

DR. BABU GEORGE

HigherEd Innovator & Architect | Global Connector | Interdisciplinary Business Scholar-Practitioner | AI, Digital Transformation, Sustainability, & Change Management

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dr. Babu George occupies a rare intersection in American higher education: he is simultaneously a working executive who has built and turned around academic institutions, and a scholar whose work is cited more than 7,000 times. That combination of the practitioner's urgency and the scholar's discipline is the thread running through more than two decades of his progressive leadership.

His record as an institutional builder is concrete and measurable. He co-orchestrated a \$25M transition to a state-of-the-art business facility while simultaneously launching Mississippi's first STEM MBA program at an HBCU, integrating artificial intelligence and data science into the curriculum from the ground up. Minority student enrollment rose 40% within 18 months. Corporate partnerships with Google, Meta, Oracle, Walmart, Coursera, and FedEx followed, not as symbolic affiliations but as working relationships generating \$500K+ in annual micro-credential revenue. His competitive grant portfolio exceeds \$7M, including a \$1.25M annually renewed USDA-funded research program.

What distinguishes this record further is its international reach. George has managed academic programs in China, Cambodia, Mauritius, Guatemala, Senegal, and beyond, overseeing 4,500+ students and 72 faculty members with full P&L accountability and zero accreditation violations. He has served on accreditation panels in Slovakia and Curaçao, edited journals for Springer Nature and PLOS ONE, externally examined 50+ doctoral candidates internationally, and supervised doctoral students on three continents. His 300+ peer-reviewed publications span management, digital transformation, sustainability, tourism, and health equity, a breadth that reflects genuine interdisciplinary curiosity rather than scattered output.

At this moment in higher education, George brings something institutions urgently need: deep expertise in AI-driven educational innovation, a demonstrated ability to build financially sustainable programs through corporate and government partnerships, and a personal commitment to access that is backed by results. He is not interested in managing the status quo. He comes to build.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Strategic Leadership: Institutional transformation • Turnaround management • Crisis leadership • P&L accountability

Academic Innovation: AACSB/ACBSP / SACSCOC / HLC accreditation • Program design • Faculty development • Quality assurance

Digital Transformation: AI integration • EdTech partnerships • Technology-enabled learning

External Engagement: Corporate partnerships • Government relations • Fundraising • Board governance

Global Operations: Cross-cultural leadership • International program management • Multi-site coordination

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Capital Projects:** Led \$25M+ facility developments and technology integrations
- **Revenue Generation:** Secured \$7M+ in competitive grants; developed \$1.25M+ annual recurring programs
- **Program Innovation:** Launched 5 new degree programs and established 3 research centers
- **Enrollment Impact:** Achieved 40% increase in minority enrollment; managed 4,500+ international students
- **Strategic Alliances:** Forged partnerships with 20+ Fortune 500 companies including Google, Meta, Oracle, Walmart, and FedEx
- **Scholarly Impact:** 6,000+ citations; 300+ peer-reviewed publications; 50+ doctoral students supervised
- **Recognition:** Multiple excellence awards at departmental, institutional, regional, national, and international levels

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY | MISSISSIPPI, USA

Interim Dean, School of Business (June 2022 - May 2023)

Full Professor (June 2022 - Present)

Led comprehensive transformation of business education at historic HBCU with \$8M+ operating budget and 800+ students.

Strategic Initiatives:

- Orchestrated \$25M transition to state-of-the-art business facility, managing construction oversight, technology integration, and operational launch
- Launched Mississippi's first STEM MBA program at an HBCU, integrating AI and data science
- Established Center for Data Analytics and Informatics at Vicksburg campus, creating regional economic impact
- Developed innovative 2+1.5 undergraduate pathway with community colleges, expanding access

Financial Leadership:

- Co-secured and manage \$1.25M+ annual SNAP-Ed Program (USDA-funded) across multi-county operations
- Generated \$500K+ in corporate partnership revenue through micro-credential programs
- Improved budget efficiency by 35% through strategic resource reallocation

Partnerships & Innovation:

