

# Transcript

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**Derek Bruff:** This is "Leading Lines." I'm Derek Bruff. Do you remember a few years ago when free online courses taken by thousands of students were going to change higher education as we knew it?

Yeah, that didn't quite pan out. Online education is indeed changing higher ed, just not in the revolutionary way that some argued that it might back then. It's been more evolutionary and it's been happening since long before those free courses got all that press back in 2012.

It's going to continue to change higher ed, and I think an important ingredient in that change, is the fact that not all online education is made the same. Colleges and universities take a variety of approaches to programs and technologies, and to pedagogies and partnerships.

In this Leading Lines episode, we're going to explore the partnership piece of that a little bit with an interview with Christopher Parrish. He's the senior vice president and portfolio general manager at 2U.

2U is what is sometimes known as an online program management or OPM provider. OPM providers are for-profit companies that partner with non-profit universities to develop, launch, and sustain online degree programs, especially graduate and professional programs.

I was surprised when I started talking to 2U and other OPM vendors in the past few years about all the different ingredients that can go into launching an online degree program. Ingredients that some universities feel quite comfortable handling and others find that they need some help figuring out and doing.

Here's a list of some of those ingredients from a 2018 overview of OPMs, from technology analyst and consultant, Phil Hill. He says that OPM providers can usually help with "marketing and recruitment, enrollment management, curriculum development, online course design, student retention support, technology infrastructure, and student and faculty call center support."

Again, some universities can handle pieces of that quite well. I think a lot of universities find that there's skill sets and tasks that they need some help with.

2U is one of these OPM providers. As I mentioned, not all online programs are built the same. 2U's approaches particularly labor intensive, their typical class size is 15, and their courses involve regular live class sessions using video-conferencing tools.

Those elements are some of the reasons that -- full disclosure here -- Vanderbilt has partnered with 2U to launch two new online graduate programs back in 2017, Masters of Education in Human Development Counseling and a Doctor of Education in Leadership and Learning in Organizations.

In today's interview, John Sloop, Vanderbilt's Associate Provost for Education Development and Technologies, talks with Chris Parrish from 2U about 2U's model for online education, about why 2U's standard university partnership agreement is a 10-year commitment, and where Chris Parrish sees online education going in the next decade.

John has some thoughts about faculty labor, and he gets one of the most surprising answers to our closing question we've had yet. I think you'll find this interview a lively one.

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**John Sloop:** Hi, this is John Sloop. I'm sitting here with Chris Parrish who is the senior vice president of 2U. I'll let you give your subtitle in just a second. I appreciate you being here with us today.

**Chris Parrish:** Terrific John, glad to be here.

**John:** [laughs] I'm going to ask you a couple of questions. I'm going to start off and set the parameters for this discussion for those listening. I want to first off start with a disclosure that

Vanderbilt is in partnership with 2U in a couple of different degree programs. Acknowledging that upfront, I think is important.

I'm really here to talk to you about your thoughts about online education, whatever terms you want to use, from the perspective of someone in the industry, who is dealing with a lot of different issues.

Like I was saying earlier to you when we were talking before we started recording, I think as people who have been educators and working in this domain, we probably approach it and think about it a little differently than you. We also don't have all the insights that you have.

Let's start off by talking specifically...We'll go from a specific conversation about 2U to broader issues. Tell those who don't know, what does 2U provide?

**Chris:** Well, thanks for having me here John. Senior vice president and the subtitle is portfolio general manager.

**John:** Good.

**Chris:** It's a long title. It basically means that I oversee a portfolio of universities including Vanderbilt. We actually have a couple of partnerships here. I'm responsible for overall partnership health and growth.

The backstory on me was, I was actually the 12th employee at 2U back in 2008. We've come a long way...

**John:** Wow.

**Chris:** ...in 10 years. Again, a subtitle of that is I left for a little while and did some work in finance and consulting and came back aboard a couple of years later.

This will be a fun discussion too because us as an individual business have really evolved in quite a lot of ways that we'll try and touch on today. 2U in general, what we do is we partner top tier colleges and universities and help build what we believe is the world's best digital education.

