

# Top Issues to Watch in Higher Education for 2023

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## Speakers:

- **Kavitha Cardoza**, EWA Radio
- **Scott Jaschik**, Inside Higher Ed

## Episode Keywords:

colleges, students, issue, education, university, people, admissions, higher ed, affirmative action, year, big, stories, ewa, higher education, works, community colleges, adjunct, harvard, universities, image

## \*Editor's Note:

See a clarification below regarding how Muslims feel about visual representations of the Prophet Muhammad.

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### **Kavitha Cardoza, EWA Radio 00:01**

The Collaborative for Student Success is criss-crossing the country on the Route K-12: Exploring Education Recovery podcast. To showcase how federal recovery funds are reshaping schools. Join Collaborative Director Jim Cowen as education commissioners, K12 reporters and advocates share how historic funding is accelerating learning and meeting the diverse needs of students.

### **Kavitha Cardoza, EWA Radio 00:38**

This is EWARadio, the podcast of the Education Writers Association. I'm Public Editor and your host, Kavitha Cardoza. Scott Jaschik is one of three founders of Inside Higher Ed, and one of the most trusted voices on higher education. He is quoted regularly in publications nationally and internationally. His look into the crystal ball of higher education and his talk on the top 10 issues to watch in the coming year is one of the most eagerly-anticipated sessions at EWA seminars. And this year was no different. We taped his talk at the Higher Education Seminar held on Jan. 26, in Alexandria, Virginia. I'm turning the mic over for today's episode to Scott Jaschik. And be warned: Scott says he frequently cheats and doesn't stop at just 10 tips.

### **Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 01:32**

So, issue No. 1: affirmative action. Affirmative action is probably going to be destroyed this year. And I said destroyed. I think the Supreme Court is likely to rule in May or June that colleges do not have the right to consider race, or ethnicity or gender in admissions and in other things. This is going to be a major calamity for higher education. And higher education, I don't think, is really ready for the calamity. There are two cases -- one involving Harvard, one involving the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill -- and if you listened to the arguments on (they were on Halloween, which is very interesting, if the

arguments scared you) they broke down exactly as expected, with the justices. The six conservative justices all seemed dead set on ending affirmative action in higher education. The three remaining certainly are very pro-affirmative action, but three votes does not make a Supreme Court decision. And I think colleges truly need to get out of their defense mechanisms about this case because the things that the colleges say don't help them. It doesn't matter to the court that affirmative action works well. It doesn't matter to the court that, without affirmative action, our leading colleges and universities would lose most of their Black and many of their Latino students. And it could be really bad. In California, when they eliminated affirmative action, the first few years were terrible for Black and Latino enrollments at Berkeley and UCLA. They were truly terrible. And no one was really prepared for that. But this year, you could have that at every college and university. And it's not just for admission, because many people are saying "well, I cover a university that doesn't have super competitive admissions." And if you do, that's wonderful. But this will also likely apply to financial aid. And most colleges use race to award financial aid. Most colleges also use race and ethnicity. They have, you know, summer programs for Latino students or Black students, for anyone. These programs could be eliminated. And I don't see quite enough awareness of this issue. And I would urge you to do lots of stories between now and whenever the decision comes out on: What's gonna happen? Is your college getting ready? Does your college have a plan? The decision is likely to come out in May or June, probably toward the end of June. So colleges are in the clear on the class that they're admitting right now for the fall. But they could be absolutely stuck with their future classes. The other thing that you should watch between now and then and after is: racial incidents on your campus. In general, when the Supreme Court has considered issues of race and ethnicity in higher ed, there have been a lot more racial incidents on campus. Now more than "what" is sort of hard to say, because we have a lot of racial incidents right now. We've had them forever. But I think it could get worse when the decision comes down. And particularly, if the decision goes, as I expect it, every Black student is going to get asked, "Do you deserve to be here?" And think about what that will do to the students.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 06:17**

Issue No. 2: ChatGPT is driving academics crazy. Our readers, who are the professors and administrators at colleges and universities, are in absolute hysteria over ChatGPT. Some people are saying that there may never be another fair admissions essay. Some people think that essays, in general, will be, you know, abandoned in higher ed. I don't think that, but people are just completely flipped out over ChatGPT. And this creates lots of stories. You can do stories on Turnitin, the anti-plagiarism company. Turnitin is working on a new system that supposedly will detect ChatGPT. Some colleges or some professors are saying they're going to require students to write longhand in class their essays. Now, a few things about that one: Many students don't know how to write longhand. No, really. I mean, they've only written on a laptop. This is going to be a new experience for them. Now, the reason I am not hysterical about ChatGPT because I am old. And, I remember 10 years ago, they were equally hysterical about Wikipedia. And there were lots of stories: "Is Wikipedia gonna ruin everything in academic integrity? And are people going to, you know, just copy a Wikipedia entry and think that's good enough?" So, I think this coming year is going to be pretty bumpy, but that within a year, something is going to be worked out. But that doesn't mean there are not lots of stories to do about ChatGPT right now for your readers.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 08:28**