- Forged transformational alliances with Coursera, Google, Meta, Oracle, Walmart, and FedEx
- Created industry-aligned micro-credential programs addressing workforce gaps
- Developed blueprint for AI-assisted education credentials

Measurable Outcomes:

- 40% increase in minority student enrollment within 18 months
- 25% improvement in student retention rates
- 100% job placement rate for inaugural STEM MBA cohort

Committee Leadership:

- University Graduate Council
- University Tenure Committee
- University Academic Governance Council
- University Research Policy Advisory Committee
- University AI Task Force

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS UNIVERSITY | TENNESSEE, USA

Associate Dean of Graduate Business & Full Professor (August 2020 - May 2022)

Transformed graduate business education portfolio with \$3M+ annual budget and 200+ students.

Leadership & Program Development:

- Supervised 12+ graduate faculty across MBA, Healthcare Management, and Accounting programs
- Launched industry-sponsored MBA cohort program with Medtronic, generating \$400K annually
- Developed Graduate Certificates in Project Management and Nonprofit Management
- Strengthened industry-academia collaboration through strategic advisory boards

Financial Impact:

- Increased graduate enrollment by 35% through targeted recruitment and innovation
- Generated \$600K+ in new corporate training contracts

Committee Leadership:

- Co-Chair, Campus Diversity Committee
- Co-Chair, ACBSP Accreditation Committee

FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY | KANSAS, USA

International Program Chair & Associate Professor (August 2015 - July 2020)

Directed global education enterprise spanning 20+ countries with \$15M+ annual revenue.

Global Operations:

- Managed international programs across China, Cambodia, Mauritius, Guatemala, and Senegal
- Oversaw 4,500+ students and 72+ faculty members (22 full-time, 50+ part-time)
- Directed \$15M+ annual budget with full P&L responsibility
- Developed cross-cultural competency training for overseas executives and faculty

Strategic Achievements:

- Coordinated Visiting Scholar and Study Abroad Programs
- Created "Management of Workplace Diversity" curriculum adopted across multiple campuses
- Established quality assurance frameworks ensuring academic standards across international sites

Measurable Impact:

- Maintained 95%+ student satisfaction rates across all international locations
- Generated \$2M+ in annual profit contribution
- Zero accreditation violations across all international partnerships

Committee Leadership:

- Chair, Internationalization Strategy Development Committee
 - Member, Faculty Committee on Digital Learning Environment
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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI | MISSISSIPPI, USA

Assistant Professor & Interim Department Chair (August 2007 - May 2011)

Leadership Roles:

- Interim Chair, Department of Tourism (2008) - managed \$2M budget and 12 faculty members
 - Chair, Faculty Senate Committee on International Relations
 - Co-Chair, AACSB Assessment and Accreditation Committee - led successful reaccreditation
-

OTHER ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Visiting & Adjunct Professorships:

- University of Nevada Las Vegas | Visiting Professor & Doctoral Faculty (2013-2024)
- University of Memphis | Affiliate Faculty, School of Public Health (2025-2026)
- University of Johannesburg, South Africa | Doctoral Faculty (2013-2024)
- Swiss Management Center University | Adjunct Full Professor (2013-2017)
- University of Liverpool | DBA Program Faculty (2014-2016)
- Universidad San Pablo, Guatemala | Visiting Professor & Doctoral Research Director (2017)
- Alaska Pacific University | Visiting Associate Professor (2012-2014)

Additional visiting appointments at institutions in India, China, Colombia, Ghana, and Taiwan.

TEACHING AREAS AND EXPERIENCE

Strategic Management, Entrepreneurship, International Business, Business Analytics, Leadership and Ethics, Marketing Management, Supply Chain Management, Organizational Behavior, Managerial Economics, Sustainability and ESG, Digital Transformation, AI in Business, Management of Higher Education, and Innovation Management, among others. I am motivated to develop and teach additional courses, as per requirements.