Historically speaking, we've focused on master's degrees and doctorate degrees. Within the last year and a half, we've also gotten into non-degree, non-credit bearing space with short courses.

We acquired a company called GetSmarter at Capetown, South Africa in July 2017 with the thought that it was clear our partners were thrilled with the full graduate degree programs but wanted some additional experimentation in the space of short courses which are a hot topic in and of themselves.

We thought that was important for us to be more of a full stack provider to our partners and drove a lot of the decision-making today.

One other highlight I'll make is that we bring both a suite of services and technology to the table with our partners. We work on a revenue share on a long contract basis. The reason for that is we go very deep with our partners. We invest somewhere between \$5 to \$10 million in the first couple of years and try and build what we think is the Cadillac of every space.

Our programs are phenomenal in terms of quality and maybe the best metric. To highlight that is, 83 percent of students that are enrolled in 2U programs or either still enrolled or have graduated today. We look at that as an 83 percent grad rate, which we're really proud of.

**John:** No, that's great. In fact, you've already jumped ahead to something I was going to talk about later. I can attest to the quality of the visual. I can't attest myself to the quality of education. I don't operate in those areas, but I'm positive that at Vanderbilt we're offering quality education.

The mark that you sometimes get in the press is, in fact, the revenue share. It sounds to me what you're trying to say is that there's a huge amount of money that has to go into this, and that's where the finances are going to making this the Cadillac of education. Is that fair to say?

**Chris:** That's right. If you're going to throw fireballs at the 2U partnership's structure, the easiest place to throw a fireball is revenue share, and the next easiest place is the contract term. Our shortest contract at 2U is 10 years and our longest is 15. All of them are somewhere between there.

Folks initially look at that and say, "Wow, OK, you're giving away over half of the revenue and this is a long-term partnership. How does that compute? Why should I do this?" What I always implore my university partners to do is think critically about the cost structure, each one of these perspective partnerships.

Something that we always do for our partners is, we build a financial model that models your costs of partnering with 2U. The benefit of that is you start to see where a lot of the costs are spent on our side and on your side. We know it's expensive to build these programs. I mentioned that 5 to 10 million of net negative cash in the first couple of years.

Usually, the university is break even within the first year, and we break even typically in about year five. We make our money towards the end of the partnership. The reason we got to 65 percent in 10 years isn't because that sounds good. It's because, at the end of an average relationship, we make about the same amount of surplus as our university partner.

Over 10 years, our totals are about the same. That's what drove those percentages. We're super transparent about our financials and our partners' financials through every deal process because that to us is the first critical step of building trust which the partnership is built on.

**John:** Moving a little to, because I didn't want to spend a huge amount of time on finances. Moving to issues in general, I want you to think outside of 2U although I know your experiences will come to bear on these questions. What do you think is the most difficult task a university faces with online education or putting a degree program online?

**Chris:** I would assume that the largest hurdle that you face, John, in your position is probably quite similar to mine which is preconceived notions of online education are just terrible. For a very long time, there were a lot of for-profit degree programs online that weren't inherently bad. In fact, a lot of innovation was driven by the for-profits, and we probably wouldn't be here today without them.

At the same time, there are were way too many masters of criminal justices being offered online without very clear outcomes for what the student was going to do with that type of degree. For us, as we go into partnership with every one of our universities, we are supremely focused on degree programs which we know will yield positive outcomes.

Not just graduation, but ensuring that these students have social mobility and economic

mobility after they graduate is really important to us. I think about the challenge that we face today, it's the same one that we faced in 2008 which are these preconceived notions of online education.

How do we make sure that we're spotlighting the good guys and reducing the spotlight from the bad guys, which is tough in today's press environment? It is. I think a necessary component of us continuing to move the ball forward that this could be done online, this can be done online at the same quality if not better than what we see on campus.

**John:** When you talk about separating the good guys from the bad guys, I want to push this a little bit further because sometimes it's not just that. For example, on a campus like Vanderbilt or you take any campus, you take any of the Ivy League schools which are experimenting with online program now.

Internally, there's still a discussion to be heard that's not about good guys or bad guys. Everyone here assumes we're good guys. We are. Everyone at Harvard assumes they are good guys.

