

REGION FOCUS: WORLDWIDE

Enhancing Back-Office Operations to Drive Excellence in the Student Experience

How back-office digital transformation enables student success in higher education



Matthew Leger

Research Manager, IDC Worldwide Education
Digital Transformation Strategies, IDC



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In This InfoBrief

In this InfoBrief, we take a deep dive look into the driving forces behind the digital transformation (DX) of higher education and the areas of focus for core technology investment in the industry.

The InfoBrief focuses in on the importance of back-office modernization for the future of higher education with the aim of improving the student experience and setting the institution up for future success. The InfoBrief includes a best practice case study from Santa Clara University and concludes with a set of recommendations to help higher education IT leaders improve their own back-office operations.



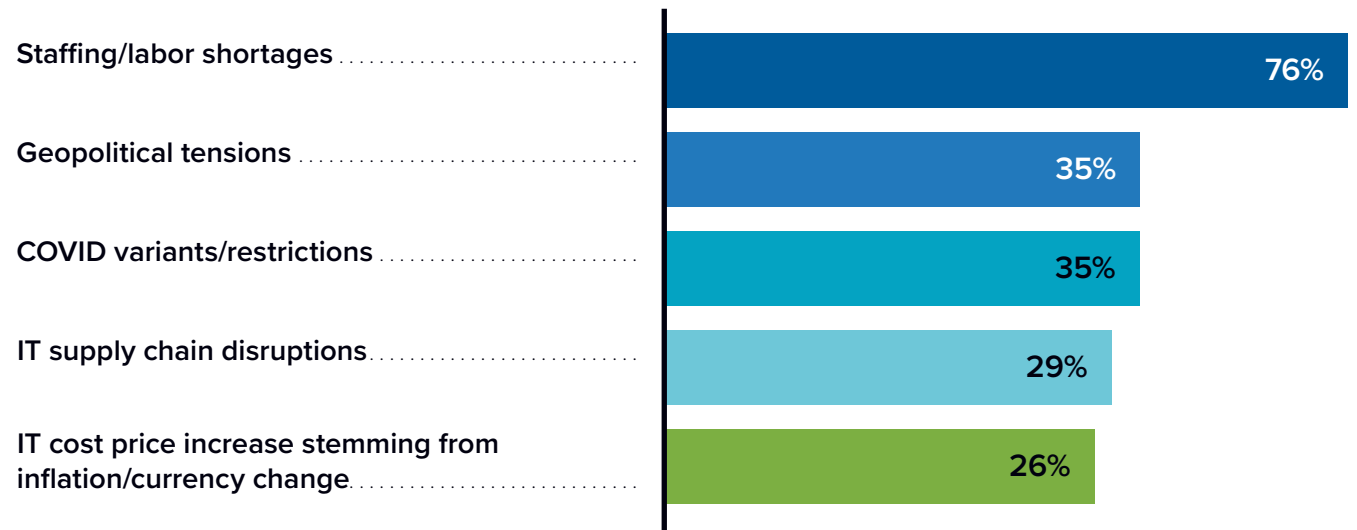
What's Driving the Digital Transformation (DX) of Higher Education?

Higher Education in a State of Flux

The higher education industry is at an inflection point as institutions confront persistent declines in enrollment and retention, workforce burnout and shortages, political pressures, financial constraints, and ongoing global disruptions.

In response, higher education leaders are seeking to leverage technology to transform how they operate, **building capabilities that enable them to be resilient, adaptable, and flexible in response to changing conditions.**

Which of the following do you expect will have the greatest impact on your IT spending plans for the rest of 2022?



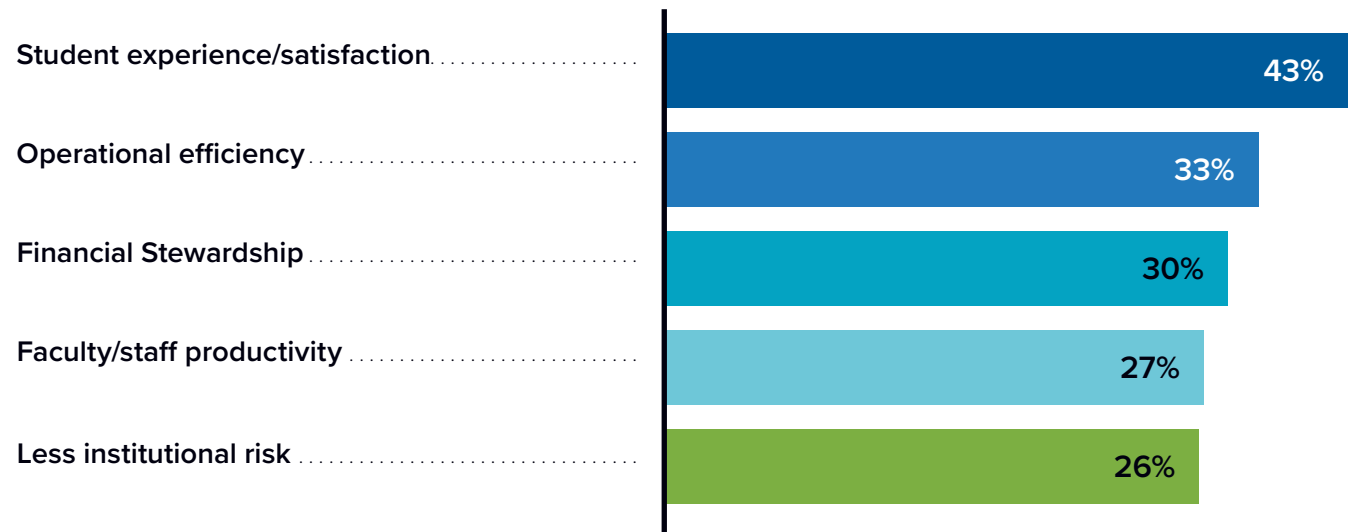
n = 38; Source: IDC's Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 8, September 2022

Enhancing the Student Experience is a Core Focus of DX Investments for Higher Education Leaders

Research has shown that students want their chosen institutions to provide **engaging and supportive experiences** that enhance their well-being and increase their chances of academic, personal, and professional success. This is putting pressure on institutional leaders to transform the student experience.

As higher education leaders are establishing their long-term DX and cloud strategies, **the student experience is priority number one.**

What are your institution's top 3 business priorities today?

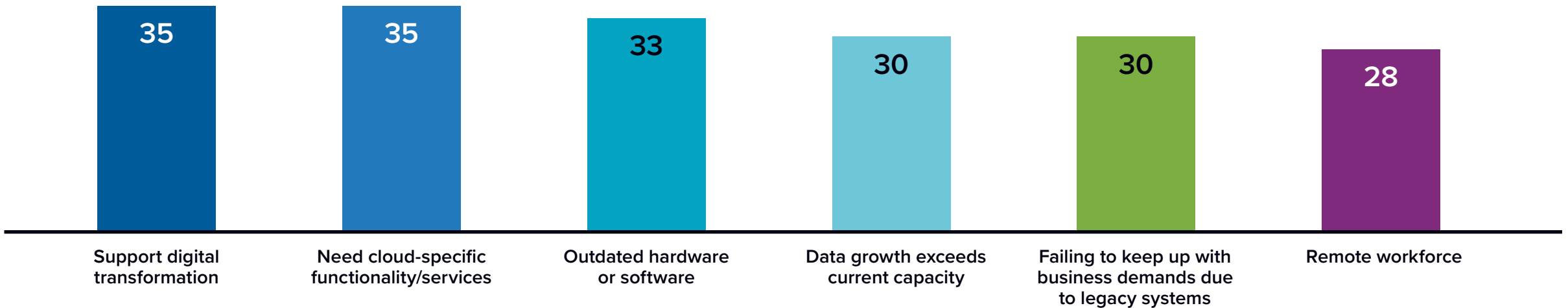


n = 39; Source: IDC's Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 6, July 2022

Cloud Services Are Central to the DX of Higher Education

To transform the back-office, improve the student experience, and accelerate DX, higher education leaders are turning to cloud services and solutions.

Which of the following trigger events have been most influential in leading you to use cloud services?



