Information technology (IT) and the Internet have changed dramatically the very nature of how we live, work and learn. In fact, applications of this ever-increasing technology in education and business have transformed our lives providing increased capacity, efficiency and access to information in our knowledge-based economy and world. University presidents must appreciate what journalist Frances Cairncross calls the “death of distance”—how the IT/communications revolution has altered radically the relationships between time, space, work and our learning environments. University presidents must recognize the three key dimensions of being green, global and mobile in their approach to using IT in education in this new era.

Knowledge and understanding of the following aspects of IT advances might be particularly pertinent to higher education institutions:

- **IT as an enabler in supporting the university mission**  
  Enhancing academic quality, improving access, reducing the achievement gap, etc.

- **Technology enhancing institutional performance**  
  Improving institutional performance and the experience of students and faculty in educational support areas, while reducing the cost of providing service.

- **Delivery of online education**  
  Organizing and promoting curriculum that can be delivered effectively online.

- **Recognize and prepare for the fast-paced world of IT innovations**  
  Focusing on key technology issues and opportunities that affect an institution is critical.

- **Technology as a means to comprehend data, not just proliferate it**  
  Providing true information competency and technological literacy so that our students and the public can sort, screen and make sense of the data they encounter.

Presidents also need to have an understanding of emerging innovations and related IT issues, including but not limited to the following:

- **Cloud computing**  
  Creates opportunities to reduce operational costs; changes business, cost and instructional delivery models; and focuses on innovation. Issues: security and compliance.

- **Social networking**  
  Changes to teaching, learning and research models; and student and faculty services and expectations. Issues: security and privacy.

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Mobile computing  
Changes expectations about access to institutional services; enhances staff and faculty productivity and sense of community within the institution.

Electronic sources  
(open source, e-books, e-textbooks)  
Changes the content and educational resources landscape; reduces costs for students; changes teaching, learning, publishing and living in the educational environment.

Enterprise resource planning  
(integrated computer-based applications and data warehouse)  
Provides strategic decision-support system for staff and faculty; may serve as a catalyst for business process re-engineering; enables “real-time” adjustments in processes and practices; may enhance data quality and integrity when common database is used by multiple applications; facilitates generation of routine management reports without IT assistance.

Website  
Forms the central pillar of the university’s communication strategy; facilitates organizational clarity and strengthens the university’s brand.

Cyber security  
Potential security breaches, personal privacy and safety.

Based on the above, it is clear that university presidents must strive to be polymathic, especially in areas of IT fluency. The pace of change is swift, and although this list may be relatively current, we can be assured that it will be fast changing. Those who stay ahead of the curve will find the opportunities advanced technology brings liberating. For those who lag behind, technology will become a barrier. Leadership must ensure that IT functions as a vector of intelligence, enhancing the institution's ability to achieve its mission.