There's going to be an internal discussion where some faculty member is going to say, "I know that we teach, we're a quality institution, but online education can't be as good." I hear this. Not all, people are coming around, the ones who have worked in it. How do you respond to those who simply think it's inherently a lesser experience?

**Chris:** This is where show-not-tell plays a large part into how that conversation could be shaped. For me individually, I think one of the biggest misconceptions of online education is that it's a technology-based business. The technology is important, you need to have a dynamic LMS that allows for content to be uploaded and downloaded, and all the features that we've seen.

Technology has come so far in the last 10 years, especially in the online learning space where there's a lot of really good options out there for technology. For us, the secret sauce is always the services and the human-mediated part of the online experience that drives the outcomes that we've seen in our program.

Every one of our programs has dedicated student support advisers that are working one-on-one with students so that they won't feel lost or alone, even though they're a digital

student. Those types of human-mediated touch points, we think are a critical pillar to a high-quality experience.

In addition to the student support advisers, another key aspect to what we believe is really high-quality online education is our live classes. In every one of our partnerships, we have live classes. Students consume content asynchronously, which is basically canned lectures. That asynchronous content can be really dynamic, sometimes it's pretty static.

What's really important is that, after they consume that content, they come to a live class. The average class size at 2U is something like 15 students. These are usually 90-minute sessions with the faculty members front and center facilitating a discussion. When we first did that in 2008, a lot of people thought we were crazy.

From a university standpoint, the thought at that point was that, all hail to convenience. Bow down at the altar of convenience. That's what online students want. Why would they want to come to class? Why would they want to come to an immersion or residency on the weekend?

When we started out with the live class model, we got a lot of flak from folks because one, it's expensive to pay faculty to teach those courses. Two, it's a lot of work, and we thought we'd lose students from it. What we found is that the immersions and the live sessions are two really critical pillars of what we think is high-quality education.

As you're thinking about conversations with faculty, I think showing and not telling, showing the content, talking through the model and displaying the outcomes is ultimately where you can get some believers in the model.

**John:** You've talked just now about building a program, to make sure it has quality, doing online. The university, we're not required to, but we would anyway assess the quality of the education. We're going to find some way of doing that.

The industry as a whole, not just 2U, has to be in a place where you're going to universities and saying, "We can assure you this is quality." Did you do some sort of assessments yourselves of education?

**Chris:** Yeah. It's a really good question. Every year we get together with all of our partners in what we call a 2U Symposium, where we bring deans, provosts, you've been to multiple of

them John, together in one location. We really just try and foster discussion about online learning in general and online learning specifically related to the 2U partnership.

I remember the first year that we did this, I think this was 2014, we were a little nervous. First time we're bringing all of these different folks together. One of the panels that we had was culture clash. It was titled Culture Clash, Combining University Culture With 2Us.

The reason I go there is I think this is a really interesting point where we brought a very technology-consumer-products-focused look at quality and satisfaction in our programs that typically aren't done at universities. We are a huge believer in Net Promoter Scores. Net Promoter Scores, for the listeners out there, you're probably familiar with it even if you don't know the name.

You've certainly seen it on multiple websites where the question is basically, "How likely are you to recommend this product or service to a friend or colleague?" You have score 1 through 10. Really tough to get high Net Promoter Scores. We embedded those scores throughout our faculty onboarding process.

We asked students those questions about technology, about the content, about the overall program, and about the support functions that they work with. We make serious and large decisions about our support scaffolding and overall programmatic strategy based on the feedback we get on the Net Promoter Score. Not an assessment in the conventional sense.

The assessments for the online programs are very similar to what you would do on campus. In terms of measuring quality and the overall experience, we've adopted this Net Promoter Score metric that we believe is the leading indicator of whether students are going to be satisfied and ultimately retain in the program to go on and get the outcomes they set to achieve at the beginning of the program.

**John:** Do you look as well at job placement later, issues like that? Universities will of course.

**Chris:** That's exactly right. One of our early partners was Georgetown Nursing. Georgetown is a great partner of ours. They're our third program that we partnered with.

There was a contingency of stakeholders at Georgetown that, although the content looked great, the classes were going swimmingly, they were still doubtful that it could produce the



outcomes that their on-campus nursing program would produce.