A Selection of OER Textbooks Authored by Me:

Designing Supply Chains: <https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/139404>

Management of Robots and Smart Machines: <https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/139203>

Decision-making under radical uncertainty: <https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/139378>

Strategy in a World that Refuses to be Stable: <https://oercommons.org/courses/unfair-by-design-strategy-in-a-world-that-refuses-to-be-stable>

After Globalization: <https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/138970>

A Positive Theory of Marketing: <https://oercommons.org/courseware/lesson/139684>

A Selection of Simulations Developed by Me:

Cross-cultural simulator: <https://culturesimulator.netlify.app/>

Biases in employee promotion: <https://biasesinpromotion.netlify.app/>

Ripples of policy decisions: <https://decisionripples.netlify.app/>

Startup Roulette: <https://startupchoices.netlify.app/>

Integrated View of Business Disciplines: <https://businessintegration.netlify.app/>

My **GitHub Profile** (which contains some 'cool' educational apps developed by me): <https://professorgeorge.github.io/>

BOARD LEADERSHIP & EXTERNAL SERVICE

Governance & Accreditation:

- Expert Member, Accreditation Agency, Government of Curaçao (2021-Present)
- Peer Review Team Member, National Higher Education Accreditation Body, Slovakia (2020-Present)
- External Examiner for 50+ doctoral candidates across international universities
- Advisory Board Member, Government of Saudi Arabia National Innovation Awards

Editorial Leadership:

- Academic Editor, PLOS-ONE (2024-Present)
- Associate Editor, Springer Humanities and Social Sciences (2024-Present)
- Founding Editor, International Journal of Qualitative Research in Services (2011-2019)
- Section Editor for multiple journals including Journal of Financial Risk Management and Administrative Sciences

Professional Service:

- Manuscript Reviewer for Academy of Management, Academy of International Business, and 20+ top-tier journals
 - Conference Director/Co-Director for 20+ major international conferences
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RESEARCH LEADERSHIP & GRANT PORTFOLIO

Total Competitive Funding: \$7M+ as Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator

Major Active & Recent Grants:

- \$1.25M+ annually: SNAP-Ed Intervention Study - Social Media Addiction in Children (2023-2025) - Co-PI
- \$150K: Health Tourism Project - Caesar's Casino Group/UNLV (2013) - PI
- \$100K: Campus Sustainability Study - US Department of Education (2019) - PI

- \$50K: Caribbean Economic Development - World Bank Consortium (2011) - PI

Research Impact:

- 6,000+ citations demonstrating growing international influence
- 300+ peer-reviewed publications in leading scholarly journals
- 10+ authored/edited books with major publishers (Emerald, Springer, Palgrave Macmillan, CRC Press)

Research Focus:

- AI and digital transformation in higher education
 - Change management and organizational innovation
 - Educational equity and access
 - Technology-enhanced learning and internationalization
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HONORS & RECOGNITION

- Faculty Fellow Award, PNC-Howard University (2024) - \$10K AI entrepreneurship research
 - Outstanding Diversity Champion, Mississippi State University System (2024)
 - Outstanding University Faculty, Fort Hays State University (2020)
 - President's Best Scholarly Researcher, Fort Hays State University (2019)
 - Best Paper Awards: Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Technology (2019), Journal of Young Consumers (2010)
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EDUCATION

Academic Credentials:

- **Ph.D.** Management Studies | Goa University, India (2006)
- **EdS** Higher Education Innovation | Fort Hays State University, USA (2019)
- **MTA** Tourism Administration | Pondicherry University, India (2001)
- **BSc** Electronics | Mahatma Gandhi University, India (1998)

All international degrees evaluated by WES/Global Credential Evaluators as equivalent to US regionally accredited institutions

Executive Development:

- DBA (Doctor of Business Administration, ACBSP Accredited) International Marketing | Swiss Management Center, Switzerland (2016)
- Institute of Educational Management | Harvard Graduate School of Education (2018)
- Institute for Senior Internationalization Officers | AIEA Fellow (2020)
- Disney Leadership Excellence | Walt Disney Institute (2022)

- Future of Work Symposium | Deloitte University (2023)
 - Mentor Academy, University of Mississippi Medical Center (2025)
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THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Recent Keynote Presentations:

