



Resilient: Confronting the COVID-19 crisis

Actionable insights to help businesses respond and recover

Episode 30: On a mission: Higher education combats COVID-19 challenges

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Mike Kearney: Welcome to Resilient. My name is Mike Kearney, the Risk & Financial Advisory CMO. What you may not know about me is I'm also the dad of a college freshman. I actually had an opportunity to spend father's-daughter's weekend with her at TCU (Texas Christian University). It was incredible. I think we all would have to agree that the start of this academic year has been far from usual. While you may not be in the same boat as my family, I think we all can recognize that universities and academic institutions are incredibly important to developing talent, providing research, creating new technologies, fueling innovation, and so much more.

While COVID-19's impact has been significant across all sectors, for education it has been both severe and expansive. Health and safety concerns, financial stress, and operational disruption have forced academic leadership and faculty to rethink pretty much everything. And as the pandemic continues, many institutions are adapting to an uncertain future. This leads to many questions that we'll explore today, such as how can universities continue to successfully fulfill their missions despite the disruption? Where have virtual environments created new and sometimes even better experiences? And what's the impact for local communities, businesses, and other stakeholders?

As campuses evolve, there are many lessons learned, and I'm honored to be joined by Jay Hartzell, president at The University of Texas at Austin, and Betty Fleurimond, Deloitte managing director and chair of Deloitte's Center for Higher Education Excellence. Together, we'll discuss what factors were considered when reopening, how outbreak response protocols were established, and what has been the experience over the past few months. I'm also hopeful that they'll share their insights as we explore how leaders across all sectors can build trust, preserve value, transform, and even thrive. So, let's hear what they have to say.

Jay and Betty, welcome to Resilient.

Jay Hartzell: Thanks, Mike. Good to be here.

Betty Fleurimond: Good to be with you both.

Mike Kearney: You know, I was thinking about this, it is going to be a fun conversation. We're going to get to talk about the impact of our favorite topic nowadays, COVID-19 on higher ed. I know that you both are knee deep into many of the learnings and then also what the future looks like. So, I'm going to start, Jay, with you, and your response to COVID-19, and UT's in particular, has been a hot topic over the last few months. And what I wanted to just first start with is if you could just talk about how COVID-19 impacted UT and then where you are today versus what probably seems like a lifetime ago, which was just the beginning of the fall semester, kind of what's it look like now versus back then?

Jay Hartzell: Sure. You think about the two big parts of what we do—research and teaching—and clearly COVID-19 has affected both. And on the one hand, on the research side, we've had some really neat stories about people who are doing work that might not have been quite in the limelight or quite as well known that happened to be really relevant to what we do. So we had a professor named [Jason McLellan](#) who worked on coronaviruses, and then COVID-19 comes and within a week he had modeled out what I now know to be called a spike protein, which is a way that you can design the vaccines to attack the COVID-19 and make them more effective. So, he was a professor doing what he does, and then all of a sudden COVID-19 hits and he's able to apply his research to try to help us move forward.

So that's on the research side. On the teaching side, it's really been about trying to retain the magic that happens in a classroom environment while also clearly protecting the safety of our students and our faculty. So, it's been trying to deliver what we do with technology, where it makes the most sense, but also protect the little nuggets of human interaction and to try to foster those, which is more difficult when people are remotely engaging otherwise.

So that's part of it. And then to your question about how it's different now versus when it first started, when COVID first hit in March, we made a very quick decision to basically take all of the instructional mission online, and there was no other choice. And so, I think the statistic I heard is that the very first day we delivered eight million minutes of online instruction in terms of bandwidth on the first day post-COVID. So it went from sort of zero to eight million minutes in that way. And then you roll the clock forward, and now we have a blend, so there are nursing classes that take place in person, because there's not a great way to teach somebody how to give a shot or take a pulse and do that remotely.