We were just so thrilled as a company to see that the first graduating class of nurses passed the board at basically the same rate as on-campus. It was about half a percentage point below what their on-campus rate was. Well within the realm of comfort. It's like 99 percent versus 98 point something.

That to us was a testament that, even in a program like nursing, if you invest and build the quality content and ensure that students are supported, you can achieve the same outcomes as indicated by board pass rate, as on-campus students. We have a bunch of those little anecdotes sprinkled throughout our portfolio.

We work with everything from speech pathology to data science, to DBT, to nursing and midwifery, very diverse set of programs that all have their own metrics that we try and equate to on-campus, and do what we can to get there.

**Chris:** Moving from what you're doing now and what you try to do to keep up, let's move to the future. There are multiple reasons why people pause at something like a 10-year contract. Being tied to something is scary, etc. There's also the question of, 10 years, in technological terms now, is a long time. Lots of stuff changes.

The material itself, the teaching material is going to be more stable than the ways we deliver it, or how we find our students, etc. If you look at a crystal ball 5, 10 years from now, how do you see...? This is not a question about 2U, although I'm sure if it implies you'll keep up with those things. What do you see changing in the next 10 years?

I know it's a difficult question. How will online education or whatever terms you want to use, how will the platforms change, how will everything change about it, anything?

**Chris:** Great question. One change that we've already seen, a pretty substantial migration on the 2U side, and I assume other online programs have seen the same, is that the amount of content that's being consumed on a mobile device just within the last two or three years at 2U has basically doubled.

We can see whether a student is watching, let's say, a recorded video on their laptop or on their cell phone. We've built an app that is adaptable such that a student can consume that

content when they're on the subway or on the airplane.

This is a mobile world. We're seeing that in a lot of different areas, and I don't think education is any different. 10 years from now, there will be a larger support system for a more mobile consumption of content.

In addition to that and almost doubling down on that, the other piece that I would highlight in 10 years is that the ROI for high-quality graduate degree programs being done online or in hybrid fashion is so compelling that I believe the majority of graduate programs will be consumed in an online or hybrid environment in 10 years from now.

The ROI is too compelling. For a graduate student that no longer has to quit their job, pick up their life, and move to Nashville, as great of a city it is, because Vanderbilt is located in here. I love Nashville. To not have to do that and to be able to pursue an EDD from Peabody College, one of the highest ranked education schools in the country, that's a really compelling ROI.

Undergraduate is much more complicated because people are going to undergraduate for different reasons -- find themselves, identity, all that. In the graduate space, we really think that the majority of programs will push there.

The implications for brick and mortar universities is such that there will always be an on-campus MBA at Harvard, but those degrees will become more and more luxury and fashion when it's welcomed that online programs can produce the same outcomes as on-campus.

That's where we think this space is headed. We're at a very early stage on that curve, but the majority of graduate programs and graduate degrees will be consumed online in 10 years.

**John:** You mentioned brick and mortar universities. That's, of course, a massive concern for a lot of faculty members and others. Can you imagine a future where we don't need students coming to campus or we don't need that many instructors? One person can teach 5,000 or whatever.

These are the types of arguments that get brought up. Trying to think as realistically as you can, not just again about 2U but about any type of other corporations or vendors or

university systems. Arizona is certainly really out there in terms of what they're doing online, etc. Do you see this as having an effect?

You mentioned Harvard is always going to have this residence. OK, that's Harvard. Do you think this is going to have an effect on universities of a certain stature, or is it going to affect different universities differently, or do you think brick and mortar is here forever?

**Chris:** The struggle of certain universities at the undergraduate level is misrepresented in a lot of ways. In fact, if you look at, pick your number, top 200 universities, many of them are seeing on-campus applications higher than ever before.

A lot of the institutions that were never dream schools for folks when we were growing up are headed that way now today. It's tougher to get into a lot of these schools than ever before. There's still massive demand for undergraduate programs.

Those schools that will struggle with that are the ones that are undifferentiated, asking for a high price put on their degrees. They're going to struggle, but those are the minority compared to most of the schools that are seeing an uptake in undergraduate application volume.