- LinkedIn Newsletter “[Strategic Foresight](#)”, with 10000+ impressions a month.
- “AI and the Future of Learning”, Keynote Speech at the International Conference on Technology Management, Symbiosis University, India (2024)
- "Artificial Intelligence Trends in Information Management", Keynote Speech, Doctoral Colloquium, University of Johannesburg (2022)
- "Towards Peace Infused Tourism Knowledge", Keynote Speech, AMITY University Global Summit (2020)
- "Digital Transformation in Post-COVID Education", Keynote Speech, Symposium on Technology in Society, Universidad Privada Boliviana (2020)
- “Metaverse and the Digital Twins of our Lives”, Invited Speech at the Annual Commencement, Shenyang Normal University, China (2019)

Corporate Training Expertise:

Designed and delivered high-impact leadership programs for corporate, governmental, and community organizations:

- Strategic Leadership & Digital Transformation
 - AI-Driven Change Management
 - Sustainable Leadership for the 21st Century
 - Inclusive Leadership in a Diverse World
 - Digital Ethics and Governance
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LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

"Education transforms lives and societies. My mission is cultivating adaptive, ethical, tech-savvy professionals who will lead in an AI-driven, interconnected world while maintaining moral foundations and commitment to sustainable development."

Strategic Priorities:

- Positioning institutions for AI-driven educational transformation
 - Building sustainable financial models through innovative partnerships
 - Advancing access through technology-enabled program design
 - Creating industry-aligned curricula for workforce development
 - Scaling international programs with rigorous quality assurance
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TEACHING & MENTORING

Educational Philosophy:

Transformative learning experiences bridging theory and practice through:

- Student-centered, multimodal instruction adapting to diverse learning styles
- Active engagement via experiential, case-based methodologies
- Critical thinking that challenges assumptions and explores new paradigms
- Real-world application connecting concepts to contemporary challenges
- Lifelong learning mindset inspiring continuous professional development

Mentoring Impact:

- 50+ doctoral students supervised or co-supervised internationally
- 100+ graduate students mentored in research and career development
- Multiple teaching excellence and student mentoring awards

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Citizenship: United States (Citizen), India (Overseas Citizen)

Languages: English (Native), Hindi (Fluent), Malayalam (Native)

Work Authorization: Fully authorized to work in the United States

References: Available upon request

CV Last Updated: 31 January 2026

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A Selection of Self-Published Books

<https://www.amazon.com/stores/BABU-GEORGE/author/B00EGDYOZ4>

Journal Publications

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- Ravola, M., George, B., and Mattathil, A.P. (2024). Assessing nutrition and physical activity needs for SNAP-Ed programming in rural Mississippi counties. Advancing Mississippi Conference, IHL Mississippi; September 2024.
- George, B. (2022). Artificial intelligence trends in information management systems. Chairing and Keynote. iCAB: International Conference in Accounting and Business. University of Johannesburg. August 2022.
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- [Customer Service Using AI and Machine Learning \(LinkedIn\)](#)
- [Digital Technologies Case Studies: AI, IOT, Robotics, Blockchain \(LinkedIn\)](#)
- [Learning XAI: Explainable Artificial Intelligence \(LinkedIn\)](#)
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The cases below are drawn from real leadership situations across the institutions and contexts where Dr. George has worked. Names and identifying details have been changed to protect individuals and institutions. What has not been changed is the texture of the problems: the ambiguity, the competing pressures, and the moments where a decision had to be made without a clean answer in sight.

Cultural and Communication Challenges

1. *The Room That Would Not Speak*

At a prestigious university in East Asia, George inherited a department that ran its meetings in near-silence. Faculty would nod, defer, and voice no objections in the room, then quietly undermine decisions afterward through inaction. He initially read this as disengagement. He was wrong. What he was actually seeing was a deeply embedded cultural norm around hierarchy and public disagreement, one in which voicing a contrary view in front of colleagues felt socially dangerous, regardless of how open the invitation appeared.

