

# THE UNIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The University the world needs now  
and the future demands



# Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are the most ambitious undertaking ever to transform our world. They are a call to action for governments, business, civil society and institutes of higher education to work together to build a better future for everyone. Grounded in a scientific understanding of both the threats and the opportunities ahead, we must find a just and common path forward. For our future security and prosperity depends not on the strength of national borders or the size of armies, but our ability to build new institutions and partnerships based on a spirit of global solidarity and peaceful coexistence.[1]

Climate change threatens truly catastrophic consequences worldwide. Millions face malnutrition due to devastating drought, and many more will be forced to choose between starvation and migration. By 2050, climate change could displace 140 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America alone.[2]

Even 1.5°C of warming - a best-case scenario - will lead to extreme temperatures in many regions and leave disadvantaged populations with lost livelihoods. The World Bank estimates that without immediate action, climate change could push 120 million more people into poverty by 2030. Eight hundred million in South Asia alone live in climate hotspots and will see their living conditions decline sharply by 2050 and 500 million people could see lower crop yields, and up to 4.5 billion people could be exposed to heat waves.[3]

According to the World Bank, at 2 °C degrees of warming, 100 to 400 million more people could be at risk of hunger and 1 to 2 billion more people may no longer have adequate water. Climate change could result in global crop yield losses of 30 percent by 2080, even with adaptation measures.[4]

In this context, higher education institutes should be the primary intellectual problem solvers in the scenarios first sketched in the 1972 Club of Rome report and detailed in the October 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, not least because that responsibility has been abrogated by so many others. With notable exceptions, the higher education community has been as complacent as most institutions in the face of climate change. The steps taken by most higher education institutes have been patently inadequate; premised on self-policing to conform to the dominant political and economic paradigm and an incremental managerialism disproportionate to the urgency and magnitude of the threat. Substituting procedural responsibility for moral responsibility; ticking boxes will not save us from impending disaster. Again, some educators and governments, have undertaken promising, creative, and urgently needed strategies for higher education to address climate change.[5]

With "business as usual" as a default response, too many institutes of higher learning assume that the climate risk can be dealt with on the basis of established approaches and structures. Yet they are sub-optimally organized to imaginatively respond at the

scope, scale and pace necessary. For the urgency of climate action requires transformational changes, not illusory thinking and an incrementalism that renders many institutes of higher learning irrelevant to humanity's most pressing challenge.[6]

It is urgent for higher education institutes to act upon their mutual moral obligation to focus on the cascading challenges we see gathering force. To do otherwise would be "a brutal act of injustice toward the poor and future generations." [7]

Global problems require global solutions; the greatest of global challenges demands uncommon boldness; and the urgency demands the broadest of global cooperation. For we have common interest in rising above the challenges of our time to find a common path forward based on our shared future and in a cooperative endeavour to build new institutions requisite to the challenges before us.

Requisite to the challenges we face, the University for Sustainability embraces a distinctive organizational model and a mission to accelerate a just and humanitarian transformation to global sustainable development with challenge-driven education, scientific research and innovation.

Ushering in an era of Science 2.0; leveraging open science and open innovation; the University for Sustainability is a state-of-the-art digital platform for and global network of universities and research institutes accelerating breakthrough research and innovative solutions that catalyse transformation at scale and at speed. With the conviction education, research, innovation, and collaboration can transform the world toward sustainable development, we seek resilient solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change, reduce inequality, lift people out of poverty, and build trust in international cooperation. For we are synergizing the experience and reach of thousands of scientists and innovators worldwide to turn knowledge into action.

Powered by socially responsible Artificial Intelligence to make today's scientific research more efficient, and tomorrow's revolutionary, a consortia-wide research cloud shall offer high performance research computing as a service to provide new ways of doing science, harness data science for sustainable development, and enable world-class cross-disciplinary research and game-changing innovation.

