In 1972, visionary futurists Robert Theobald and J. M. Scott wrote one of the most interesting works related to education in the field of future studies, *Teg’s 1994: An Anticipation of the Near Future*. Like many significant studies of the future, *Teg’s 1994* was written as a work of fiction, in this case about a college student named Teg and her experiences as an “Orwell Scholar” in the year 1994.

What makes *Teg’s 1994* significant is the nature of the future of higher education that Theobald and Scott envisioned and how much of it has come to pass. In many ways, *Teg’s 1994* can also provide valuable insights into the future of higher education that this fictional student’s own children and grandchildren might encounter over the next 25 years.

Theobald and Scott were able to fairly accurately describe many of the trends in higher education that have actually occurred over the intervening 37 years. This includes a description of a worldwide computer system that provides Teg with opportunities to conduct her own research, as well as communicate with her peers; campus locations around the world that enable her to conduct her studies in different geographical settings; a faculty member who serves as a mentor, with whom she corresponds by e-mail; and pharmaceuticals that stimulate concentration and reduce the effects of adolescent hormones.
If Theobald and Scott were writing today, they might craft a sequel to Teg’s 1994 around the following trends that are shaping the future of higher education, also commonly referred to as tertiary education in other countries.

1. Globalization of education that leads students to study outside their home country and to respect various cultural settings. This globalized education embraces English as the world language of convenience, while still supporting and honoring other languages and cultures.

2. A growing, but frustrated, need to harmonize the framework, definitions, and subject matter content of higher education programs around the world.

3. Continuous changes in technology that impact learning, including the use of the Internet, the digitizing of all the world’s books, the complete transition of all technical journals to electronic format, the ascendancy of online teaching and instructional designers over classroom teaching, and the use of ever changing technology, such as iPods and iPhones to deliver educational content.

4. The changing role of faculty that diminishes their engagement in classroom teaching.

5. The changing nature of students, most of whom are already working adults who want to further enhance their knowledge and skills.

6. A continued need but a changing role for residential campuses, as they become the headquarters for global educational enterprises and the gathering places for academic rituals and tribal events.

Globalized Learning

Education is shrinking the world, and the world is shrinking the educational enterprise. On the one hand, universities in the United States, Australia, and Europe are increasingly enrolling students from other nations while also encouraging and enabling their students to study abroad. Many U.S. institutions are establishing partnerships with universities in other countries to offer U.S. degree programs in these countries. On the other hand, China is exporting the teaching of Chinese language and culture through the establishment of Confucius Institutes at universities all around the world and increasing the quality and quantity of tertiary institutions at a rapid pace.

Higher education institutions in South America are seeking accreditation with U.S. regional accrediting bodies. Many postsecondary institutions state that preparing their students for living in a global society is a key part of their educational mission. This growing emphasis on global interaction provides much of the pressure for the second major trend, harmonization.

Harmonizing International Educational Standards

In the increasingly global economy, multinational entities such as corporations and nongovernmental organizations demand more standardization in higher education’s structure and content. Corporations are already actively guiding efforts to standardize the content of curricula in key fields such as engineering and business, exerting influence on specialized accrediting agencies whose approval colleges and universities must have for credibility.

The disparities in educational structure among different nations and regions is constantly creating headaches: There is no international standard for a baccalaureate or a master’s degree, for instance, and there is also wide variation among nations in quality assurance of academic programs, faculty credentials, and educational support services. These discrepancies create problems for students as they move internationally to obtain a global education, as well as for employers in assuring their workforce is properly prepared.

Despite the barriers, the pressure for harmonization mounts. It is only a matter of time before governments and multinational entities begin to establish alliances that will impose global standards in terms of structure and definitions, if the higher education community does not work this out for itself. Colleges and universities are being challenged to re-examine their historical approaches and enter into discussions that create a great amount of discomfort and discord within the complex perspectives of different academic disciplines. Efforts such as the Bologna Process in Europe (implementing comparable degrees, credit systems, and other standards) are a harbinger of what is to come globally.

The drive to harmonize can also be seen in assessment of student learning, where objective evidence of student learning based on standardized examinations will become the global norm, rather than the subjective evaluations of faculty using hundreds of different assessment methods.

Technology’s Impacts on Teaching and Learning

Technology that supports higher education continues to evolve at a rapid rate. The once-valued library stacks and reading rooms full of printed periodicals are being replaced by semantic search engines, online book collections, and electronic journals.