He stopped holding large open forums and began a different practice: brief written reflections submitted anonymously before each meeting, which he would summarize and read aloud himself, as if they were points raised by the group. This moved dissent out of the individual and into the room without exposing anyone. Over time, as people saw that contrary ideas were being taken seriously, a few voices began attaching their names. The shift did not happen in weeks. It happened slowly, almost imperceptibly. But by the second semester, the meetings had genuinely changed. George did not transform the culture. He found a narrow gap in it and worked through that gap consistently until the gap widened on its own.

2. *When the Map Did Not Match the Territory*

A joint academic program spanning universities in East Asia, West Africa, and Southeast Asia looked excellent on paper. The partnership agreements were signed, the curriculum was approved, and the timeline was set. What George discovered within the first term was that the three teams held fundamentally different assumptions about what a deadline meant, what a collaborative decision required, and who had authority to speak for whom.

Rather than escalating the friction through formal complaints or protocol enforcement, he proposed a different kind of meeting: one with no agenda items about the program itself. He called it a working day devoted entirely to how the partners preferred to work, how they signaled disagreement, how decisions got made within each team, and what they needed from partners to feel respected. It felt slightly awkward and possibly unnecessary to some of the participants. It turned out to be the most productive day of the partnership. The problems that followed were still real problems, but they were no longer compounded by the assumption that everyone else operated the same way.

Curriculum and Academic Innovation

3. *The Faculty Who Feared the Algorithm*

When George introduced a proposal to pilot AI-powered adaptive learning modules in a graduate program, the resistance he encountered was not primarily technical. It was philosophical. Several senior faculty members worried, not unreasonably, that a system making personalized content recommendations was making pedagogical decisions that belonged to instructors. One put it plainly: "If the algorithm decides what a student sees next, what exactly am I here for?"

George did not argue the point. Instead, he reframed the pilot: rather than positioning the AI as a teaching tool, he presented it as a diagnostic one, something that surfaced patterns in student behavior that faculty could then act on. Instructors retained all curricular authority. The system simply gave them better information. Enrollment in the pilot was voluntary for faculty; three colleagues agreed to try it. Their students' midterm performance was noticeably stronger, and those faculty talked about it openly. By the following year, George did not need to make the case again. The faculty made it for him.

4. *A Curriculum That Had Stopped Asking Questions*

An institution George worked with in Asia had a business curriculum that was thorough, rigorously taught, and about a decade behind the world it was supposed to prepare students for. The faculty knew it. The students sensed it. Nobody had quite been able to move the process of reform forward because the existing curriculum had accreditation anchors, departmental ownership, and enough internal inertia to outlast most initiatives.

George's approach was to avoid framing the effort as a curriculum revision, which would have activated every defensive reflex in the building. Instead, he assembled a small cross-departmental task force around a single practical question: what should a graduate of this program be able to do on their first day of work that they currently cannot? That question cut through departmental loyalties

because it pointed outward rather than inward. The task force brought in three industry partners who answered it plainly. The resulting changes were not radical, but they were real, and they had faculty buy-in because the faculty had helped diagnose the gap rather than being told about it.

5. Building a Research Culture From a Standing Start

One of George's more difficult assignments involved a well-regarded Western institution where research output had quietly declined over several years. The symptom was easy to see in the numbers. The cause was structural: faculty were carrying heavy teaching loads, had limited access to modern research infrastructure, and had no organic community of practice around scholarship. Individual ambition existed. The conditions for it did not.

George approached it less like a research director and more like someone trying to create a social environment. He established small interdisciplinary working groups, not committees, but informal reading-and-writing groups that met over lunch. He identified two or three faculty members with live research interests and gave them modest course releases. He then built a grant-writing workshop around their actual projects so the process felt concrete rather than abstract. The first cycle of results was modest: two submitted proposals, one funded. But the culture had shifted enough that in the following year, seven faculty were involved in active grant work. George's contribution was not expertise in every field. It was knowing that research cultures are social before they are intellectual, and acting on that knowledge early.

6. Getting Business Students Ready for the World

George has consistently held that the gap between what business schools teach and what employers actually need is not primarily a content problem. It is an experience problem. Students learn frameworks and cases about decisions that others made in the past. They rarely practice making decisions themselves, under real pressure, with incomplete information.