But there are a bunch of classes where it's a blend. So, a professor staring at a screen with some students who are wherever they are, that are engaging that way, and a few students in the classroom. And then our biggest classes are fully online, where students are only taking it in that format. So, there are people walking around, it feels more like a college, but it feels like a college on a summer day, without many classes in person. So, it's not in any sense normal, but it's at least directionally closer.

Mike Kearney: Hey, Jay, you said something I'm going to ask both you and Betty, because I think it's important. You said, how can we retain that classroom magic, which I actually love just that language. And I do believe that there are silver linings in everything in life. And I've seen many, I mean, I was a consultant that was on the road pretty much every week, and it's been nice to get to know my family again. But is there any silver linings, and maybe, Betty, we could start with you, about kind of virtual learning, things that you've seen that have maybe been better in some regards, not in totality, but some things that add to the learning experience from a virtual perspective?

Betty Fleurimond: Sure, Mike. And, by the way, I'm still struck by the eight million minutes metric, it's sort of the new zero to 60, right? But I've seen institutions really look for ways to either try to mimic the magic that happens with in-person instruction or look for new ways of creating magic. And I think sometimes the magic happens in places that we didn't expect. I

don't think there's any other cohort that's ready for this space and understands and knows this than the student cohorts, and even more specifically, traditional students as distinct from nontraditional students. I think this has been a little bit more seamless for students than it has for faculty. And I know, Jay, you can speak to this a lot more than I can, but I've talked to a lot of institutions where students have found the spark a little bit easier than some of the other stakeholders in this space.

Mike Kearney: So, Jay, what have you seen?

Jay Hartzell: One of the silver linings that I've seen is faculty are actually working together more, arguably than I've ever seen them to get together around how to teach and how to adapt and how to use technology. So we've had stereotypically younger faculty, for example, who may be a little more tech savvy helping some of our more senior faculty who may be less savvy, or across ranks. And we're kind of a hierarchical organization, as you know, and so we've had people that might not be in the full professor status who are helping full professors figure out how to do what they do, which is really neat to see.

Mike Kearney: Mike, let me jump in really quickly. Obviously, like you said, you've seen a lot of disasters and crises—probably everything from my guess, 9/11, throw in a hurricane or two, and now the COVID-19 pandemic. What are some of the things that you've learned? And you can take this any way you like.

So, there's a piece there. I think we're also learning that certain things that we did all the time are actually easier remotely. So office hours. Students don't necessarily want to get out of their apartment, come to campus, park, and find a way to get to the professor's office for a 15-minute question, but they might use technology to meet remotely and do it that way. So, I've heard professors talking about office hour attendance is actually up. Another example is we're getting probably the best guest speakers we've ever gotten because we can get people from all over the world to pop in for an hour, hour and a half, and there's no plane flight involved. There's none of the

other costs of travel and logistics. And I think that stuff's going to stick. I think we're going to find our faculty and our students using the technology creatively five, 10 years from now that may not have happened at least this rapidly without this issue.

Betty Fleurimond: I think that I would add another silver lining where institutions are able to, I think, serve more students in this environment. And then also being able to use technology to serve students around student mental health and wellbeing, I've seen an uptick in that as well.

Jay Hartzell: That's right. We actually converted some other rooms that were used for other purposes into small rooms that can be used for students who need tele-counseling because they need privacy. And so, if you have a roommate or you don't have a private space and they wanted to engage with our mental health team, and so, we've built out more private spaces because that tele-counseling function has been quite popular.

Mike Kearney: So, Jay, I want to go back to how you guys have responded to COVID-19. And I know one of the things that is near and dear to you is the notion of flexibility and optionality, especially in decision-making, especially when there is this uncertainty. And we didn't know seven months ago what it was going to like today. And we certainly don't know what the next seven months are going to bring. Can you talk about how you would use kind of those premises in making decisions under a whole host of circumstances?