Issue No. 3: TikTok. TikTok is a major company that has ties to the Chinese government. TikTok has been declared a national security threat. Now, this may seem hard to believe. When I look at what my nieces post on TikTok, I have a hard time thinking it's of much interest in Beijing. But be that as it may, a bunch of states, generally red states, but also Wisconsin -- the University of Wisconsin --- banned TikTok and you should be writing about what your universities are doing, whether they're in the banning or the not-banning, and why. This is an important issue for for your readers because it involves censoring, really, what students can do with their phones, and that should probably offend you.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 09:35**

Issue 4: Ron DeSantis. And this is not just an issue for Floridians. Do we have any Floridians here? They're apparently not being let out of the state right now. But what Ron DeSantis is doing in Florida is going to cause real damage to not just Florida but in other states as well. Already in Tennessee, they're trying to copy him and proposing legislation to do some of what he's done. What has he done? He said that he that he will not accept a public school in the state using AP in African American Studies. Now, he can't truly be against AP and African American Studies because it hasn't been debuted yet. But there are versions of it out and about. And he's said Florida will not accept it. This is not, and I'm not saying this because I think AP is the most wonderful thing in the world. I actually don't. But if you're going to have AP, it seems to me that you should have AP in African American Studies, too. It's just basic, common sense. And the college board knows how to create AP tests. But that's not all that he's done. He has appointed six new trustees to New College of Florida, which if you haven't heard of it, is a great college. Actually, it's been a very highly regarded college. And it's a small college, unlike the rest of the Florida public system, which is made up of large universities. And he's said that New College is "woke" and prone to all sorts of politically-correct examples. And, supposedly, these new trustees may try to fire the president next week. This is not normal for a governor to appoint trustees like that. And why is he doing it? Obviously, it's getting him a lot of attention. And if it works, he hopes it will be a primary campaign for president. And if it works, you bet other Republican governors are going to copy him. And there's going to be a new standards for what you can do.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 12:15**

Issue 5: Congress. What's going to happen in Congress? Actually, not that much because you have a split control of Congress, and now there's going to be a lot of bills that will come out of one side or the other, and then they will promptly die. You don't need to worry, aside from the spending issues of what to cover. There's not going to be -- when the House of Representatives passes a bill to do who knows what, odds are, it's not going to happen in the Senate. But, you need to watch the Education Department. Because, in this atmosphere in which we are living, the Education Department is going to do much more. And the Education Department isn't going to look for things on which they can get legislation, because they won't be able to get legislation, but they're going to just do things. You know, and some of those things are going to end up in court like the loan forgiveness is before the Supreme Court right now. But, I think that this may be a year of a lot of action in the Ed Department instead of Congress.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 13:40**

Issue 6: Colleges closing for good. Last week, Presentation College of South Dakota announced it was going to close at the end of this academic year. You've probably never heard of the college, but it's an

important college in educating nurses and other health professionals in South Dakota. In December, Cazenovia College, a liberal arts college in central New York, announced that it was going to close. Holy Names University in Oakland announced that it was going to close. So, here you have three colleges that are never going to -- after this year -- never going to operate again. That is a lot of colleges in a short period of time. I suspect we're going to have more. We also are seeing more mergers of colleges, more colleges realizing they can't make it alone. And, so, looking for a partner. Now, obviously it is very sad when a college closes. But the questions you really need to look at are: Who's going to get the students? And, why is this happening right now? The federal government, in the last few years, gave money to every college because of COVID. That is stopped. And so that COVID money wasn't just to keep the colleges going with COVID. It kept colleges alive. And now it's gone.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 15:26**

Issue 7: I've mainly been giving you negative issues. Issue 7 is when you can write positive stories on: direct admissions. Direct admissions is a new way to admit students. Instead of the students applying to the college, the students create a portfolio, not with their name, but it has their grades, test scores if they want, what they're interested in studying, where they want to study -- meaning geography -- and then they put it in a database and colleges search the database and admit students directly without the student ever having applied to a college. Now, last year, a few colleges did it. This year, probably 200 colleges are doing it. This is amazing growth for admissions. Why? Because the students who are doing this and the colleges that are doing this are students and colleges that serve low-income first-generation students. Most big changes in higher ed happen because somebody figures out a way that "Oh, I can get money out of Harvard applicants or University of California applicants." This isn't that. And in that way, it's really significant. And last year, the students said they loved it. These are not students who are looking forward to the college admissions process. Big companies are getting involved in it. EAB is in it. The Common App is in it. NISH is in it. Some colleges are doing it individually, by themselves. This is a huge change. And there are probably colleges that are in your area that you can write about. This is a big change for colleges.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 17:35**

Issue 8: international. International works multiple ways. It's about students going abroad, foreign students coming here, which is mainly what I'll talk about. Far fewer foreign students are likely to come here, as long as you're all wearing your masks. And I'm not saying to take off your masks. They are worried about COVID. Lots of people are worried about COVID. You're probably worried about them bringing COVID. Look at what's going on in China, where, you know, China one day released people from following all the COVID rules and 60,000 people died. Think about it. International is going to continue to be really hit-and-miss. The best colleges will probably get a lot of international students. A lot of colleges, I think won't. And that is worth watching.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 18:39**

Issue 9: is mental health. Which, I'm not going to talk about a lot because you were just talking about it. But mental health is a huge issue for colleges. The main thing I want to clarify about mental health is that it is not a problem that was brought to us by COVID. COVID accelerated concerns about mental health. May have made mental health a worse issue. But mental health was a bad issue before COVID.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 19:11**

Issue 10: academic freedom. Many people think academic freedom is sort of boring to write about it because everyone knows what academic freedom is. Whatever.