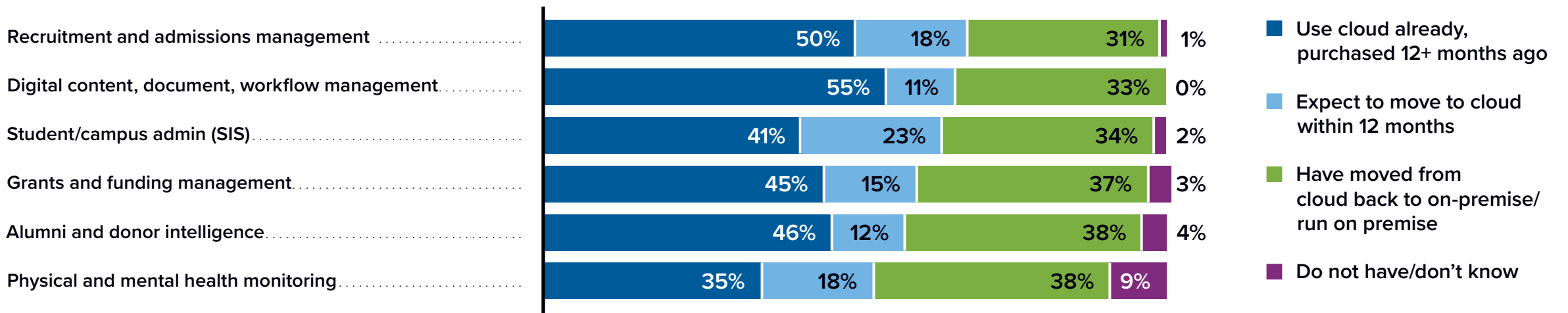
n = 100, Base = higher education; Source: IDC's *Worldwide Industry CloudPath Survey*, April 2022

Transforming the Back Office to Support the Whole Student

Higher education institutions are moving campus administration applications to the cloud.

Historically, the top priority for technology investment in higher education has been in the classroom to improve student outcomes, and that is still true today. However, there is a growing recognition of the need to provide greater support for students outside of the classroom to increase their chances of success. This requires institutions to invest in back-office transformation to enhance students support services.

Primary Approaches for Digital Infrastructure Activities



n = 100, Base = higher education; Source: IDC's Worldwide Industry CloudPath Survey, April 2022

Case Study: Santa Clara University

In 2015, Santa Clara University (SCU) decided that it was time to retire its legacy, on-premise ERP. In place for more than two decades, the system was outdated, highly modified, and costly to support and maintain. When modernizing its ERP, SCU prioritized user-experience, business and operational continuity, mobility, scalability, and data analytics.

SCU began its six-year ERP modernization project in 2016. The university has taken a phased approach to implementation, beginning with HCM before moving to Finance, and then Student. By moving to the cloud, SCU has been able to:

- Modernize faculty, staff, and student user experiences
- Reduce IT ecosystem complexity and technical debt
- Enable anywhere, anytime access to core administrative systems
- Reduce on-premise dependency, ensuring business and operational continuity
- Leverage analytics for decision-support and to improve business processes

HCM

Enabled department leaders and managers to conduct important HR tasks from any device, anywhere, enabling flexibility in work modality while improving user experiences and satisfaction.

Finance

Established tighter financial controls across the institution, enabling greater operational efficiencies and improving budget, cost management, and approval processes.

