framework for DX in higher education, this is just the first step in a long-term effort to radically change institutions. Given that, it is important to begin right. The following is a summary of initial key actions for the first phases of a digital transformation journey:

- ✓ **Spend time on strategic planning to ensure digital platforms and new use cases are aligned around a common, enterprise-wide vision that has executive support.** This includes understanding what is possible; many institutions don't fully realize the capabilities of solutions and may not fully scope out how capabilities can be used to transform the institution.
- ✓ **Invest in design and architecture planning to save time and money.** There are important architectural components and principles to consider, especially for enterprise-level platforms across multiple business units. Use outside resources if you have to, but do invest time and energy in architecture design.
- ✓ **Don't move existing problems to the cloud.** Now is the time to address long-standing challenges from legacy environment and fix them.
- ✓ **Define needs areas and how you are measuring success.** Develop new KPIs for measuring DX impact in financials, business, and operations.
- ✓ **Prioritize scaling.** Islands of innovation don't scale, and they don't provide the needed functionality for the future of higher education.

[checklist continues on next page...](#)

- ✓ **Take a unified platform approach.** This is important, even if you start small and not with a full, enterprise-wide deployment.
- ✓ **Recognize that data is key.** Data management and data governance set the foundation for advanced analytics and insights for transformative decision making.
- ✓ **Use tools to scale innovation.** Platforms are about scaling innovation. Part of this is automation to use new tools, such as blockchain and chatbots, to manage processes that are difficult to scale.
- ✓ **Incorporate change management as part of DX.** This involves not only reskilling and upskilling employees on technologies but also creating and adopting new business processes by many different stakeholders such as faculty, staff, students, alumni, and corporate donors.
- ✓ **Include continuous improvement plans with regular reviews of evolution and progress.** As discussed throughout this white paper, DX is a journey and a process. The course will need to be adjusted and corrected along the way to account for new trends, innovations, and market disruptions.

“Don’t be scared to start experimenting with technology solutions. Seek support from those who will help you achieve your institution’s digital goals.”

Mike Page  
Head of Enterprise CRM, LSE

# 5 Things You Can Do Now

Digital transformation takes time and persistence, and the key is to start somewhere and start now.

- ✓ **Educate yourself and your institution** on what is possible with digital platform capabilities today. Talk with peers in online communities and events to gain a deeper understanding of how technology can support the institutional mission. Personal conversations can uncover important details and lessons learned.
- ✓ **Get buy-in** from leadership and ensure there is a clear lead who can oversee platform development. Create an internal team of staff, from across the institution, who will help push DX and associated governance and institutional changes. Start work with people you know who can help evangelize DX and amplify the message.
- ✓ **Get community input on initiatives.** Set up a process to ensure there is input from key user groups over time, and collect information about needed services and how users want to access services and their key concerns about DX.
- ✓ **Include continuous improvement plans with regular reviews of evolution and progress.** As discussed throughout this white paper, DX is a journey and a process. The course will need to be adjusted and corrected along the way to account for new trends, innovations, and market disruptions.
- ✓ **Embed security, privacy, accessibility, and inclusion** into all aspects of DX decision making to ensure your institution has digital trust with staff, faculty, learners, and alumni.

For decades, academia has operated on its own time frame, focused on the art of learning, research, and thought leadership. While these are still fundamental tenets of higher education, the global learning environment is rapidly changing as digital-native students enter universities with expectations for a connected campus experience, as technology innovations disrupt markets and skill sets are in constant need of upgrades, and as access to tertiary degrees becomes essential for upward mobility. It is time for higher education to embrace and accelerate digital transformation as a necessary process for its survival and relevance.

## CASE STUDY

## Monash University

## Breaking Down Silos to Maximize Impact

Digital transformation at Monash University is improving operational efficiencies and student experience by consolidating platforms and breaking down data silos to maximize the impact of technology investments. This has enabled a shift in organizational digital maturity to better support the university's mission to focus on solving the grand global challenges of the day.

Monash has been on its digital transformation journey with the goal of maximizing return on relationships through personalized engagement with prospective and current students, alumni, and industry and government partners using modern tools, streamlined processes, and emerging capabilities. Since its implementation, the Salesforce platform has been a strategic enabler at the core of Monash's business operations and transformation.

### Salesforce Accelerates Monash's Digital Maturity

Monash built the Salesforce platform as a centralized engagement layer integrated with a range of core business-critical applications that power the student journey. A deliberate decision was made to use a single Salesforce environment across the university for all departments, from Human Resources (HR) to Alumni Relations to Admissions and Student Service, to ensure staff are working together and able to effectively share data.