At one institution, he addressed this by creating what he called an Industry Lab: a structured partnership with local businesses in which student teams took on real, live problems, not simulated ones, under faculty supervision. The companies involved were not large corporations doing a favor. They were mid-sized firms with genuine operational questions they could not easily answer internally. Students were not graded on whether they solved the problem; they were graded on the quality of their thinking and their ability to communicate it. Several of the firms eventually hired from the cohort. The program cost very little to run and produced more tangible career outcomes than most internship arrangements George had seen.

Inclusive Workplaces

7. The Diversity Initiative That Almost Became Theater

George was brought into a situation where an institution had the right language around diversity, the strategic plan language, the committee, the stated commitment, but the demographics of faculty hiring and student enrollment told a different story year after year. The gap between aspiration and outcome was not due to bad intentions. It was due to a system that had been designed, over decades, to reproduce itself.

He pushed for something that felt mundane but turned out to be consequential: a detailed audit of where, exactly, candidates from underrepresented groups were being lost in the hiring and admissions pipelines. The answer was not at the final decision stage, where everyone was paying attention. It was earlier, in how position descriptions were written, where they were posted, and how initial screening criteria were applied. George worked with department chairs to revise those upstream elements. He also introduced a targeted scholarship program, small enough to be funded but large enough to signal genuine intent to prospective students. The numbers moved. Not dramatically, and not immediately, but in a direction that held.

8. History That Would Not Stay in the Past

At an elite institution with a distinguished public reputation, George encountered a complicated situation involving historical financial relationships that had come back into public view. The institution's early growth had been partially funded through sources that, by contemporary ethical standards, were difficult to defend. Students and faculty were raising questions. External media attention was beginning.

George did not recommend a communications strategy. He recommended accountability, starting with the board being willing to say plainly what had happened, what the institution had benefited from, and what it intended to do differently going forward. The response was a scholarship endowment directed specifically toward students from communities connected to the historical harm, alongside a governance revision that created clearer standards for donor relationships. It was not a perfect resolution; no such resolution exists in situations like this. But it was an honest one, and it changed the tenor of the conversation from defensive to constructive in a way that a communications strategy alone never could have.

Crisis Management and Ethical Leadership

9. The Misconduct Story That Almost Got Worse

When credible allegations of financial misconduct emerged against a faculty member at an institution where George held a leadership role, his first instinct was to contain the story. His second instinct, which he acted on, was to resist that first one. Experience had taught him that institutions which manage financial scandals primarily as communications problems tend to deepen the damage. The story becomes about the cover-up.

He moved quickly on two fronts simultaneously: an independent external audit, and a straightforward communication to faculty and senior staff that acknowledged the situation and described exactly what steps were underway. He answered questions he could answer and said clearly when he could not answer others. The outcome was not painless; there was significant institutional disruption and some reputational cost that took time to recover. But the process was clean, and the community's trust in leadership held because leadership had not asked them to look away.

10. The Donation He Turned Down

A well-resourced donor approached an institution George was affiliated with and offered a gift large enough to fund a new center. The gift came with conditions: naming rights, advisory influence over the center's programming, and an implicit expectation that the institution's research output in a particular area would align with the donor's commercial interests.

George recommended declining it. He made the case internally that the value of research independence, over a 20-year horizon, was worth more than the immediate capital. The donor was not pleased. The institution ran a smaller, slower fundraising campaign to build the center on its own terms. It took longer. George still believes it was the right call, not because he is indifferent to resources, but because he has seen what happens to academic credibility when it is traded quietly and incrementally for funding. The exchange rarely looks consequential at the time. It almost always is.

11. Gender Discrimination and the Slow Work of Repair

A university George served was dealing with serious and credible allegations of gender discrimination involving a faculty member with significant seniority and institutional standing. The pressure to handle the situation quietly was substantial. The affected parties were junior and had less institutional leverage.

George's position was that a quiet resolution was not available here, regardless of how uncomfortable the alternative was. He pushed for an independent investigative process, then made sure the findings were taken seriously rather than filed away. Beyond the immediate case, he worked to restructure the systems around faculty evaluation and promotion that had, over time, created the conditions for the behavior to persist unchallenged. That work was slower and less visible than the investigation itself. It was also more important. The goal was not just to respond to what had happened, but to make it structurally harder for it to happen again.

