

ICDE GAC North America Task Force - Action 1

Accessibility

Inclusivity is a polarizing topic in North America at the moment, so many institutions and educators have instead focused on accessibility. Accessibility in the North American context means removing the barriers that prevent learners from enrolling, participating, and succeeding at the university. Some of those barriers include the high cost of tuition and learning materials, limited access to required technologies, inaccessible digital content, and resources that do not reflect learners' circumstances. Accessible education centers on employing strategies proactively by implementing no- or low-cost educational resources, Universal Design for Learning, consistent learner experiences, and flexible course options.

Scalability

Scalable education in North America means expanding access to more students without reducing quality or leaving learners behind. Scalability requires stable and secure technology ecosystems, quality standards, faculty training and development, instructional design support, and high-quality and fully-accessible open educational resources. However, institutions in North America vary significantly in how much financial support can be dedicated to scaling effectively, creating some disparity in the student experience. Recent developments in AI may help to address scalability as long as humans stay involved to safeguard accuracy and integrity.

Sustainability

Sustainability means institutional stability and growth in the face of cultural, political, and technological changes. Sustainable education in North America is at risk due to steep declines in funding, an imminent enrollment cliff, and rotating leadership at the executive level. Colleges and universities have been slow to change, by design, but will need to evolve more quickly to address the persistent challenges that threaten their long-term sustainability. Flexible learning models, alternative credentials, open education, quality standards, and the responsible use of AI are among the creative solutions being used to support sustainability in North America.