- **New architecture brings disparate solutions together.** Monash worked with architects from the Success Cloud team to develop a new Person360 architecture, which includes an application network built using MuleSoft's API-led connectivity approach.
- **There is a complete and unified view of constituents.** Monash uses Sales Cloud across the student life cycle for student recruitment and admissions, marketing, lead management, and philanthropy. The university uses Marketing Cloud to personalize and automate experiences and to manage Monash's complex global preference center, an important part of the university's data privacy strategy. Service Cloud is used for multichannel customer service at the university's "one-stop shop" contact center.
- **The enterprise admissions portal** provides access to course applications and digital offer acceptance, including via mobile devices. Community Cloud underpins this streamlined and paperless application process, which includes fewer steps and dynamically tailored questions. It also significantly streamlines

#### Quick Stats:

Over **80,000** students from **100** countries

Campuses in **Australia, China, Malaysia, and Italy**

Ranked as a **global top 100** university by *Times Higher Education*

internal processes such as moving applications between departments for faster review cycle times. This solution combines Salesforce AppExchange offerings from Conga and DocuSign as well as the use of Salesforce CPQ for product bundling.

- **Customer support innovation provides personalized support.** Once students are enrolled, all service requests and inquiries are managed through Service Cloud. Monash has developed deeply integrated intelligent chatbots to answer high-volume FAQs across multiple channels such as Apple Business and enable self-service transactions through chatbot such as purchasing official copies of university documents.
- **Departmental use goes beyond the student experience.** Human resources manages all staff tier 1 inquiries related to common questions such as payroll, leave, and the HR contact center on Service Cloud with Salesforce Knowledge. The alumni portal services 300,000+ alumni and manages upwards of \$40 million a year in donations online via Salesforce Communities.

## The Results and Impact

Monash's investments in internal Salesforce capability have resulted in dramatic improvements in delivering new services, tools, customer experiences, and capabilities with increased speed, agility, quality, reliability, and productivity. For example, Monash has improved its delivery processes for production-ready new applications and application enhancements using Selective Apex unit testing and automation of release management. Monash has reduced the time for developer tasks to realize an increase in application releases by 85.7%.

The university's response to the COVID-19 global health pandemic also demonstrated Monash's transformation in operations and a culture of cross-department collaboration, leveraging the Salesforce platform. Monash demonstrated that the university can be hyper-agile. As a result of improved release management capabilities, projects that once would have taken 7-14 weeks were able to be completed in 48 hours while maintaining quality.

## Hyper-Agility in Response to COVID-19

With the COVID-19 crisis, Monash quickly moved its entire operations online to enable students to continue their studies online and staff to work from home. Monash was able to stand up a new dedicated contact center to handle COVID-19-related inquiries using Service Cloud in 48 hours. The university launched specific financial grants with an online application process for application forms, review, and approval—all integrated with the finance system for processing. A dedicated task force was stood up, which used personalized campaigns in Salesforce and Marketing Cloud to manage over 10,000 outbound welfare checks and track sentiment and impact in real time.

## Why Salesforce?

With a centralized IT department and IT procurement policy, Monash is very strategic and deliberate at the platform level. As such, it was important the CRM platform of choice was the market leader with a highly mature suite of solutions and rapidly expanding vision of innovation.

### The key qualities Monash found in Salesforce were:

- **Innovative and collaborative partner**
- **Powerful platform with depth of configurability and code**
- **Strong ecosystem in terms of talent availability and training**

## Next Steps

Monash has transformed large portions of student engagement for prospects, current students, and alumni. Now the university is looking to transform and provide line-of-sight visibility into its industry relationships (e.g., what boards an individual may serve on, major partnership opportunities, contract research opportunities, education partnerships, and industry-based learning). In addition, Monash is rolling out Einstein Analytics to apply predictive intelligence to continue to uplift service and engagement outcomes.

**CASE STUDY****BI Norwegian Business School**

## Gaining a Complete View of Students

BI Norwegian Business School has worked on digitization for many years to provide more competitive, relevant, and modern digital services to its students, faculty, and staff. Within the past decade, an initiative internally referred to as “Project Front Office” focused on integrating siloed systems into a custom portal solution called @BI. This portal provided a digital solution for students to find necessary information, including classroom and online education information. Over time, the school developed additional custom solutions for applications and admissions, digital exams, and CRM.

As solution offerings matured, BI shifted its mindset from building and maintaining custom solutions to looking at which solutions could meet their needs. This led to a strategic goal for BI to move to a unified, enterprise-wide platform for the student experience, replacing its current CRM system. In early 2019, BI chose Salesforce Education Cloud as its platform to establish and develop a complete ecosystem of services that would engage its students and staff with personalized services.