Jay Hartzell: Sure. Thanks, Mike. I'm a finance professor by training, and I remember one of the things that we teach is that options have more value when the underlying asset is more volatile. And so, another way of saying it, it pays to wait to make a decision when you have more uncertainty about the underlying process that you're worried about. And so that was something I came back to quite a bit, especially over the summer. And if you kind of go back to where we were in July, July at least in this part of the country, case rates were up and things looked pretty bleak in some ways. And many of our competitor schools were making decisions every day to

go fully online for the semester or for the year. And there was pressure for us to do the same, and people would ask, "Why aren't you willing to pull the trigger now on the entire school year?" for example.

And I felt like this is a case where there was so much we didn't know, and the world had already changed since March. In March we shut down the university, and we had one case, and nobody today would think of shutting down a university over one case. And so, we knew that things were going to evolve, and we've learned. And so, it was just a question of trying to put in a framework to make a decision as we go down the road, but not feel like we had to exercise that option to make a full decision with such incomplete information. And so we were trying to communicate about it and talk to our stakeholders about why we were waiting to make a decision. That was a challenge, but I felt—and our leadership team as a whole felt—like the value of waiting was too high. Because we could learn more and make a better decision later.

Mike Kearney: How do you do that as a leader, though? And I hear what you're saying. It's like, obviously we're going to apply kind of a scenario-based approach. And all that sounds good, like when you're reading a textbook or when you think about it theoretically, but when you've got people that are coming to you, important people, that are saying, "Hey, why aren't you making a decision now?" how do you lead through that?

Jay Hartzell: Yeah, that's a great question. I think for me, a lot of it came back to trying to articulate why we're so concerned about what we do. So, for example, appeal to what's best for our students. Students are something where we all line up, and we all want the best outcomes for our students. And articulate that, imagine we pull this plug today and go fully online for the year and lay out a case for how that, under many scenarios, might harm our students ultimately, and then people can kind of see, okay, I see why that scenario is bad for students. And then back into, okay, then how can I gain some credibility or some trust that if things get really bad, then we will do what you arguably want us to do today. And so it was having a lot of those conversations about how would

we make a decision. I'm sure many of you saw many universities, including ours, come out with things like triggers and variables or indicators. And a lot of that was trying to say, "We're taking this seriously, we're not saying we're going to be fully in person no matter what", and then we tried to lay out kind of a framework of how we would make adjustments. And I feel like laying out that framework of how we would think about the problem gave us some credibility to go back to the main thing we were trying to get across, which was, this is what is best for our students. And so therefore give us time to see this unfold because none of us want to do something that harms our students in some holistic sense.

Mike Kearney: I was going to come to this topic of triggers in a few minutes. But since you raised it, can you dive into that in a little more detail, because I know some organizations use this approach—they developed triggers. They then identified potentially actions that they would take if they hit those triggers. But can you maybe bring that to life a little for our listeners?

Jay Hartzell: Sure. So for us—and we knew it might change—but we were trying to sit there back in July and think about what are the things we'd want to know about that could influence our decision of whether we sort of tightened things up or loosened things more. And it was everything from the environment we're in—in Texas or in Austin—to things that are very local in our community. So, for example, we had labs that were going back online or never went offline. And so, did we see any indications of spread within a laboratory that would be a sign that something we were doing was not working the way we had hoped. We got some negative press because in the list of triggers, we had student deaths. And it was, first, I think pointed to that it seemed callous that we would talk about student deaths in that way. And we also highlighted students but not faculty or staff. And what we were trying to say with that trigger or that indicator variable was that's something we know none of us should expect. If you kind of run out forecasts and projections and how we thought, when we thought about the disease, and I think it's still true, that student death is so unexpected, that would be a bigger signal of something not

going well than somebody who we might expect to be more at risk. And so, it was laying those kinds of things out. Anything from something that I thought was at a local level that would tell us how we're doing either as a policymaker or in terms of the disease itself, but then building up to kind of the local level.

