

# “Future of Higher Education”

## Forum Series Summary Report

### Overview

In April and May 2018, Illinois Tech hosted a series of four community forums during which a diversity of participants collaboratively engaged in an exploratory and evolving process to forecast the future of higher education. These interactive forums were driven by ideation exercises from the Institute of Design and accomplished the objectives below; the extent of the accomplishment is demonstrated by the percentage of participants from all events who positively agreed that the objective was achieved.

- To contribute toward a campus culture of communication and collaboration (93%)
- To constructively provide ideas and perspectives to the university’s strategic planning committees (79%)
- To share out-of-the box creativity-sparking methods that could be applied to work and life (87%)
- To inspire a different kind of professional development and growth among participants (87%)

Anecdotal evaluation results from the forums are [here](#), and insight into why participants attended is [here](#). We are grateful for the 132 unique individuals who attended, many of them multiple times, totaling over 200 instances of participation; 51 faculty and 81 staff members attended, representing 39% and 61% of attendees, respectively.

### Co-sponsoring Groups:

Academic Affairs, Staff Advisory Council, and University Faculty Council

### Coordinators:

**Renee Albrecht-Mallinger** - Institute of Design, Graduate Student

**Jackie Anderson** - Staff Advisory Council Chair; Office of Technology Services

**Britt Burton-Freeman** - University Faculty Council Chair; Institute for Food Safety & Health

**Elizabeth Friedman** - College of Science; Lewis College Adjunct Faculty Member

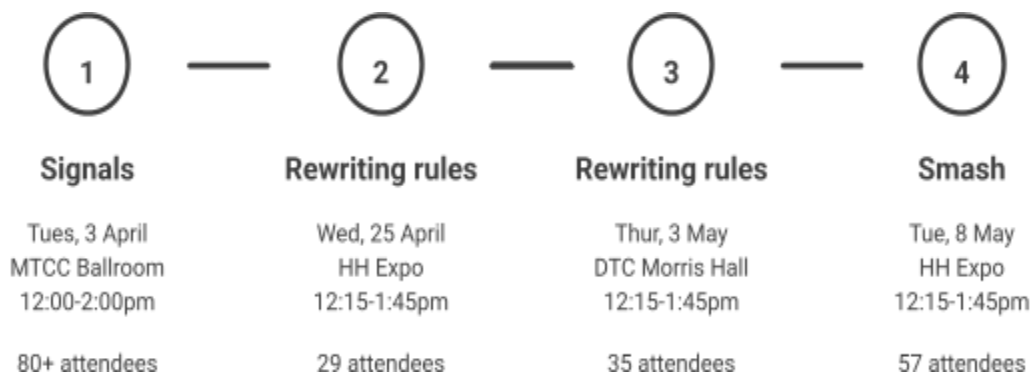
**Francis Lane** - University Faculty Council Vice Chair; Lewis College of Human Sciences

**Megan Mozina** - Staff Advisory Council Member; Student Access, Success, & Diversity Initiatives

**Sarah Pariseau** - Academic Affairs

**Christopher White** - Vice Provost for Research & Academic Affairs

### The Forum Series



## Forum 1: Signals

The first forum was facilitated by Renee Albrecht-Mallinger, a graduate student at the Institute of Design (ID), supported by a few additional ID students. She led the participants through an activity to analyze *signals* in our world that may indicate what is to come. Whereas trends illustrate what was happening in the past up until the present and may be useful indicators of the future based on what has been known, signals are specific, unprecedented events or examples that can become the first bleeps of a trend. After determining them, participants “smashed” together three seemingly unrelated signals as a way of exploring opportunities for Illinois Tech (Forum 1 “smash” results can be viewed [here](#)). Event photos of Forum 1 are [here](#).



Following Forum 1, Megan Mozina, Sarah Pariseau, and Christopher White processed the data (see photos below). They separated the signals from the trends, and grouped the signals into the following **themes**:

1. [Alternate credentialing](#)
2. [Cultural parochialism](#)
3. [Discord](#)
4. [Educational institutions as community resources](#)
5. [Educational technologies](#)
6. [Government's relationship to education](#)
7. [Personalization](#)
8. [Rejection of traditional business models](#)
9. [Rejection of traditional orthodoxies](#)
10. [Scope of educational institutions](#)
11. [Speed of information transmission](#)



## Forums 2 & 3: Rewriting the rules

The second and third forums at the Mies and Downtown Campuses, respectively, followed the same agenda and were both facilitated by Megan Mozina from the Office of Student Access, Success, & Diversity Initiatives' Continuous Improvement unit. The activities conducted, which were designed by Institute of Design faculty member Jeremy Alexis and further developed by Renee Albrecht-Mallinger, took participants through a step-by-step process to challenge their orthodoxies. Participants were asked to analyze what changes would be made to Illinois Tech if particular innovative organizations were to acquire and apply their respective “superpower” at the university. Then participants determined what the “thought barriers” were in place at the university



preventing such a change; thought barriers are based on beliefs and orthodoxies, and do not include more tangible barriers such as a lack of financing, personnel, or space. Finally, participants were asked to “flip” those thought barriers in a positive way, to “rewrite the rules.”

