

# Conclusion: Creating Better Teaching and Learning Environments by Focusing on Teaching and Learning

**Charlotte Baker**

*Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA*

**Rebecca J. Blankenship**

*Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, USA*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*In this summary, authors Charlotte Baker and Rebecca Blankenship provide an overview of the cases and their impact on the overall DLI initiative. They also explore similar initiatives at other colleges and universities and how these technical transformations are changing the higher education teaching and learning culture. The authors examine the DLI in terms of other short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals as noted in the 2019 Horizon Report and how the DLI initiative can be used as a vehicle to actuate an ongoing culture of innovation and digital transformation in colleges and universities across the country.*

## **TECHNOLOGICAL GAPS AND CHALLENGES**

Technology permeates nearly every aspect of life in the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Smartphones, computers, digital streaming of theater and music, and even auto-responding cars and refrigerators are ubiquitous. While this digital technology has moved very quickly through society, its integration into education has been slow and, at times, inequitable. Issues such as access to digital technology tools such as computers and knowledge of how to use these tools continue to be barriers for institutions, professors, and students. These issues must be dealt with and the gap shortened as we move forward. More and more jobs and careers rely on students having some level of digital knowledge and ability and thus to be equally prepared as any other candidate, the courses they take must be on par. While a panacea may not exist to bridge the digital divide within Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) (NAFEO, 2019) or reduce the need for financial aid that many students at HBCUs require for attendance (Holland, 2019), there are ways to address some of the very important issues that can significantly reduce the gap.

As clearly delineated in the introduction of this book, there are many challenges facing faculty in higher education and many on-going and constantly evolving changes that universities and faculty must face in higher education daily. The use of various pedagogical methods to digitally address higher educational populations is not a new concept (Boston University, 2019; UC Berkley, 2019). However, the Digital Learning Initiative at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), as described in Chapter 2, is unique in its approach to take higher education professionals at an HBCU in a variety of roles across the institution and teach them to improve their educational methods. These roles varied from undergraduate professors to graduate and clinical professors, people who had previous educational training and those who did not, those who had taught for many years and those who had not, and those who were digitally comfortable and those that were not. The diversity among the DLI fellow participants clearly represents that the challenge in higher education of harmonizing teaching and learning within the digital era is not unique to one discipline over another. Rather, it is a pervasive challenge manifesting in multiple professions as the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy increasingly demands employees who are not only versed in

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