Strategic planning: Review of external data/information
Briefing theme: Teaching & Learning

Background:

- Much has been written from thought leaders and pundits alike about how the pandemic has caused a once-in-a-lifetime disruption to almost all sectors, including post-secondary education. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has not been a change agent so much as an accelerant of trends already well underway. In what some are calling "post-Corona", several real threats and opportunities lie ahead for higher education.

- The following briefing provides a synthesis of these trends that are disrupting post-secondary education that are specific to the teaching and learning environment. This is pertinent for the University of Calgary to consider as we embark on the development of our next strategic plan.

Key Trends Identified:

- **Greater emphasis on lifelong learning.** The idea that a university degree singularly prepares students for decades of work has long been outdated; instead, learning is a lifelong process that intersects with the workforce continually. The pace of change for work is dramatically decreasing the half-life of employee skills, driving both employees and employers to seek additional learning experiences; thus, making continuous learning a growing reality for the future of work.[i] Learners today will likely need to reskill and upskill several times over their careers.[ii]

- **Anticipated uptake in subscription-based tuition model.** Some predict that tuition, which is now largely credit-based, will become subscription-based, whereby for a regular payment, people will have access to a range of programs, thus potentially retaining the loyalty of their students/alumni across their lifespan.[iii,iv]

- **A focus on competency-based education.** The industrial-era model of higher education, focusing on units of time, process, and teaching, will be eclipsed by a knowledge-economy successor rooted in outcomes (i.e. focusing on the outcomes we want students to achieve, not how long we want them to be taught). That will gradually render the traditional academic currency of process and time irrelevant and leave higher education searching for a replacement. In the short run, this will require colleges to become bilingual, operating on two different standards (one, courses and credits; the other, outcomes and learning). In the longer run, higher education will have no alternative but to embrace outcomes and learning as its primary accounting system.[v]

- **Assessment will become largely formative and individualized, as opposed to high-stake exams.** Formative assessment, which entails both formal and informal evaluations through the learning journey, encourages students to actually improve their performance rather than just have it evaluated. The documentation and recording of this assessment includes a range of measures, replacing alphabetical or numerical grades that are unidimensional. For example, the International School in Geneva just launched its Learner Passport that includes measures of creativity, responsibility and citizenship. Transcripts will become records of the competencies people achieve throughout their lives and the certifying authority for each.[vi]

- **A move from "just in case" education to "just in time" education.** "Just in case" education teaches students the skills and knowledge that colleges believe will be necessary for the future. Whereas "just in time" education teaches students the skills and knowledge they need right now. They may need to learn a foreign language for an upcoming trip or business deal. They may need to learn an emerging technology. "Just in time" education comes in all shapes and sizes, but diverges

from traditional academic time standards, uniform course lengths, and common credit measures. Only a small portion of such programs award degrees, most grant certificates, microcredentials, or badges.[vii]

- **Rise in status and value of alternative credentials (including microcredentials, stackable credits, badges, certificates, etc.), and the corresponding diminished dominance of a degree credential.** Degrees appear to be declining in value in the labour market. For example, Google, Ernst and Young, Penguin Random House, Hilton, Apple, Nordstrom, and IBM have all announced they will no longer require college degrees for employment.[viii] Microcredentials tend to appeal to a different type of student that we can expect to see more of overtime (i.e. older, mid-career, etc.), that want to remain employed while learning. They often don't want to take a 2-4 year degree en-bloc, and need a program delivered in a way that is accessible to them. More students will be working part-time, undertaking family responsibilities and wanting to integrate learning into their lives rather than interrupt their lives for an immersive experience.[ix] That being said, it's worth noting that student demand continues to increase for many degrees – particularly professionally oriented graduate degrees.[x]

- **Possible widening gaps between what employers want and what we teach.** This gap is creating opportunities for new educational delivery methods and technologies to gain in popularity. Furthermore, the need for students to stay up-to-date in skills such as data analytics has opened the door for non-traditional providers to gain market share. Through disruptive innovation, these providers are delivering education in formats that are not only more accessible and affordable, but also more enjoyable and consumable.[xi]

