

## **Higher-education leaders optimistic about coming year but U.S. debt ceiling, shrinking operations budgets, competition are still top concerns according to academic outlook survey**

**St. Louis – October 4, 2011** – While most are optimistic that the 2011-2012 academic year will be better than last year, uncertainties about the global economy, shrinking administrative budgets and intense competition for students are major concerns of college and university leaders according to results released today from Three Rivers Systems Inc.’s annual survey.

Distributed randomly to college and university administrators worldwide, the 2011-2012 Academic Outlook Survey again confirms that the persistent global recession of the last few years – and now the added pressures exerted by the unresolved debate concerning an extension of the USA’s debt ceiling – continues as a serious concern for higher education along with that of having to do more with fewer financial resources.

Responding to the question “If the U.S. debt ceiling crisis and the global economic uncertainties it exacerbates continue, our institution will feel a major impact in the coming academic year,” 66 percent strongly agreed or agreed while only 8 percent disagreed.

Sixty percent of respondents ranked “budget reductions” as their number one challenge, down slightly from 64 percent in last year’s survey, while “competition for students” remained unchanged at 32 percent. “Decreased enrollment” moved higher on the list of concerns this year, cited by 27 percent, up 9 percent over last year.

Despite the gloomy financial outlook, optimism runs high among the administrators. Some 53 percent strongly agreed or agreed they are “generally optimistic about the upcoming academic year and believe it will be better than the previous one,” up 17 percent over last year.

Similarly, most administrators feel student outcomes will be better this year even as the resources to serve those students decline. Those predicting better student outcomes outnumbered by 2 to 1 those seeing no change.





In response to the question, “In thinking about our mission in the 2011-2012 academic year, we will be asked to do more with fewer resources,” 82 percent responded strongly agree and agree, down from 86 percent last year. Interestingly, those disagreeing increased a whopping 400 percent from 4 percent to 16 percent.

Even so, most administrators again this year ranked budget as their biggest headache, followed by workload and communicating effectively with faculty or staff.

This summer’s proposed merger of software providers Datatel and SunGard was a cause of concern. Half the respondents said they believed the consolidation would reduce choice and raise IT costs, while only 9 percent disagreed. Those worried about future SunGard product-support by Datatel outnumbered those not worried by 2 to 1.

The survey again included a question about heeding the advice in a 2010 report published by EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit association with a mission to advance higher education by promoting intelligent use of information technology.

Report author Phillip J. Goldstein concluded that IT leaders in education must do four things to persuade their institutions that technology is a good investment and not just a place to cut costs:

-  Secure new revenue streams through online learning.
-  Improve utilization of assets through more-efficient administrative operations.
-  Improve student retention and reduce time to graduation through better systems to track academic progress and improve advising.
-  Leverage data and analytics to support improved decision making.

In ranking their institutions' likelihood of implementing these items, a large majority thought each was most likely or likely to be done. Improving utilization of assets was up 9 percent over last year while improving student retention and reducing time to graduation through better tracking systems was up 6 percent over last year.

Electronic tablet and e-books failed to gain much ground over last year. Administrators reporting their institutions have e-tablet or e-book strategies in place remained at only 9 and 12.5 percent respectively. Those with no e-tablet strategies held at 73 percent, while those reporting no e-book strategies rose 9 percent to 75 percent.

Each year, Three Rivers Systems' Academic Outlook Survey seeks to capture a snapshot of higher education's expectations for the coming year. With its focus on technology, the survey offers a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities colleges and universities envisage in the coming academic year.

**About [CAMS Enterprise](#)**

Developed from the ground up with Microsoft Internet technologies, [CAMS Enterprise](#), is a highly scalable, comprehensive academic management system that is quick to implement and easy to use. CAMS Enterprise consolidates multiple stand-alone systems including admissions, student information, financial aid, student services, fiscal management with HR and payroll, fund-raising, alumni relations, document management, learning management, a full suite of portals, and more, into one solution that ensures administrators, staff, faculty and students all work with the most recent and most accurate information. CAMS Enterprise is a totally Web-native, completely integrated solution for managing the entire student life cycle at higher education institutions.

**About [Three Rivers Systems Inc.](#)**

Three Rivers Systems Inc. is a leading provider of comprehensive administrative software solutions for higher education. Headquartered in St. Louis, the company has been delivering innovative technology-driven solutions to the educational community since 1985. Three Rivers Systems has a large worldwide client base using CAMS, its Comprehensive Academic Management System. A full-service solution provider, the company delivers software and all implementation, training, project management and support services for its clients.

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