



Innovating for the Future

by Amanda Hankel, editor

This month, the world lost one of its greatest innovators—Steve Jobs, cofounder of Apple Inc. When thinking of Jobs, you probably think of how products such as the iPod, iPhone, iPad and iMac have revolutionized the consumer technology space. But these innovations also made a tremendous impact on higher education, as well. Apple products have improved education, offering “desktop computers, laptops and mobile devices that changed both knowledge sharing and knowledge consumption for students and adults alike.”¹

We decided to dedicate this issue of the *Higher Education Brief* to Jobs, as a pioneering innovator in education. The importance of innovation in higher education and the application of new ideas and new technologies remain paramount concerns for all educators interested in moving past the status quo and exploring new possibilities. How did Jobs achieve the success he did as an innovator in education, and how can we use what we’ve learned from him to continue to innovate and improve quality in education in the future? The content of this issue may help to arrive at an answer.

In the [Quality Progress](#) article, [“Around the Bend,”](#) you will learn how innovation is one of the key forces shaping the future of quality, according to ASQ’s latest Future of Quality study. According to the article, “innovation lies at the heart of survival” for organizations. Defining success as “the pursuit of something different and exciting,” the study suggests that for any organization, including higher education institutions, to succeed in the future, it must be willing to think differently to achieve innovation.

Often, the concept of thinking differently is easier said than done. The article, [“Innovation on Campus: Changing the DNA of Higher Education”](#) suggests innovation is lagging at universities, particularly prestigious ones. But change is happening in the higher education space, largely in the form of adopting new technology. The article [“Do ‘the Risky Thing’ in Digital Humanities”](#) supports this point with a story about pushing students to be innovative in their education by taking a chance on innovative projects. Building on that, the article [“My 64 Years of Fighting for Innovation”](#) discusses the author’s career long battle of tradition versus innovation in higher education.

In her article, [“Not Invented Here: Tales From the Dark Side of Innovation,”](#) Marianne Di Pierro, Ph. D., associate editor of the *Higher Education Brief*, touches on the importance of



being open to thinking differently—and the potential consequences if an organization is reluctant to do so. Di Pierro employs Carson McCullers' novel, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* as a vehicle for her ideas regarding the knowledge, enthusiasm and spiritedness that certain contemporary organizations lose because they are too willing to ignore the sage wisdom of their innovators.

Finally, in her article, [“Fab Labs: Re-envisioning Innovation and ‘Entrepreneering.’”](#) Sylvia Tiala of the University of Wisconsin–Stout writes about fabrication laboratories (fab labs) as platforms for students and educators to foster innovation. “This community workspace removes barriers such as access to equipment and access to expertise,” Tiala writes. “The fab lab’s grassroots environment serves as an incubator for creative endeavors, job creation, economic development and research.”

Innovation is about thinking differently, remaining open-minded to new ideas and coming up with creative ways to bring new ideas to life. These are all concepts practiced by Jobs in his remarkable career at Apple. As the articles in this issue illustrate, the future of quality—and the future of higher education—depends on the ability to innovate. Thankfully, we have great examples, such as Jobs, who have shown us what it means to be an innovator in education and what it takes to succeed.

How do you think innovation will impact higher education in the future? Email me at ahankel@asq.org.

REFERENCE

¹Ian Quillen, “Apple's Steve Jobs Was a Pioneer in Education Technology,” *Education Week*, Oct. 2011, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2011/10/apple_founder_steve_jobs_passe.html