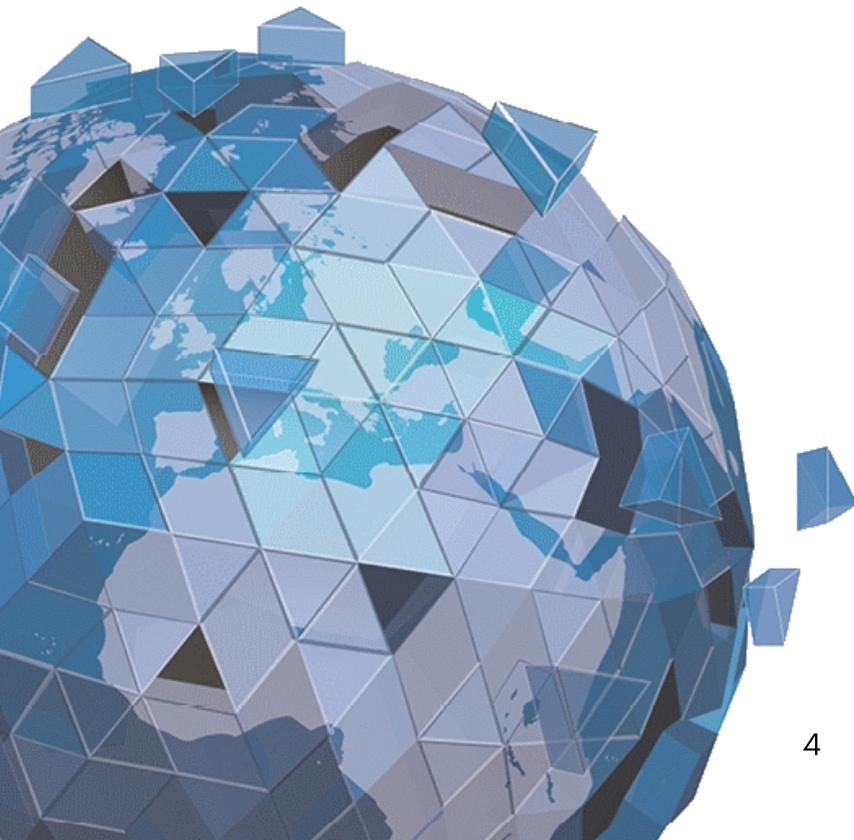
Recognizing the disproportionate impact of climate change on the Global South and an unconscionable assault on the poor; in the spirit of solidarity, the University will scale and strengthen resources and a collaborative infrastructure to enable member institutes to better serve their constituents and their regions. Supported by a state-of-the-art research infrastructure, synergizing research collaboration, and advancing joint educational programmes, our goal is to provide extraordinary value in the provision of sustainable development-themed education, breakthrough research, and climate mitigation and adaptation solutions. We are the university the world needs now and the future demands.

Professor Dr K.M. Stokes  
Founding President

# THE UNIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

## Ambition for 2022

- Providing extraordinary value in the provision of sustainable development-themed education, breakthrough research, and climate mitigation and adaptation solutions, we will be one of the world's pre-eminent modern universities for excellent challenge-driven research.
- With more than 650 member institutes, 150,000 researchers, 400,000 post-graduate students research expenditures in excess of US\$2.1 billion and a portfolio of over 3,000 patents, by 2022 we will have significantly increased the level of research and established ourselves as the most impactful global network. The University for Sustainability's influence will be determined by its connectivity; the responsible knowledge flows it facilitates and by technology transfers it enables. Its ability to effect change will be determined by its relational influence through its network.
- The University the world needs now and the future demands, we will be known for the societal impact of our challenge-driven post-graduate education and research.



## Governance

The University for Sustainability is governed by a Board of Directors and a University Council, which provides strategic leadership and the voice of our members respectively. The Board of Directors is the highest governing body and has general responsibility for the University's strategic development and setting the main priorities, including finances and staffing. The Board is made up of elected individuals all of whom serve in their professional capacities on behalf of the University. Each member institute of the University for Sustainability is represented in the University Council. It oversees programme development and the direction of the organisation. The Council also acts as a forum of consultation, networking and cooperation between all members. The Executive Leadership Team of the University for Sustainability's manages day-to-day activities as overseen by a President and Vice-Presidents. They collectively form the Executive Leadership Team. The Executive Leadership receives expert counsel from: a Scientific Steering Committee, a Global Governmental Advisory Council and a Global Business Advisory Council.



## Member Benefits

Enabling member institutes to deliver against their mandated sustainable development goals, improve their financial resources and make measurable gains in research, development, innovation productivity, as well as educational opportunities, the University for Sustainability provides unrivalled benefits.