Administrative and Operational Excellence

12. The Institution That Was Running on Paper

George took on an administrative environment in which a staggering number of basic academic processes, course approvals, grade changes, committee decisions, procurement, were being handled through physical forms, email chains, and informal follow-up. Faculty and staff were spending measurable portions of their working weeks on process management that had nothing to do with their actual work.

He launched a digital workflow project, which sounds more exciting than it was. Most of it was tedious: mapping every process, identifying the redundancies, building buy-in from the people who had inherited responsibility for the old ways of doing things, and implementing replacement systems in stages small enough that failures could be corrected without crisis. Administrative time on routine approvals dropped by roughly 40% over 18 months. The real benefit was less visible but more significant: faculty got time back, and they spent it on teaching and research rather than paperwork. That was the point.

13. Sustainability as a Structural Commitment

When an institution George worked with began receiving criticism for its environmental footprint, the first instinct of the administration was to produce a sustainability report, a polished document describing aspirations. George pushed instead for a different question: what would it actually take for this institution to operate differently, in ways that could be measured and held accountable?

That reorientation produced a different set of actions. Not a report, but a set of binding commitments with timelines. Not a sustainability committee, but changes to procurement standards, physical plant operations, and curriculum. Several of the changes were operationally inconvenient in the short term. The institution adopted them anyway. George's view has always been that

sustainability initiatives that do not create any friction are usually not real sustainability initiatives. The friction was a sign that something was actually changing.

Student Well-Being and Support

14. The Wellness Problem No One Wanted to Name

Mental health was deteriorating visibly among students at a Western university George was affiliated with. Faculty were noticing it in attendance, in assignment quality, in the conversations happening around the edges of office hours. The institution had counseling services, but they were underfunded, appointment waits were long, and there was a persistent cultural stigma around seeking help that reduced their reach.

George's response started with something small: he funded a peer support training program, equipping students to recognize distress in their classmates and make the first approach, not as counselors, but as people who knew what resources existed and could help someone take the first step toward using them. This removed the activation energy that the formal systems required. The counseling center's caseload increased because people were reaching it who previously had not. George also pushed for a reduction in appointment wait times as a budget priority, framing it plainly as a retention and completion issue for institutional audiences, and as a matter of basic care for everyone else.

15. The Online Program That Was Losing Students It Should Have Kept

Enrollment in an online degree program at one of George's institutions had been declining steadily. The exit survey data pointed to a consistent theme: students felt isolated and unsupported. They could access content but could not easily access faculty. They could submit work but rarely received feedback that felt personal. The program had been built to be efficient. It had not been built to feel like an education.

George commissioned a full pedagogical review rather than a marketing review, which is what had been proposed. The review identified specific structural gaps: insufficient synchronous touchpoints, an absence of peer learning structures, and a feedback model that relied almost entirely on automated grading for formative assessment. Addressing these things required both money and faculty time, neither of which was in obvious surplus. George made the case to leadership that the cost of redesigning the program was significantly lower than the cost of continued attrition, and he won the argument. Enrollment stabilized within two semesters and grew in the third.

16. Using AI Without Losing the Student

Dropout rates in one of George's hybrid programs had been elevated for two years running. The data pattern was consistent: students who fell behind in weeks three through five rarely recovered. By the time an instructor noticed, the window for effective intervention had usually passed.

George worked with the program's data team to build an early-alert model that flagged students showing the behavioral signatures of disengagement, declining login frequency, late submissions, reduced discussion participation, before the academic consequences became visible. The alerts went to faculty advisors, not to automated systems. The human contact was deliberate. George was skeptical of AI-driven interventions that substituted data for relationship, and he wanted the model to enhance human judgment rather than replace it. Faculty who received alerts were expected to reach out personally, with knowledge of what the data showed. Retention improved in the following year. George is careful not to overclaim the effect; the data was one variable among several. But he believes the early contact mattered, and the conversations he had with faculty afterward support that.