Mike Kearney: I think that's fascinating because I think the other element of this is the more that you think about what these triggers are, it then allows you to make better decisions in the moment because you're not doing it based on emotion. You're actually doing it based on something you probably, I'm guessing, you and the administration put a lot of thought into, what are those triggers and why do they really matter to us? And so, going back to my previous question about how do you lead through that—it's we've been very objective in how we went through this decision-making process and that will allow the quote-unquote triggers to dictate what we do. Obviously taking into consideration other things.

Betty, what are you seeing at other universities? Are you seeing the same approach applied? I think it's very thoughtful. I think it's probably very effective, but what are you seeing?

Betty Fleurimond: The idea of decisive action. I think every institution will have their own decision action blueprint, right? So whether you're a large public institution or a small regional or specialized college, I think some considerations, residential versus non-residential, there's a whole host of considerations around that. Are you a campus that offers food services? Do you have on-campus police? Are you an institution with athletics? And not to mention the actual sort of core teaching, learning, and research considerations.

So, I think by now every institution has a pandemic task force. Schools are executing their crisis plans. I think there's opportunity to refine and look at scenario-based contingencies. By now I think we understand what policies to adjust if we want to prioritize safety and wellbeing of students, faculty, and staff. We heard Jay talk about that. Although, I've talked to some

schools in certain states who are gearing up for the outcome of the election, and so I know that that's sort of an added level of contingency that certain schools are looking at on top of this global health pandemic. By now, we know how schools are figuring out how to balance student success with program requirements.

Where we had grade requirements before the pandemic, what does that look like now? And how are students being evaluated in the classroom? And then there's scenario planning, just even around the physical campus. A great way to frame decisive action—I'd say four things. One is what will you allow? So, a phased re-opening. So just really being certain and clear about what are the things you'll allow. What are the set of things you'll prohibit? Travel, large gatherings, et cetera. Third, what will you suggest? So, what are the set of things that—you might look at operational policies, for example, there may be some ways to provide recommendations across the academy. And then I think the fourth thing is what are the things that you are going to do? Contact tracing, telework, and again, depending on where you are in this sort of continuum, I think that those are four ways to really think about how you prioritize decision-making. We've seen schools do that.

Mike Kearney: Hey, Jay, I think I shared with you when we did our pre-call that I just moved to the Austin area, so it's great to be here. And everybody told me, given the fact that I came from California, you're not going to understand how big football is in Texas until you get there. Which is true. So, you guys were one of the leading institutions on putting athletics back into motion. Can you talk about that decision-making process and how you went about that?

Jay Hartzell: Yeah, it's fascinating. So, I go from business school dean to interim president and Big 12 board of directors' member. And then, I can't remember what meeting it was. I'd been in a few meetings and it had been probably a couple months in, but two conferences say they're going to postpone their seasons and there's doubt if they'll ever play. We're the, I view in hindsight, a pivot conference, because we're third in the queue and there are two after

us that are meeting. And there's a belief I think, implicit or explicit, that we were a little bit pivotal in that conversation. If we say no, then now there are three out of the five saying no season. Where if we had said yes as a conference, then I think it gave more space to the other two to follow. And I think at the end, it's important to separate a couple of parts.

One is separate out the decision of, do you play sports for our student athletes under the health and safety concerns? And then the second question, which I think is often conflated, is how do you feel about fans? And I think often people sort of, given where we are and the size of our stadiums and things, people could add the two and say you shouldn't have fans and therefore you shouldn't play football. So, we really approached it, as a board and as a university, more about the health and safety of our students. Could we get comfortable with that? If they could be safe, they wanted to play. So we wanted to let them play if they could. That's what they wanted.

And it was just trying to make sure that we felt good about the health and safety side. And I think many of the things that were coming up at the time that we were facing a decision were questions really less about—and as we went through the debate became less about—communicating the disease on the field and a little more about recovery. And when should they be able to come back? And if we could separate those two decisions, it pushed more toward letting them play if we had the right security precautions in place and being really careful about when they came back. And so sort of the narrative or the focus, the debate changed more into what policies and procedures do we need so that teams can compete safely. And then if a person gets ill, then how do we get very, very comfortable that they are safe to return to the field? And that got us sort of, I think, over the hump as a conference to letting the season progress, because we felt like with the right safety protocols, we could get past hurdle one, and then we could argue about hurdle two, but hurdle two is really less about whether you should play in sports at all. It was more about when an athlete should be safely allowed to return.