In the graduate space, the on-campus programs, regardless if it's Harvard, Vanderbilt, or other programs, will be looked at as a luxury good for graduate students.

As we think about where this is headed, the early adopters that have moved online and thought through how their programs can continue to evolve over the next couple years those will be the winners. Folks trying to build this capacity five, six, seven years from now will really struggle to make a dent in the market.

**John:** Because they're trying to catch up.

**Chris:** They're catching up. That's right. That's right. One point on this, too, that you brought up before is how do you reconcile this 10-year contract or multiple-year contract with a changing environment around the degree program?

There's probably not one-degree program at 2U right now that looks the way it looks today like it did when we first launched it. We're constantly trying to evolve that academic product,

if I can use that word in this scenario, in a way that is responsive to what students need and want, and also fit the capabilities and the capacity of the university.

That is a constant push and pull effort with our partnerships, but one that's really necessary to ensure that degree programs remain relevant both in terms of technology they're using but also the content that they're teaching.

**John:** Again, not just with 2U, I think this dance we're all having to perform because this is interactive process. I'm a media ecologist. When I'm thinking about the types of technologies we're using, that you're using, that Vanderbilt uses, it is part of the message of what our education is now and that we have to continue to evolve with it.

That's reason why I don't worry so much about the length of a contract myself as long as you're working in tandem with someone else, a real good partnership. To me, I don't think you can overestimate how much change we might see in 10 years. I don't know what it's going to look like.

It's going to be a very different type of education by then. Hopefully, the quality is still there, etc. There's going to be some differences.

**Chris:** You started a question just a couple minutes ago, asking about almost the faculty impact of digital education. I would put that question back out to folks that are working in this arena because I believe that the future of online education is one that continues to be faculty-centered.

I mentioned before, our average class size is 15 students. In some ways, those are smaller class sizes than probably the average of most graduate programs across the country. We believe that faculty will continue to have a critical role in graduate education.

There are plenty of other programs out there asynchronous only, where the faculty impact is really on building the course that don't have as much involvement in the actual facilitation throughout the term. That's just not something that we think drives the quality outcomes that we've seen, at least, on our side from our partners.

**John:** I know, anecdotally, we're talking general here. We're not talking about 2U. I have a number of friends at universities, where a particularly popular summer school course, for

example, used to have 10, 11 sections, which was employment for 10 or 11 people.

Now, one person teaches the entire thing through an online program. A couple courses like that. On the one hand, you can chalk that up to, "OK, this is a change in..." Historically in every industry, changes in technology lead to a shift in what people are doing.

That's part of what the pain we're seeing in those cases, and I'm not questioning. From the outside, I would question, "Well, how well does that work?" I'm assuming those universities who are doing that type of change, they're assessing their education. They're still happy with what it is.

That's part of the resistance that you see from some faculty. It changes the industry that has real effects on people, on employment, on pay. My feeling is that if the stress is on revenue streams, that ends up becoming part of the problem if that's what you're talking about.

If instead, you're talking about how do we deliver a quality education to more people, then it becomes part of the academic mission of the university. You're on much safer grounds. I'm editorializing here. It's a little bit outside of your domain, but this is part of the responsibility of faculty and people who care about education and what the mission of the university is.

I care deeply about what the mission of this university is. That doesn't preclude change. Of course, you're going to have change, but those changes have to fit within the mission. That's sometimes what you're getting resistance from some faculty about some of these programs.

I understand some of it. On the other hand, I also understand that technology does change structures. That's something we have to balance. I'm going to quit rambling here. I'm just picking while I'm walking through this.

**Chris:** It's a really good point. The other piece that I would bolt on to that, too, is that you want to be building and supporting degree programs that are worthwhile in the eyes of the institution.

That's being responsive to market trends but also staying within the capacity and the subject matter expertise of a given school or institution. That's something that we need to be sensitive of.

If there's a comment that I hear a lot of from detractors of general online models and online degree programs, it's that you're building degree mills. Scale is a necessary component of a lot of these programs. Sustainability is not optional.

At the same time, you want to be scaling something that you believe extends Vanderbilt's mission, and is worthwhile for societal good overall, which is the core of the university as I see it.