### Solutions and Technologies

BI went in on day one with large ambitions for an enterprise engagement platform, and the first year was focused on the architecture that would scale to its ambitions. Working with an implementation partner specializing in higher education, in early 2020, BI rolled out the three core Salesforce clouds: Service Cloud to provide rapid, multichannel support to students and staff; Sales Cloud to manage and build lasting constituent relationships; and Marketing Cloud to engage students with personalized communications and marketing.

Change management was key to successfully implementing Salesforce across the school. Part of this change management led to centralizing the school’s customer service into a department called InfoHub, which handles all inquiries from students. InfoHub also manages the Salesforce call center, which handles communications with both internal staff and students. BI continues to centralize more functions, using InfoHub as the core.

### The Results and Impact

With full launch of Salesforce in early 2020, BI reported improvements in the first few months, such as better customer service, with 87% of 11,000 service requests being resolved before getting escalated.

**Quick Stats:**

**BI Norwegian Business School is an independent, not-for-profit foundation and the main provider of research-based knowledge of business and management disciplines in Norway:**

**Largest business school in Europe**

**20,000 students**

**1,000 staff**

**4 campuses located throughout Norway and 1 campus in China**

Shortly after the Salesforce implementation, the pandemic hit. According to BI, Salesforce enabled the institution to cope with the school shutdown in response to COVID-19 in multiple ways that would not have been possible without the platform.

The Salesforce solutions made it much easier to work from home. The single enterprise solution helped staff work remotely right away, which enabled BI to continue its operations with less disruption.

With Salesforce, the school went from 80 different email addresses to manage student support, contact schemes, and personal chat to a single version of contact information. This single point of contact became extremely valuable in sending out timely, relevant information via email and SMS. It was also valuable in helping answer student questions about end-of-year exams and the school closure. Because BI students prefer text and chat to calls or emails, it is important that the school is able to provide information to students in their preferred engagement method.

## Why Salesforce?

BI selected Salesforce based on the rich capabilities of the platform but was also impressed with the level of presales process support it received. After implementation, BI found the Salesforce customer success team to be proactive and very focused on helping BI meet its goals. “We’ve worked with many American companies and have never experienced the level of customer service from a technology partner as we have with Salesforce,” said Amund Bergan, Head of Digital Development at BI Norwegian Business School.

## Next Steps: Higher Ambitions for the Future

BI continues to have big ambitions to scale and expand services on the Salesforce platform.

### Four focus areas for the future are:

- **Revamping the recruitment and student journey.** BI wants to revamp processes for an even more holistic experience; for example, changing the application process so that it isn’t detached from other key processes. In addition, BI wants to enable a complete view of the student from recruitment and admissions as well as alumni and B2B engagement.
- **Marketing and using automated solutions.** BI wants to use more tools to automate and personalize communications with students and market to them more effectively. This would include growing the use of Interaction Studio to track experiences and deliver relevant offers in real time.
- **Developing student self-service.** BI plans to develop self-service capabilities for students using Salesforce Community.
- **Engaging alumni.** BI would like to use Salesforce Community as a way to engage alumni more often and more effectively.

# About the Analyst



## **Ruthbea Yesner**

**Vice President, Government Insights, Education, and Smart Cities, IDC**

Ms. Yesner manages the US Federal Government, Education, and the Worldwide Smart Cities and Communities Global practices. Ms. Yesner's research discusses the strategies and execution of relevant technologies and best practice areas, such as governance, innovation, partnerships and business models, essential for government and education transformation. Ms. Yesner's research includes analytics, artificial intelligence, Open data and data exchanges, digital twins, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, cloud computing, and mobile solutions in the areas of economic development and civic engagement, urban planning and administration, smart campus, transportation, and energy and infrastructure. Ms. Yesner contributes to consulting engagements to support K-12 and higher education institutions, state and local governments and IT vendors' overall Smart City market strategies.

[More about Ruthbea Yesner](#)

# About the Sponsor

**Salesforce.org, the social impact center of Salesforce, provides technology that empowers changemakers to build a better world.**

We are dedicated to creating solutions for nonprofit, education, and philanthropic organizations so they can have greater impact. Operating within Salesforce, a for-profit entity, increases our capacity to innovate on top of the world's #1 CRM platform, to channel the pro-bono power of more than 45,000 Salesforce employees, and to inspire Salesforce customers and partners to join our global movement for good.

[To learn more, visit salesforce.org](https://www.salesforce.org)

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