We've just had two cases of universities ignoring academic freedom and then having a big to-do. One is Hamline University where an adjunct at Hamline in Minneapolis, St. Paul, showed in her class an image of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad. And, it was a respectful image, in fact. It wasn't one of the cartoons that you may have seen.

But many Muslims do not believe that it's wise to show an image of Muhammad.

(\*Editor's Note: "Most Muslims [believe that visual representations](#) of Muhammad should not be viewed, even if the Quran does not explicitly prohibit them. The prohibition stems from the belief that an image of Muhammad could lead to worshipping the prophet rather than the god he served.")

A student complained, and this adjunct was promptly notified that she was not welcome to teach there next year, or this year, actually. That's huge. Since then, the adjunct has said she's going to sue the university. And, so, now the universe says, "Oh, we didn't mean to say she was Islamophobic." But they did say she was Islamophobic. And this is a really serious issue. Oh, and by the way, when she showed the image, she warned the students in advance, so the students were allowed to leave the class in advance and not see the image. And this wasn't good enough to prevent her from being called Islamophobic. Think about that. That's one issue.

The other issue happened at Harvard. Harvard rejected a fellow to one of its prominent programs, who is very well-respected in the field of human rights. Why? Because he has criticized Israel. Now, there are all kinds of views on Israel. But, to say that because somebody has criticized Israel, they are not suitable to be a Fellow at Harvard -- and by the way, this guy has criticized every country under the sun. He hasn't just been after Israel. And Harvard has totally reversed itself. After yanking his fellowship, they're now going to award him a fellowship. But when there's an academic freedom issue that breaks in your community that you cover, jump on it. They make good stories, people love them.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 21:54**

Issue 11: unions. Unions are growing in higher ed. Now, the unions for the public colleges are governed by the states. So, if a state doesn't want unions, they don't have to have unions. But many states do allow their public college faculty to unionize and their graduate students to unionize. We've just seen a big sustained strike at the University of California, among four groups, but particularly among TAs and they got big raises when it was over. Also, at the same time, we saw the New School faculty went on strike. There, it was the adjuncts who were on strike in New York City. Then we had the University of Illinois at Chicago, faculty went on strike and they got a good contract. Unions are going to be making noise at your campus. And it's really important to take it seriously. And to cover it.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 23:06**

Issue 12: Higher Ed is becoming a have/have-not society. You know, "haves" are, you know, your Ivy League, your University of California, University of Michigan, University of Virginia, they've got it. They've got a billion dollars in the bank, or way more than a billion dollars, in some of their cases, and they've got tons of students. But then you have everyone else, and everyone else doesn't have a spare billion. They are going to be in trouble. And this relates to a bunch of the issues: Who is going to be the most trouble? Community colleges.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 23:50**

Issue No. 13: Community colleges are hurting in a big way. They have suffered through three years of enrollment losses. And an enrollment loss for a community college means not only did they lose the students who aren't paying their tuition, even though tuition is low at community colleges, they are also losing money from the state legislature, which is cutting their budgets. Most community colleges are between about 15% lower in enrollment than they were before the pandemic. This is a huge issue that you should be writing about at your community colleges that you cover and

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 24:37**

Issue 14 is: COVID. COVID is not over. And it's really amazing what's going on with COVID. There are some colleges are restoring mask requirements. Most aren't. Some colleges are restoring a number of requirements. Most colleges aren't. COVID should be the subject of your stories, even if the colleges don't want it. Write about it. It's so important that you get this story right.

**Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed 25:14**

Those are my 14 stories that you should write about this year. Thank you.

**Kavitha Cardoza, EWA Radio 25:24**

That was Scott Jaschik, one of the three founders of Inside Higher Ed. That wraps up this issue of EWARadio. I'm Kavitha Cardoza. Do you have questions for Scott? Let's continue the conversation on Twitter at @EdWriters. And if you cover higher education, please share your stories at #TellEWA. Special thanks to Judy O'Babatunde, Angelina Liu and Kristan Obeng from EWA, as well as Raul Garcia for production assistance. The mission of the Education Writers Association is to strengthen the community of education journalists and improve the quality of education coverage. For more than 75 years EWA has helped reporters get the story right. Thanks for listening and lifting up education journalism. Collaborative for Students Success is criss-crossing the country on the Route K-12: Exploring Education Recovery podcast to showcase how federal recovery funds are reshaping schools. Join Collaborative Director Jim Cowen as education commissioners, K12 reporters and advocates share how historic funding is accelerating learning and meeting the diverse needs of students. Catch up at [EdurRecoveryHub.org](https://EdurRecoveryHub.org) or wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts.