

Strategic Planning Dialogue Session #1 - August 13, 2024

The Changing Landscape of Higher Education

Description

According to futurist and author Jack Uldrich, "Today is the slowest rate of change we will ever experience." From Artificial Intelligence (AI) to quantum computing, the world is changing rapidly around us. How will these changes affect the way we teach and how our students learn? How do we teach a community of learners who are tech savvy, and have the world at their fingertips, while others are English language learners or are facing challenges? A panel of experts will offer their views on these and other questions.

Keynote Summary

Jack Uldrich, Futurist, painted a vivid and compelling picture of the rapidly changing world we are facing. Topics included:

1. **Historical Perspective on Change:** Drawing from the transformation in early 20th-century New York City, Mr. Uldrich highlighted how quickly change can occur, emphasizing that the pace of change is accelerating.
2. **Transportation and Mobility:** The evolution from horse-drawn carriages to internal combustion engines in just a decade illustrates how swiftly technology reshapes our world. Mr. Uldrich predicts a shift toward "Mobility as a Service" with the rise of self-driving cars, which could change traditional car ownership.
3. **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI's rapid development is transforming multiple fields. From enhancing educational efficiency by automating routine tasks to revolutionizing industries like healthcare and entertainment, AI offers opportunities to focus more on human-centered tasks.
4. **Impact on Education:** The integration of AI in education will free up time for more meaningful learning experiences. Institutions need to adapt by incorporating new technologies / approaches to stay relevant.
5. **Future Trends and Innovations:** Mr. Uldrich discussed that upcoming trends such as quantum computing will drastically speed up problem-solving and innovation. Additional future trends include advancements in battery technology and micro-mobility.
6. **Exponential Thinking:** Emphasizing the importance of thinking exponentially rather than linearly and that technologies are advancing at an accelerating rate that requires us to prepare for rapid changes.
7. **Education and Workforce Preparation:** As many jobs evolve or disappear due to technological advancements, institutions like Harper have a crucial role in reskilling and upskilling individuals. Embracing new educational models and thinking creatively about student support will be vital.
8. **Critical Thinking and Adaptability:** In a world where technology and society are shifting rapidly, fostering critical thinking and adaptability in students becomes more important. This includes questioning traditional practices and exploring innovative solutions.
9. **Future-Proofing Strategies:** Encourage proactive thinking about the future and advocate for dedicating time to visioning and preparing for upcoming changes. This includes embracing new questions, considering unconventional solutions, and being open to the unimaginable.
10. **Unthinkable Scenarios and Longevity:** Preparing for a future where longevity may impact career and retirement is crucial. Institutions must be ready to support lifelong learning and career development.

The keynote message underscored the necessity for education systems to adapt dynamically to a fast-evolving landscape. By integrating these insights and preparing for rapid changes, Harper can better equip students for a future filled with unprecedented opportunities and challenges.

Panel discussion – Question 1

How can we prepare students for an increasingly globalized world?

Following is a summary and expansion of the key strategies for adapting to this change, both for educational institutions and individuals. By focusing on these areas, educational institutions can equip students with the skills and mindset needed to thrive in an interconnected world.

1. **Exploration and Self-Discovery:** Encouraging students to explore their interests and skills throughout high school can help them make informed career choices. Instead of focusing solely on outcomes, emphasizing the journey of discovery can foster a more holistic understanding of their passions and capabilities.
2. **Interdisciplinary Learning:** Breaking down silos in education is crucial. Students should learn to collaborate across disciplines—combining technology, business, and the arts—to tackle real-world problems. This kind of integrative learning reflects the complexities of globalization, where multiple perspectives are necessary.
3. **Understanding Global Contexts:** Educators should emphasize the importance of understanding global markets, cultural differences, and regulatory environments. This includes discussing how local decisions can have far-reaching international implications, especially in technology and manufacturing.
4. **Ethics and Critical Thinking:** A balanced education that includes both STEM and liberal arts is essential. Students need to engage in the ethical dimensions of technology and be trained in critical thinking to navigate the challenges they'll face in their careers.
5. **Fostering Curiosity:** Encourage students to ask questions rather than just seek answers to enhance problem-solving abilities. Instill a sense of curiosity and humility to prepare them to adapt to a rapidly changing world.
6. **Practical Experiences:** Integrating real-world experiences, such as internships or collaborative projects with global partners, can give students practical insights into working in a complex diverse environment.

Panel discussion – Question 2

What are some actions / strategies Harper College employees can take in the face of this coming change?

The following is a summary of the key points from the discussion including essential strategies for fostering adaptability and resilience among faculty in the face of rapid change. Key points include:

1. **Collaboration Across Disciplines:** Engaging with diverse colleagues can spark innovative thinking. By discussing challenges and solutions with people from different areas, educators can gain fresh perspectives and ideas that enhance their teaching methods.
2. **Embrace Experimentation:** Embrace strategic experimentation allowing for flexibility and responsiveness to change. Recognizing not every initiative will succeed encourages a mindset focused on learning and growth.
3. **Celebrate Failures:** Creating a culture where failures are seen as learning opportunities—like through a “heroic failure award”—can foster innovation. This approach encourages faculty to take risks and explore new methods without fear of repercussions.
4. **Identify Core Values:** Faculty should reflect on their core values and priorities when designing their teaching. This focus helps streamline efforts and ensures that changes are aligned with their goals for student outcomes.
5. **Focus on Manageable Changes:** Rather than trying to implement every new idea, educators can adapt specific assignments or approaches to keep changes feasible and impactful. This makes the process of integrating new initiatives less overwhelming.
6. **Create a Culture of Innovation:** Encouraging an environment that values innovation means allowing room for exploration and experimentation. This could include appointing roles like a “chief innovation officer” to keep an eye on emerging trends and opportunities.

Panel discussion – Question 3

Which current trend do you believe will have the most positive lasting impact on Higher Education?

Following is a summary and themes from the discussion regarding the evolving landscape of higher education and the strategies for adapting to change.

1. **AI as a Catalyst for Reflection:** The rise of AI prompts educators and institutions to rethink their roles and approaches. While there are challenges, this disruption can lead to greater awareness of what it means to be human and the importance of empathy, creativity, and critical thinking.
2. **Return to the Humanities:** There's a growing recognition that skills in philosophy, ethics, and the arts are essential. As technology advances, these disciplines can provide context and depth, enabling students to distinguish their unique human perspectives from AI outputs.
3. **Student-Centric Focus:** Higher education must address the needs of today's students, who seek personalized, accessible, and relevant learning experiences. Institutions will need to articulate their unique value propositions clearly.
4. **Accessible and Flexible Learning:** Online programs and micro-credentials are making education more accessible, allowing learners to engage with content on their own terms. This flexibility supports diverse learning styles and professional needs.
5. **Personalized Learning through AI:** Using AI to tailor educational experiences based on individual learning styles and needs can enhance engagement and effectiveness. This trend emphasizes the importance of understanding each learner's unique journey.
6. **Industry Partnerships:** Collaborations between higher education and industry can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. This approach allows for experiential learning, which is crucial for innovation and personal growth.
7. **Encouragement of Experimentation:** Creating a culture that embraces experimentation and views failure as a learning opportunity is essential. This mindset can foster resilience and adaptability in faculty and students.