### Membership:

- Improves your institute's revenue management and lessens its financial risk profile. It increases your institute's research infrastructure utilization by connecting researchers in the research ecosystem with you underutilized infrastructure. This creates opportunities for innovative R&D collaboration with lower investment risk profiles while it unlocks your institute's research productivity and increases its infrastructure utilization. Importantly, this allows member institutes to shift investment from capital to operational expenditures opening up entirely new opportunities as they access the University for Sustainability's research infrastructure-as-a-service to improve their cash flow and financial agility;
- Making today's scientific research more efficient, and tomorrow's revolutionary, an ecosystem-wide Research Cloud offers high performance research computing as a service to provide new ways of doing science and game-changing Research, Development and Innovation. To deliver against mandated sustainable development goals; facilitate joint academic programmes; accelerate collaborative sustainable development research and the deployment of scalable solutions, members benefit from a range of competitive cloud computing solutions and new frameworks for using state-of-the-art data science;
- Increases the international ranking, brand value, and enhances the global reputation and competitiveness of member institutes as it strengthens their sustainable development educational and research portfolio with high-impact thematic global collaborations and joint initiatives;





- Increases Research Funding opportunities by expanding access to international funding opportunities and increases revenue by leveraging network effects with respect to public and private sector partner's projects, programmes and contract opportunities. These include: (a) The University's Research Fund Development – a competitive grant programme designed to foster challenge-driven research and co-innovation among member universities and business partners. Members may be eligible for additional opportunities with partner funding agencies, and (b) The Sustainable Development Innovation Fund pools resources to scale up proven and / or innovative technologies, sustainable development solutions. The Fund will complement other financing vehicles in pursuit of scalable solutions for sustainable development and climate adaptation and mitigation;
- Prepares students with enhanced global educational offerings and high impact challenge-driven learning including: an Undergraduate Summer Programme, Joint Master's and Ph.D. programmes, a Doctoral Students Symposium, a Fellows Programme and exchange programmes; and the University for Sustainability Prize for Excellence in Sustainable Development Research;
- Sponsors an International Students-at-Risk Network that gives at-risk and conflict-displaced students a chance for post-graduate education abroad;
- Increases student referrals and the geographic footprint of your institute's applicant pool to improve and gain a higher percentage of top quality applicants while increasing the retention of top performing students;
- Attracts and retains top faculty through increased access to high quality global talent and enhanced research infrastructure while developing best-in-field offerings and reducing recruiting costs;
- Enables participation in high level conferences of our core partners such as UNESCO, UNIDO, UNEP, etc. promoting the collective views of its members and broadening the voice of those most impacted by climate change;

- Brings together thought leaders, researchers, and policy-makers to exchange ideas in Leadership Forums, advocate for and collaborate on sustainable development solutions;
- Acknowledging the disproportionate impact of climate change on the Global South and the central role of climate justice; the Global Sustainable Development Initiative promotes: (a) Science, Technology and Innovation-driven sustainable development and (b) South-South and South-North cooperation in the development and application of science, technology and innovation (STI). The Initiative promotes the sharing of experiences and best practices in harnessing STI for sustainable development for and in the Global South with the Sustainable Development Research Network (SDRNet). Connecting South-South and South-North STI as well as traditional and indigenous knowledge, SDRNet enables researchers to follow a research interest, connect with colleagues, and seek new collaborations. Researcher's profiles may be used to suggest funding opportunities, to connect members with other who have similar interests, and provide a global community of practice for sustainable development research and practice.
- Advances sustainable development by accelerating Intellectual Property deal-flow and member institute's revenue by bringing together global 'green' venture capital, angel finance, and entrepreneurial talent within an Artificial Intelligence Innovation and Investor Network to grow licensing and commercialization; and,
- Delivers breakthrough student performance with our Artificial Intelligence-augmented Personalised Learning Analytics System (PLAS). Informing smarter strategic choices, PLAS can facilitate the digitalization of your finances, shape data-driven programme assessment and increase tuition revenue while lessening your expense ratio.



## References

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# Notes

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." These simple but powerful words are the first line of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1949. The declaration's power has always depended on our collective will to uphold its noble aspirations. The University for Sustainability does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability in any of its policies, procedures, or practices.



Secretariat Office  
The University for Sustainability  
150 Washington Ave, Suite 201  
Santa Fe, New Mexico, U.S.A.  
Tel : + 1 505.428.9599  
Website: [www.u4sustainability.org](http://www.u4sustainability.org)  
Email: [contact@u4sustainability.org](mailto:contact@u4sustainability.org)