Mike Kearney: Right. It's interesting. One of the things that's come into my mind and almost a through-line of our entire conversation is transparency. And I think transparency, it always sounds really easy to sell. You should be as transparent as possible, but it's once again more difficult in real life. But I think one of the things that I'm hearing, Jay, from you, and, Betty, from you, is the importance of transparency. And maybe, Betty, we could start with you. In a lot of these decisions that universities are making, can you talk about the importance of transparency? And are there any downsides, like, are there any times where maybe you shouldn't be as transparent as you otherwise think you should be? So maybe, Betty, if I could just start with you and then, Jay, we'll ask your thoughts.

Betty Fleurimond: I think the second leads to the first. Yes, there are some downsides to it. We are in an environment where something that you say may be either taken out of context or may come back and really just not be the spirit of what you want to say. I've seen leaders at institutions be very, very, very careful, and it is a bit unfortunate because we're really all trying to manage through this crisis together. But in that, even being careful about how you talk about what you're doing, how you talk about some of the considerations, the priorities, and mindful about how you talk about human life.

Jay Hartzell: I would agree with that. And I can give you an example of something where we probably, I think we erred on the side of transparency and it caused some heartburn for a while. So, we decided very early that we would track and post the number of known COVID cases in our community and count them all. So, in the summer, if we knew that a student who might be in Dallas got sick, we would add it to our account. And so, we've kept a cumulative count of total cases since we knew that we had the very first one. And so you roll the clock forward, and we're also a big school. So 50,000 students, 70,000-plus kind of in the broad campus community.

So, you roll the clock forward and we've got, as the New York Times reported, the most COVID cases in the country. And so then the social media hits start coming: "Jay,

how can you not shut down the university? You're the number-one COVID university in the country." And it was tough because you want to say, "That's not fair." And the fact that many universities just didn't report, so they weren't even in the sample. You had a lot of choices to make about what you call a case, does it count if they're only on campus, all these choices. And we tried to be very broad and be very transparent about it and kind of use any case we could say is connected to us as one of the ones we counted, but that's hard to tell when the debate is being fought via social media. And that subtlety or complexity about, we report it this way and that other university reports that this other way is lost, it feels like it falls on deaf ears. And so that was a challenge for a while. Then, eventually other schools started getting closer to us in the way they measured things and we could kind of stand still and they caught up to us in many ways. But there was a time when it was pretty frustrating because I thought we were being unduly hammered for something that we thought we were doing for very good reasons.

Mike Kearney: Right, there's no standard. I will tell you, I mean, one person's opinion: my daughter's school I think was extremely transparent. I think I shared this with you previously. And what it does is it builds trust, especially as a parent, like if you know that they're reporting everything, you're actually then going to trust the numbers when they start to go down, which gives you a lot more confidence that your kid's probably safe. So, I'm glad you do what you do.

Betty, I want to pivot to you, and I want to talk about resilience. What are you seeing, or maybe better said, how can universities take action to ensure that they're resilient, which is probably the most overused term nowadays, but during the pandemic. I will say just as an aside, we named this podcast Resilient in 2016. So maybe we were before our time, but what's your thinking, Betty?

Betty Fleurimond: You are ahead of your time, Mike, with that.

Mike Kearney: For the first time in my life.

Betty Fleurimond: I think about it in sort of schools are either responding to the crisis—

so, how do we protect our students and faculty and staff. In recovery mode, which is how do we build on some of the lessons learned. And then the third phase of this is how do you start to thrive and prepare for the next normal? We had hoped that institutions in particular would be sort of transitioning from recovering to thriving.