- **Rising demand for meaningful work-integrated learning opportunities.** Demand will grow for learning by doing. This will challenge the traditional university model. Work-integrated learning is hard to scale up in the standard business and operating model of a university, but that is where the demand will be; from students themselves, and their prospective employers.[xii]

- **Students are more focused than ever on career and job readiness.** Survey after survey continue to demonstrate that work outcomes are the main reason most people chose higher education. For example, a recent survey by Gallup of 86,000 university graduates found that 58% reported job and career outcomes as their primary motivation to choose higher education. This is true across all higher education pathways and demographic subgroups. Work outcomes are also more than double the next-most prevalent reason, with 23% reporting a general motivation to learn more and gain knowledge without linking it to work or career aspirations.[xiii] Similarly, the Canadian University Survey Consortium surveyed more than 15,000 first-year students about why they decided to attend university. Overwhelmingly, the top three reasons students provided were all job related (1. to prepare for a specific job or career; 2. to get a more fulfilling job than I probably would if I didn't go; 3. I am more likely to get a job with a degree).[xiv]

[i] Gartner (2022). Top Business Trends Impacted Higher Education in 2022. Retrieved from https://www.gartner.com/en/webinars/4009279/the-gartner-top-12-strategic-technology-trends-for-2022-higher-education.

[ii] Pulsipher, S. (2020). COVID-19 Accelerates 3 Trends Facing Higher Education. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/scottpulsipher/2020/07/08/covid-19-accelerates-3-disruptive-trends-facing-higher-education/?sh=5536a32238df.

[iii] Levine, A. & Van Pelt, S. (2021). Five Ways Higher Ed Will Be Upended. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/5-ways-higher-ed-will-be-upended-in-the-decades-to-come.

[iv] KPMG (2020). The future of higher education in a disruptive world. Retrieved from https://home.kpmg/ca/en/home/industries/government-public-sector/education/the-future-of-higher-education-in-a-disruptive-world.html.

[v] Levine, A. & Van Pelt, S. (2021). Five Ways Higher Ed Will Be Upended. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/5-ways-higher-ed-will-be-upended-in-the-decades-to-come.

[vi] El-Azar, D. (2022). Four trends that will shape the future of higher education. Retrieved from https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/02/four-trends-that-will-shape-the-future-of-higher-education/.

[vii] Levine, A. & Van Pelt, S. (2021). Five Ways Higher Ed Will Be Upended. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/5-ways-higher-ed-will-be-upended-in-the-decades-to-come.

[viii] Levine, A. & Van Pelt, S. (2021). Five Ways Higher Ed Will Be Upended. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/5-ways-higher-ed-will-be-upended-in-the-decades-to-come.

[ix] KPMG (2020). The future of higher education in a disruptive world. Retrieved from https://home.kpmg/ca/en/home/industries/government-public-sector/education/the-future-of-higher-education-in-a-disruptive-world.html.

[x] Falkenberg L. & Cannon, E. (2021). Future Proof Universities Must Have Visible Strategies for the Disruption Upon Us. Retrieved from https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2021/04/future-proof-universities-must-have-visible-strategies-for-the-disruption-upon-us/.

[xi] Kang, J. (2022). At a Point Between Disruption and Transformation. Retrieved from https://www.aacsb.edu/insights/articles/2022/01/at-a-point-between-disruption-and-transformation.

[xii] KPMG (2020). The future of higher education in a disruptive world. Retrieved from https://home.kpmg/ca/en/home/industries/government-public-sector/education/the-future-of-higher-education-in-a-disruptive-world.html.

[xiii] Gallup (2022). Why Higher Ed? Retrieved from https://news.gallup.com/reports/226457/why-higher-ed.aspx.

[xiv] Canadian University Research Consortium (2022). 2022 First-Year Students Survey Master Report. Retrieved from https://cusc-ccreu.ca/.