**John:** Here's one sense in which I believe in market forces. I don't even like to talk about that in terms of education, but I do think degree mills get found out for what they are. I'm not pointing to any certain direction.

If a university, if a structure was simply trying to produce as many degrees as possible or doing it as a revenue stream, the quality suffer. That ends up showing. In universities, what we have is our name. Universities as a whole we are going to fight to protect that and make sure that quality is there.

Again, I'll keep hitting this. That's part of the soul of a faculty member, and we have to be part of the fight to maintain that. I don't want to keep taking up too much more of your time. I have one question we always close with but, is there's anything you'd like to say about this environment, about what's going on, about technological changes? Any final thoughts?

**Chris:** It's busy right now. There's a lot of noise. As there are more and more players, if you will, helping to support and build great online programs, it can be hard to discern through all the noise, whether that's building things internally or building things with a partner or doing it on your own, whatever it may be.

It's complicated work regardless of whether you're partnering with somebody or doing it internally. Although that's rarely lost on an institution, it's easy to get lost into things like, "OK. I'll partner with somebody to do digital marketing or I'll do digital marketing myself."

You and I both know there's a big difference between somebody who's really good at digital marketing and somebody who's not good at digital marketing.

**John:** That's one of the hardest parts really.

**Chris:** The devil is in the details with a lot of this. That makes it particularly cumbersome for universities to piece through all the different options out there to build degree programs or short courses but certainly a necessary component.

Folks like yourself and offices like yourself at Vanderbilt, who it's their job to do that, are much needed. I'm seeing more and more of these online learning offices pop up across my university partnerships, and that's a really good thing.

**John:** I was going to stop us, but you've led me to a different question through your answer. If you were in my position, trying to think as the Associate Provost for Education Development Technologies, who's talking to third-party vendors or at least assessing what's out there, what would be your advice to that person?

Or what would you do if you were in my position? What would you look at with these different companies with different options? As you said, there's a lot of people who claim they can do this, etc. How would you make those assessments? What would you be thinking about?

**Chris:** By the way, if I'm in your seat, did I just get a PhD?

**John:** Yes.

**Chris:** You just gave me a PhD?

**John:** You got the PhD.

[laughter]

**John:** I'm trying to ask you though to think. I know you believe in your own company or you wouldn't be there.

**Chris:** Of course.

**John:** What are the types of things that you would ask when you're looking at different options?

**Chris:** Demand transparency is the first piece. Surface level, we do student support. We do marketing. We do faculty support. All that will start to sound the same, I would imagine, if I was somebody in your seat.

Understanding what that looks like in terms of a financial commitment, what that looks like, in terms of humans that are committed, body count, those sorts of details usually built up into a financial model.

Now, I'm a recovering finance person. I worked at Bank of America for a little while, so I know a little bit about financial models but just enough to be dangerous. I would implore your colleagues to do the same that you have to dig into the details and understand what's underneath each one of these support functions.

Otherwise, it's easy for somebody to say, "We do X, Y, and Z," when they do a portion of what another person will do or somebody within your own department. That part, it's the stressful part. It's a hard part. It might be a little monotonous and boring, but the devil is in the details with this sort of thing. That would be my advice to other folks sitting in your seat.

**John:** My advice to anyone sitting in my seat is also...I mean you're right about all this. I'm not contradicting. I'm not even adding on something different, really. I'm just going to say that the most effective strategy I've had in making assessments is talking to other partner universities.

**Chris:** Smart.

**John:** Before we worked with you, I talked to several people who had. I've talked to universities who have worked with a wide variety of people. You get an honest assessment there. You get an honest assessment of what they think works and what doesn't work or what's been frustrating, not frustrating.

The approach, I think, is very important. Is this partner...? Do they understand? It's often hard to understand, university folks. What [inaudible 34:07] do they get that? Do they help you supported? I think those are important questions to sort ourselves out.

**Chris:** You're hitting on trust too which, not to be cheesy, I don't mean to be cheesy at all, but when you're working with a partner or you're working internally, you got to make sure



that you have the trust where even if you hit bumps along the way, that you're not going to veer off just because it's inconvenient. Using your gut-building trust in a relationship is also not bad advice there.

