Why Design Matters for Learning Institutions

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ABSTRACT
Design is becoming a mainstream element in the business world, but it’s been late to reach academia. In this brief, I argue that embracing design is critical for institutions and that design affects learning, outcomes, and enrollment.

Keywords: design; design thinking; learning design; user-centered design.
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every part of the learning experience. Design that ensures that curriculum meet standards; design that helps support learner persistence from enrollment through completion; design that makes academic and support services, whether brick-and-mortar or virtual, easy to access and use; and design that helps students build connections with their peers and instructors. On and off campus, design is critical to learner achieving learner outcomes.

With the proliferation of online degree programs, learners have more choices over which institutions to attend. Therefore, design will become an increasingly important aspect of their decisions. The design of programs – including their curriculum, their online experience, and their implicit or explicit promised outcomes – will drive decision making and affect the degree to which students continue through a program and the extent to which they refer their friends, colleagues, and contacts into that program. In these cases, design will influence the institutions brand, in big and small ways.

Design also has a less scientific quality that can support, or detract from, students’ perception of an institution’s culture, brand, and commitment to learning. Design drives innovation, which in turn cultivates an atmosphere of novelty – engaging our brains, capturing our imaginations, and delighting our senses. Design creates excitement – which is why we find ourselves at museums, art exhibitions, and performances – and taps into our fundamental nature as makers. In short, design is a lot like compound interest: it multiplies over time. For these reasons, I think it’s important for any good institution to become a design institution, complete with instructors who recognize their roles as designers.

REFERENCES

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