



A CHANGING EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT AND EMERGING FUTURE TRENDS

Given its mission, ORU pays close attention to what is happening (and what is likely to happen) “in every person’s world” so that its curriculum can prepare graduates most effectively. These are some of the changes and trends that ORU has observed:

- The importance of graduate education continues to grow with each new generation.
- The higher education model has shifted from a central emphasis on teaching to a central emphasis on student learning. Assessment of student learning is vital to future progress and is a key to differentiation and sustainability.
- Worldwide partnerships and global connections are becoming common in the academic and economic world.
- “Millennial” students access and process information differently from the “Silent,” “Boomer” and “Buster” generations that instruct them.
- The technology revolution continues to fuel productivity and knowledge growth, which creates greater knowledge and economic separation among individuals as well as institutions.
- There is a steadily growing emphasis on the importance of science and medicine in the new economy.
- A potential shift of world power exists as China and India grow their economies rapidly. Change in the Middle East offers new opportunities for outreach. The message of the gospel is currently “heard small” in these areas.
- There is a demand for transparency and efficiency in the economic life of for-profit corporations (Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002) and nonprofit organizations (e.g., Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability [ECFA], Guidestar, Charity Navigator, U.S. Senate hearings).
- Major Donor involvement in determination of philanthropic contributions is steadily increasing (fewer but larger gifts with more participation by the givers).
- The Hispanic population has grown rapidly and is the strongest new consumer market.
- Organizational structures, both technical and social, are altering form in the transition from the Information Age to the Concept Age.
- Effective, sweeping change may be necessary to remain relevant. The rate of change is constantly accelerating, requiring new paradigms and constant self-evaluation to remain viable and potent.
- Successful institutions of higher education have become more discipline-differentiated in addition to institutionally differentiated. “The all-inclusive university was (*is*) thriving on ever-finer specialties, doing well at scientific inquiry and technological development.” (Cohen, p. 365)