But the fact is, state governments are seeing cases rise. And that impacts the institutions. And so, I think we're seeing a lot of institutions go from sort of we're just into recovery, but now we've got to really look again, take a second look at what does responding look like? So, I think institutions are—this sort of plan, the crisis plan, that's a living, breathing document. I see and hear institutions, they are really looking at that plan almost on a daily basis because scenarios that we didn't anticipate sort of rise anew, or scenarios we did plan, we're now able to really execute against that. So, I think there's a lot of agility. I've seen institutions really challenge even current orthodoxies. We do have a colleague, Allan Ludgate, who does really brilliant work around challenging orthodoxies, which is rethinking academics and operations. And how do we really build sustainable, resilient models?

Mike Kearney: So, Jay, one of the things I'm super curious to get your input on is things like safety concerns, when you put out rules or requirements, social gatherings, things of that nature. My question really is how do you engage the students and make sure that you maintain their trust while bringing some level of discipline, especially when there is heightened responsibility, heightened risk, but at the end of the day, your students to a certain degree are like your clients. And there is this kind of balance between trust and discipline. How do you manage that?

Jay Hartzell: Yeah, it's a great question. And just to start off with context, and Betty mentioned how different many universities or colleges are in terms of kind of just the way they operate and run. So, for context, a typical year, we have about 8,000 students on campus and 42,000 students off campus—like off campus, meaning not in our housing, and they're very close, but they're not in dorms, for example, that we control. This year, it's about

3,700 students in our dorms. And then we can't quite tell how many are in Austin, but it's the balance are in Austin somewhere else, not on campus. So, we have a much different ability to control, to enforce, to cajole, to do whatever we want to do with those students that are in our dorms, living in our environment, than the ones who are not. And so, we can't be quite as draconian as many universities have chosen to be in terms of using kind of the stick method to motivate students to behave the way that many have done. So, we haven't suspended anybody. We haven't expelled anybody for kind of COVID behaviors. So that's part because of the way we're structured about who lives where and how that works and whether they're in Austin's jurisdiction versus ours.

But the other part is, as we talk through it as a leadership team, we kept coming back to the concern that if we are seen as the draconian types, then we won't get the information we need to do the contact tracing to find out where the disease is and how it's progressing. So, we really kept coming back over and over again to trying to do things to put the students' willingness to be transparent from their side at the forefront. And so, it took a while, to go back to your point about building trust, it took a while to build trust. We have this amazing testing capacity, and we heard students were not going, they were going to a drugstore somewhere else and paying on their own dime if they could, because they were afraid that if they tested positive with us, we would somehow crack down on their fraternity or sorority or social organization.

And so that was kind of the word on the street. And so, we had to keep going back and saying, this is not a discipline issue to us. We're not going to shame your sorority for the fact that you had 10 cases. So, trying over time just to work on that. And it's, we're seeing a lift now that students are willing to engage in and we're calling it proactive community testing, but the testing for asymptomatic people just to see where the disease is. But it took a while to get that trust that we weren't going to use a test result to somehow find a way to shame or punish them or their friends.

Mike Kearney: Hey, Betty, what are you seeing on this?

Betty Fleurimond: What I'm seeing in real time is there's a lot of fast learning that we're absorbing. And so, at the same time, we're sort of building the model for how to be resilient and how to just keep this thing moving. We're also learning a lot and we're learning things that we didn't expect or anticipate. And, Jay, I think I heard you say, how can this now be our new normal? So things like does a university service have to be in person? A student standing in line, for example, because I have a question about my financial aid. Can we actually deliver services in a remote environment, and does that necessarily have to be something that goes away? Does a personalized student experience need to require a human touch?

Can this digital transformation that we are sort of going under, some faster than others, is that something that we sort of have always needed all along? Wow, perhaps we are becoming who we've always wanted to be all along. And so, let's keep doing some of these things, fully realizing that some of these things really are just for the moment and we can go back just to certain things, or maybe there's something in between.