Technology will continue to transform teaching. Freshman math classes are already being replaced by computer-based math teaching labs on many campuses. Large lecture courses are being replaced by courses taught online. Small discussion-oriented courses are being replaced by online courses with live chat rooms or asynchronous discussion boards, taking advantage of social networking to turn learning into a cooperative activity.

All of these changes support the ability of students to pursue their higher education from anywhere and at any time. Faculty are already putting class lectures onto small files for students to play on iPods and listen to while they go jogging.

New technology for proctoring students’ online exams now allow students to take tests from any location under supervision. Online delivery already takes college courses to the smallest rural communities in America and to students around the world. This trend will continue and grow as young people growing up in the homeschooling movement move directly into college programs without setting foot on a campus. Online courses are also providing new ac-
Zhao Wujun, a student from Xian, China, demonstrates Tai Chi at a program sponsored by the Confucius Institute in Troy, Alabama, one of several such institutes established around the world by China to help export its culture and language.

The electronic proctor: Remote Proctor device is widely used in Troy University (Alabama) eCampuses in place of a human test proctor. A camera with 360-degree video image range is connected to the student test-taker’s computer and verifies his or her identity through fingerprint identification.

Zhao Wujun, a student from Xian, China, demonstrates Tai Chi at a program sponsored by the Confucius Institute in Troy, Alabama, one of several such institutes established around the world by China to help export its culture and language.

Classroom at Michigan State University integrates multimedia technology with face-to-face learning.
financing benefits after their service is complete. Such a movement would accelerate the trend toward an older student body and would significantly disrupt the current model for residential campuses. As the student population continues to change, metrics that are primarily based on the assumption of a full-time 18- to 22-year-old student population that are used to evaluate tertiary institutions, such as the U.S. News and World Report rankings, will become increasingly misleading.

New Roles for Educators

The faculty have always been the core of the college or university, but their role is rapidly changing. The full-time faculty of the future will reflect current trends in three ways.

First, full-time faculty will increasingly serve as the guardians of a body of knowledge in their discipline. They will engage in the international discussion about the content and equivalence of academic courses and programs, working with other practitioners in their field through the auspices of specialized accrediting bodies.

Second, full-time faculty will continue to devote more of their time to conducting research and publishing or performing in their field. They will thus contribute to the body of knowledge in their field and re-

cess for students with disabilities and for students who want to complete an undergraduate or graduate degree while serving in the military.

“Going to college” no longer means going to a particular place for a particular number of years. It increasingly means engaging in a structured approach to higher education in whatever physical environment is most suitable for the learner.

The Changing Demography Of College Populations

While most people envision the traditional 18- to 22-year-old when they hear the term “college student,” that image no longer reflects the actual demographics of college students. In the United States, the college student body increasingly comprises working adults.

Fewer and fewer young people and their families will have the economic capacity, or the willingness to assume large amounts of debt, required for full-time college study, unless supported by academic scholarships. Instead, they will opt for part-time study, combining community college and online university courses to complete most degrees. The exceptions will be in the performing arts, sciences, and engineer-

From Roman Architecture to Freshman Organic Chemistry, more postsecondary courses are being offered on sites like Open Yale, with content available on YouTube and iTunes.
would most likely be headed for college by 2020. Unlike their fictional mother, this next generation of college students really will be living wherever they want and taking many (if not all) of their courses online. They will interact with other students from all around the planet and may even complete degrees that are accredited by international accrediting agencies, giving them even more maneuverability in the global workplace.

Teg’s children—and their twenty-first-century peers—truly will be the global, mobile learners that education futurists have envisioned.

About the Author
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College Campuses and “Homecoming”

Despite these trends, the residential college or university will continue to exist, even though the enrollment on campus may become a shrinking percentage of an institution’s total enrolled population. Affluent parents will still value the opportunity to send their young student “off to college” as a reliable way to help them mature.

Many academic programs in the performing arts, sciences, and engineering will still require study that is best accomplished on a campus, which will help keep residential halls occupied. Moreover, many institutions will use their residential campus as the organizational glue to hold the institution together (like a corporate headquarters) and as a place to gather a critical mass of full-time faculty and administrators.

The campus will be the home base for popular athletic programs that promote national visibility and tribal identity: as such, there may always be a need for “homecoming,” as campus provides a touchstone where students may come (often for the first time to set foot on the campus) to wear the school colors.

Teg’s Children

By now, Theobald and Scott’s character Teg would have had children of her own, and those children would most likely be headed for college by 2020. Unlike their fictional mother, this next generation of college students really will be living wherever they want and taking many (if not all) of their courses online. They will interact with other students from all around the planet and may even complete degrees that are accredited by international accrediting agencies, giving them even more maneuverability in the global workplace.

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