*Photos from Forum 2 at Mies Campus (more available [here](#))*

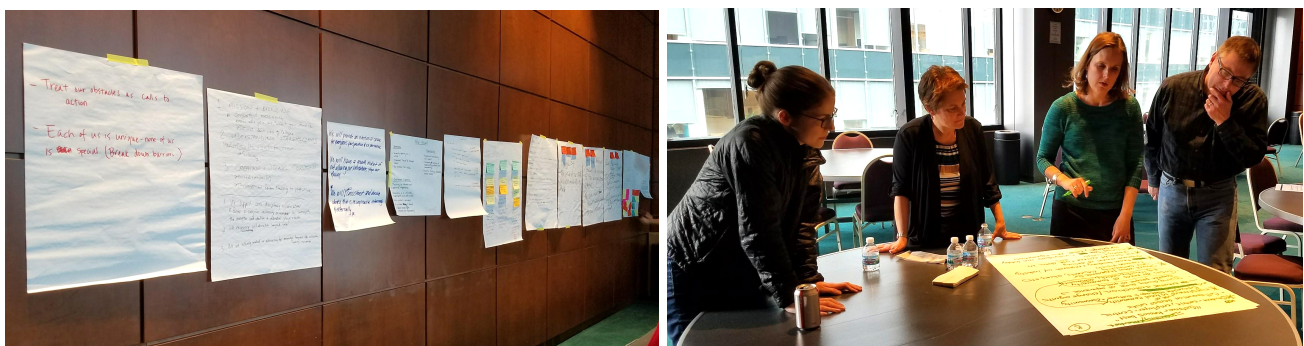


*Photos from Forum 3 at Downtown Campus (more available [here](#))*



Since the activities were the same in the second and third forums, the data from both forums was processed together by Elizabeth Friedman, Megan Mozina, and Sarah Pariseau, with assistance from Renee Albrecht-Mallinger, Joseph Orgel, and Christopher White. The themes of the **rewritten rules** were:

1. A student-centric focus, where “the customer knows best”
2. Investing in and drawing from Bronzeville and the wider-community of Chicago
3. Focusing our programs on needs of industry, employers, and the marketplace
4. Cultivating shared values and experiences for the university community and alumni
5. Embracing different modes of delivery for educational content
6. Collecting and using data in strategic ways
7. Collaborating with industry professionals for team-teaching, research, and career development opportunities
8. Advocating for change and creating new expectations



## Forum 4: Smash & Summarize

The interactive analysis activity done at the forum series finale was designed by ID Dean Denis Weil, further developed by Renee Albrecht-Mallinger, and facilitated by Elizabeth Friedman (the College of Sciences' Director of Professional Master's Degrees & New Initiatives and an Adjunct Professor in the Lewis College of Human Sciences). Each table of four to five participants received a set of cards containing Illinois Tech's Core Competencies, the Themes (resulting from Forum 1), and the Rewritten Rules (resulting from Forums 2 and 3). In an augmented version of the last step of the first forum, participants "smashed" together pairs of the cards to prompt creative brainstorming of new opportunities for the university. Forum 4 event photos [here](#).



Forum 4 results were analyzed by Jacqueline Anderson, Britt Burton-Freeman, Elizabeth Friedman, Megan Mozina, Sarah Pariseau, and Christopher White. All ideas were thematically grouped into the **opportunity areas** below. The full list of brainstormed opportunities, categorized by these thematic opportunity areas, is available [here](#).

1. Remove traditional academic boundaries
2. Build new curricula
3. Create personalized education
4. Broaden pipeline of students
5. Create corporate partnerships
6. Create community partnerships
7. Use data-driven decision-making
8. Leverage technology
9. Develop a meaningful shared experience



## Summary of Common Themes

Many of the themes were consistent throughout each forum. The **summary of common themes from all four forums** is below, and the comprehensive forum results chart which produced them is viewable [here](#).

1. Redefine what education and credentials mean
2. Students can personalize their educational experiences
3. Develop a shared community



4. Leverage educational technologies
5. Use data for strategic decision-making
6. Co-create with industry
7. Serve the community
8. Advocate to the government

## Next Steps

This report will be disseminated to the university community and presented to university leadership, including the Board of Trustees. Most importantly, the themes, rewritten rules, and opportunity areas will be taken into consideration by the strategic planning committee when determining the future plans of our institution. Finally, the momentum and energy in the campus community as a result of this forum series has inspired preliminary plans for additional such opportunities for the 2018-2019 academic year.

Members of the Illinois Tech community and beyond are encouraged to reach out to the coordinating team with questions or to have an open dialog. To remain part of the conversation, Illinois Tech faculty and staff members are encouraged to join the Google Group called “Future of Higher Education Interest Group.” We look forward to continuing this exploratory journey together!

*Illinois Institute of Technology, May 2018*