Student

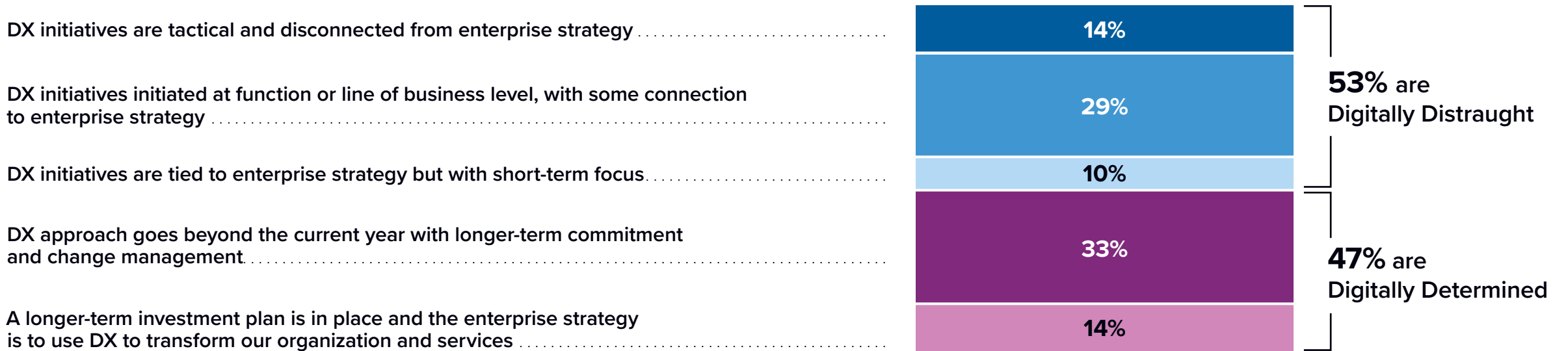
Simplified and streamlined course registrations by bringing together the course catalog and registration systems in one location, saving students time and improving satisfaction.

By moving to Workday, SCU is transforming the faculty, staff, and student experience while building a technological foundation that will set the institution up to adapt and evolve in the face of ongoing change and disruption.

Many Higher Education Institutions are Considered Digitally Distraught

Poor DX strategic execution is a leading factor hampering the ability of higher education to transform the back office and improve the student experience.

What is your organization's approach to digital transformation (DX) efforts? (Higher education)



Key Considerations for Higher Education Leaders



Strategic Considerations

- ✓ Elevate student experience/success as a mission-critical priority for all DX investments and initiatives from the back office to the classroom.
- ✓ Map out the student experience, from pre-admissions to post-graduation, to identify opportunities to invest in digital solutions that personalize the student experience, streamline student administrative tasks, and free up faculty to support students with unique needs/challenges.
- ✓ Start with a vision for a reimagined student experience and work backward to identify technical solutions to support that vision.



Implementation Considerations

- ✓ Prioritize DX strategic planning and change management early on. Continuously iterate and evolve the approach over time based on user feedback.
- ✓ Think beyond the “lift and shift” approach to cloud transformation to take advantage of more advanced/strategic capabilities offered by modern cloud solutions.
- ✓ Partner with vendors that understand the technology challenges of higher education and have certified implementation partners with demonstrated experience successfully leading digital transformations efforts in the industry.

About the Analyst



Matthew Leger

Research Manager, IDC Worldwide Education
Digital Transformation Strategies, IDC

Matthew Leger is a Research Manager on IDC's Government Insights team, responsible for the Worldwide Education Digital Transformation Strategies practice. Matthew's research focuses on key education IT and digital transformation trends, as well as emerging solutions impacting how primary, secondary, and higher education and related services are delivered. His primary focus will be on identifying best practices for implementation and use of key technologies to improve student outcomes and teacher performance, streamline operations and administration, and improve campus management. Given that his previous research has focused on the future of work and the role of education and training institutions in reskilling the modern workforce, Matthew's research includes a focus on how K-12 and higher education leaders can use technology and EdTech innovations to adapt their services to meet the rapidly changing demand of an economy that requires lifelong learning and upskilling.

[More about Matthew Leger](#)

Message from the Sponsor



Workday has seen institutions respond quickly to meet faculty, staff, and student needs during change events, which has altered all facets of the higher education experience. Now, institutions are seeking to continuously gauge the health of their finances, operations, staff, faculty, and students to better assess the programs that are operating efficiently.

Workday supports continuous and institution-wide planning to help institutions forecast enrollment, headcount, net tuition revenue, program viability, and much more. Built-in analytics and always-on audit and controls help speed decision-making and simplify system maintenance.

Workday helps institutions engage students in the moments that matter and leverages real-time academic, financial, and advising information delivered in an easy-to-use browser or mobile experience, improving the overall student experience. It surfaces data and insights that can help institutions identify trends, make decisions, and support students — all with the ultimate goal of enabling student success and striving for institutional excellence.

www.workday.com/highereducation



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IDC Research, Inc.

140 Kendrick Street, Building B, Needham, MA 02494, USA

T +1 508 872 8200



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