Mike Kearney: I always like ending my conversations with what I call the lightning round, where I'm just going to throw out maybe two, three, four questions. We'll see how it goes. This is your opportunity to respond extremely quickly. I'm going to pose the question to both of you and then we'll end it, so you can go on your way today. So, the first question really centers around innovation. What innovation have you seen as a result of COVID-19 that has helped your leaders, your faculty, or your students be more resilient, receive a better learning experience, whatever or wherever, I guess, you want to take it. Jay, let's start with you.

Jay Hartzell: I guess I would say that where I've seen innovation is that people that are figuring out where the technology is best used for sort of pockets of opportunity. And so seeing it, I mentioned earlier that seeing it for guest speakers, seeing it for office hours, it's been not just assuming that everything is going to be delivered in one monolithic way, but where people have

taken a step back and said, "Okay, this is where it makes the best sense to use the technology. I can record somebody teaching something that is just ingesting information in somebody's brain, and I can use the time where we're online together or in person together to really hash this out together." So what we talk about as a flipped classroom model. And COVID has accelerated our faculty's willingness to go through that hard work of how could we flip a classroom today, because they're going to have to do some sort of change anyway. So that, it may be sort of a healthy nudge from the disease, but it's been really inspiring.

Mike Kearney: Betty, how about you?

Betty Fleurimond: I promise, Jay, and I did not coordinate on this, but as I think about this, I see the innovation in, and this is coming from, I'm an engineer by trade and I geek out on technology, but I see the innovation really in the human part of this, the human condition. I think I've seen, how do we use what we have out of necessity to make it work for us? So, for example, doing things like—and by the way, there are communities that don't have the same access to technology. And so I think that's something that, which is a whole separate topic, but I do think that's something that I would highlight. But students that are going to spaces that they haven't been just to be able to access technology or using video conferencing in ways that, in innovative ways with breakout rooms and different ways to engage or even—I think we talked about a little bit of this earlier—but I'm seeing a lot of creative ways to use our video conferencing or technology for connection in different ways, connection with professors, with faculty, with staff, with wellbeing officers. So, I think it's just the ways in which our behavior has stretched into using technology for our benefit, because we have to.

And I think that was really special. I think that the responders really appreciated that. And any time that you can show them that support, it goes a long way for them. They constantly work their tails off.

Mike Kearney: What about if we were to roll the clock forward five to 10 years? I think you mentioned earlier, Betty, talking

about this whole notion of thrive. And, honestly, even just going back to 2008 with that recession, the number of businesses that were started or innovations that come out during a crisis or difficult times is exponential to kind of a normal year. So, I do think that when we look forward five to 10 years, there's going to be certain changes and opportunities, quite frankly, that universities could pursue now. So maybe, Betty, I'll stick with you for this one. Is there one that you say, "Gosh, in the next five to 10 years, I'm excited to see"—you could fill in the blank—that you think may come to fruition.

Betty Fleurimond: I think it's going to be the student experience. I think there's been, and by the way, it's hard to pick, like it's hard to pick my favorite 80s song, it's hard to pick. But I would say the student experience. There has been, eight months ago, six months ago, the question was, how do we recreate the student experience; that is, certainly while considering safety, certainly while considering the financial impact to our institutions, but really, the student experience is one that we've put under a microscope in a way that I haven't seen us do—the academic enterprise do—in a really long time. And again, the stakeholders that are paying attention to it: students, parents who are saying, I'm sending my kid to a campus and, sort of the promise of that student experience really is not an option for my kid this semester, or perhaps even next term. And so, what do I do about that? And so there is an entire ecosystem of, I think, stakeholders that are paying attention to that student experience. And I think we've seen the disruption has forced us to expand the notion of that sort of traditional student experience. And so I think—I am not in the business of predicting, but I would be very excited about new ways of curating that student experience.

Mike Kearney: Awesome, Jay?