**John:** Especially when you're married for at least 10 years.

**Chris:** [laughs] That's right.

**John:** You know that that marriage isn't going to go on that long, so you got to make sure.

**Chris:** You got to love us.

**John:** Yeah. A question we always ask and this often goes to...It may be a little odd in your case, but I doubt it. What is your favorite non-digital education technology?

**Chris:** Non-digital.

**John:** Non-digital.

**Chris:** Wow, that's even tough to think about. Non-digital, what is that? OK, I have one for you. I grew up in the Poconos of Pennsylvania. Both of my parents are great cooks, so my mind immediately goes to a grill.

My dad, as a business on the side, cooks pigs for different folks' weddings, graduations, that sort of thing. I grew up cooking big pigs, 200-pound pigs, on this big grill.

**John:** This, so far, is the strangest answer I had ever gotten to this question. Go ahead.

**Chris:** [laughs] Grills, to me, remind me a lot of growing up because my parents cooked so much, and my dad makes such great barbecue. Now, I live in Austin, Texas. You could argue barbecue capital of the US. I'm sure Memphis would take exception with that. Grills, to me, great food. Barbecue is probably my favorite non-digital technology.

**John:** No. Non-digital education technology.

**Chris:** Oh, you didn't say education technology. [laughs]

**John:** Oh, I'm sorry. I apologize. I like the answer of the grill, though. I thought you were going to work this into either a metaphor. "The grill reminds me of blank," or somehow this was going to be something you have taught before.

**Chris:** I was actually talking to a gentleman last night over a glass of wine. He told me that one of his favorite pieces of...I guess it would be considered non-digital technology. It hadn't been invented yet. It was something that he named the macrowave.

His idea is that microwave heats things up quickly. Macrowave freeze things quickly. [laughs] I thought that was a bizarre answer too. I add that in there so mine doesn't seem as bizarre. [laughs]

**John:** Yeah, but what do you think education-wise?

**Chris:** Non-digital technology education-wise...

**John:** I will tell you. For example, if you ask this question to almost any mathematician, they're going to tell you chalk. They still write on chalkboards. They love writing on chalkboards.

**Chris:** You know what I really liked, and I have some great memories, is that when I grew up, the math teachers used the overhead projectors that you could write on. I thought those were just clever.

I wouldn't even call them inventions but a clever way to teach because you could highlight things, encircle different pieces, and annotate as needed. That sort of sticks with me in my own learning experience through high school and middle school as impactful. The overhead projector, John.

**John:** [laughs] We went from the grill to the overhead projector. I love this. This is likely the most awkward final question we've ever done on this podcast, but I like it.

**Chris:** [laughs]

**John:** I hope they don't edit any of that out. Chris Parrish with 2U. This is John Sloop at Vanderbilt. I appreciate you talking to me today about this.

[background music]

**Chris:** Thanks, John.

**John:** Thanks a lot. Take care.

**Derek:** That was Christopher Parrish, senior vice president and portfolio general manager at 2U. As John mentioned, Vanderbilt has partnered with 2U to launch a couple of online graduate programs from our School of Education and Human Development. We actually talked to some faculty who are helping to launch those programs back in Episode 20 of Leading Lines.

If that strikes your fancy, you might want to go back and listen to that episode. I've put a link to it in the show notes. You'll find those show notes as well as past episodes and transcripts on our website, [leadinglinespod.com](https://leadinglinespod.com).

If you have thoughts about this episode, please share them either on the website or on Twitter where we can be found @leadinglinespod or via email, [leadinglinespod@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:leadinglinespod@vanderbilt.edu). What do you think about universities partnering with OPM vendors like 2U? What do you see for the future of online education? We would love to hear from you.

Leading Lines is produced by the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching and the Vanderbilt Institute for Digital Learning and the Office of Scholarly Communications at the Vanderbilt Libraries and the Associate Provost for Education, Development, and Technology. That would be John Sloop, our interviewer on this episode.

This episode was edited by my colleague, Rhett McDaniel. We come out with new episodes the first and third Monday of each month. Subscribe in your favorite podcast app, as they say. I'm your host, Derek Bruff. Thank you so much for listening.

[music]

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