Jay Hartzell: Yeah. I liked Betty's. But just to pick something different, something that we're talking a lot about that I think is going to be fascinating. I'm not sure how much COVID is going to accelerate or not—is this movement towards thinking about skills and credentials in lifelong learning, and we are a producer of typically degrees, and

if the market is going away from degrees toward skills but wants credentials around those skills, then what's our role in all that? And do we start to unbundle a typical degree and make it into bite-sized chunks that can eventually be re-aggregated into a degree, but I think that's going to be really interesting. And I think because of technology and our willingness to adopt it more quickly, we could be more quickly competitive in the skill and credential provision market to serve more people as a university than we were probably willing to do a year ago.

Mike Kearney: I'll sign up, Jay, now that I'm in the area. I love that. That sounds good. I'm teasing, but, honestly, I mean, I even think back to when I went to school, unfortunately, it was kind of a means to an end—go to school, get a job, and move on. And the thing that I probably miss now, which listen, it's out there, so I could pursue it, are those abilities to learn new things, to pursue things that are interesting and to make myself more marketable. So I think that's fantastic.

We named this podcast Resilient, like I was joking, four years ago, and we didn't know really what it was, but one of the things that has come up a lot recently, we interview CEOs, board members, presidents of academia now, I could say, but a whole host of leaders. And the one question I always would love to ask them is what makes a resilient leader. And what I have heard over and over and over recently, including from the Johns Hopkins CEO and the Northwell Health CEO recently, is that resilient leaders have to have hope, which I love because how can you actually bounce back or respond to a crisis if you have no hope? So the question I want to end on, Betty, I'm going to start with you and then, Jay, you can close it out, is what gives you hope for the future?

Betty Fleurimond: What gives me hope for the future is the potential I've seen unfold in front of our very eyes in terms of what we've seen really in our recent past. What we have accomplished in the last six to eight months—and certainly we're not out of the woods, and certainly there's been new ways of sort of rethinking—but I think we have discovered new ways of learning, new ways of being, new ways of doing, and the human potential, I'm going to bet on it. And that gives me incredible hope.

Jay Hartzell: That's great.

Mike Kearney: How about you?

Jay Hartzell: Yeah, so I would say what gives me a lot of hope is you get around a really smart, engaged, passionate 20-year-old, and you can't help but be excited about the future. And we happen to have almost 40,000 of those running around here. But it's the people. And you see the students and how they want to go out. Our slogan is "What starts here changes the world." And you start to talk to these students, who firmly believe that they can go change the world, and how can you not be excited and motivated and willing to get up and worry about the nitty-gritty parts of hand sanitation stations. If you remember that we're after helping those students go out and change the world, it gives me hope.

Mike Kearney: That is such a great way to end it. I do think that there's probably an imbalance with negativity at this point in time right now in our country. So, to hear the thing that gives you hope are 40,000, 20-year-olds running around, that they could actually really change the world—that gives me a little bit of hope. So, Jay and Betty, I really, really appreciate your time. This was a fantastic conversation. Thank you for joining the Resilient podcast.

Betty Fleurimond: Mike, thank you. And, Jay, thank you.

Jay Hartzell: Thanks a lot, Mike. And, Betty, I was taking notes. I learned a lot from you today, so I appreciate your insights and perspective very much.

Betty Fleurimond: Likewise. Be well.

Mike Kearney: Jay and Betty, thank you for your insights. I loved hearing how universities are adapting and even finding some bright spots despite the uncertainty. We've covered a lot of topics over the last eight months in the series. And as we continue, we'd like to hear from you about what topic or guest you want to hear about. So hit me up on LinkedIn or Twitter and share your ideas. Feedback is tremendously helpful as we continue to prioritize what we're going to bring to you next.

For more insights across all aspects of COVID-19, just go to deloitte.com on our COVID-19 page. You can also listen to the Resilient podcast on [Apple podcasts](#), [SoundCloud](#), [Stitcher](#), [Spotify](#), now even [Amazon](#), or on your favorite podcast app. Until next time, stay safe and remain resilient.

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