



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Report of the Second Chancellor's Commission



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Preface

Launched during a global pandemic and intersecting with significant changes at the Aga Khan University [AKU] and across the communities it serves, the second Chancellor's Commission has completed its deliberations. Our report, *Reflections on the Future Aga Khan University*, draws on the diverse perspectives and expertise of the 15 individual Commissioners, while presenting our shared guidance on diverse paths forward for the institution.

The report provides a model for growth that reflects the institution's mission, values, and foundational strengths; the exigencies, opportunities, and challenges in its operating contexts; and its constraints in financial, human, and technical resources. We also set out strategic planning and operating principles that can inform both the University's immediate decisions and longer-term ambitions, including expansion into areas of greatest potential and need.

Changes in the World and in Higher Education, and Their Implications for the Future AKU

To situate its recommendations, the Chancellor's Commission reflected on the geopolitical, economic and social conditions in the world and profound shifts in higher education globally that AKU will need to navigate in the years and decades ahead. We studied the local and regional impacts of global forces, including climate change, health crises, geopolitical and demographic shifts, artificial intelligence, inequality, violent conflict, and resurgent nationalism. Similarly, the Commission observed profound changes in the higher education sector and contemplated how AKU will benchmark and evaluate its programmes; where it finds its peers, partners, and networks; and how it continues to deliver quality education, research, and healthcare that is impactful, relevant and accessible to the diverse and growing constituencies it serves.

Our analysis of these operating contexts at the global, regional, and local levels provided ample grounds for caution in making confident forecasts for conditions 25 years from now, let alone prescribing long-term strategies. Instead, the Commissioners sought to identify how AKU might leverage its significant, distinctive strengths in the near term to chart its future course, and, as noted above, delineate mechanisms and principles to help AKU navigate what is likely to be a fast-changing environment everywhere it operates.

A Renewed Commitment to AKU's Mission and Values

The Commissioners considered AKU's mission and its four core values of Impact, Quality, Relevance, and Access [IQRA] and determined that they remain essential touchstones for reflection, planning, and evaluation in the decades ahead. We base this report's first 10 recommendations on a renewed commitment to IQRA, highlighting opportunities to strengthen AKU's reputation and position as a university that applies its deep social responsibility towards the resolution of the world's challenges—particularly in the Global South.

Of particular note, the Commission identified a several ways in which the UN Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] framework could help AKU intensify and realise that commitment to IQRA, bridging disciplines important to the University's future, defining an institutional research agenda, and providing metrics for measuring its progress.

Strategic Planning Principles and Processes

Our proposed set of strategic planning principles and processes centre on three themes: focused agility and continuous evaluation; embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, and pluralism across the institution; and strategic and efficient growth— all of which are relevant to both near- and longer-term decisions AKU must make.

We have emphasized the need for AKU to develop more agile planning processes that include new navigational systems, with continuous scanning of its contexts, forecasting and scenario planning, risk management with table-topping of responses to different crises, and integrated analyses of the comparative performance and relevant benchmarks for improvement of all the operations of the institution. As a logical outgrowth of the reconfirmed IQRA framework, we propose a broadened definition and approach to equity and inclusion, while maintaining a focus on gender that includes both addressing gender inequities and empowering women to realise their full potential. Finally, the Commission's recommendations in this section centre on a model for growth that is less top-down and more incremental, building from and budding off existing capacities in response to clear needs. We also caution against unfocused expansion and comprehensiveness based on mimicry of institutional programming prevalent to the Global North. Instead, we recommend prioritising the successful establishment of major new, resource-intensive initiatives already underway.

Operational Principles and Applications

To expand AKU's reach and strengthen its influence and impact in its varied operating environments, the Commission saw an ongoing need to enhance integration, cooperation, and connectivity across the University and with the wider AKDN. We delineated five guiding principles to advance those objectives: prioritising interdisciplinarity and cross-disciplinary integration; creating a robust virtual presence; fostering a networked, learning health system; positioning AKU as a networked institution for lifelong learning; and promoting knowledge integration through research, experiential learning, and innovation.

Many of these operations-focused recommendations seek to harness the potential of digital technologies to strengthen institutional management and governance, forge deeper connections across the University and with partners in and beyond the AKDN, and improve both the relevance of and access to AKU's academic programmes, research, and health services. In sum, the Commission underscores the increasing importance of the virtual university community and offers guidance on how the present AKU can position itself for that future.

New Priorities

In the immediate to medium term, the Commission strongly advises against a course of rapid expansion, either geographically or in the pursuit of academic breadth. It does, however, propose AKU consider two interrelated fields for future expansion along with the development of a university-wide pluralism curriculum.

The report accordingly offers a series of recommendations on developing AKU expertise and capacities to address climate change and sustainable development, building on AKU's foundational strengths and assets within the wider AKDN. It similarly recommends steps to prioritise the establishment of a public health school, again drawing on the substantial support matrix that exists in AKU's Faculties of Health Sciences. These two fields could connect and reinforce one another under the broad themes of population and planetary or environmental health.

The Chancellor's Commission also sees a unique, timely opportunity to position AKU to play a leading role among institutions of higher education and in the societies that it serves through a common pluralism curriculum across its faculties. In this spirit, we envisage the ability to productively engage with diversity as a distinguishing attribute of AKU's future graduates. We also offer some specific thoughts on how the institution might pursue this university-wide integration of pluralism.

Our Vision: Sober Realism and Hopeful Imagination

Our aim has been to craft durable, practical recommendations that will help the current and future University be more agile and resilient, attuned and responsive to conditions and needs in its local and global spheres, strategic in its operations, and open to innovation, experimentation, and change.

At the first meeting of this Chancellor's Commission, members remarked on the preface to the first Chancellor's Commission report, in which the His Highness the Aga Khan congratulated that group for its "sober realism and hopeful imagination". This Commission has similarly aspired to achieve that balance.

1. Introduction

Background and Rationale

The Aga Khan University [AKU] was established in 1983 by His Highness the Aga Khan, through a Charter granted by the Government of Pakistan. The Charter established several defining principles for the University's development: it would be open to all; its purpose would be the promotion and dissemination of knowledge and technology; it would provide for instruction, training, research, demonstration, and service in the health sciences and such other branches of learning as the University may determine; it would be a fully autonomous corporate body with freedom to govern its academic functions and the right to grant degrees; and it would be allowed to establish faculties abroad.¹

As defined in the Charter, the initial focus of the new university was on the health sciences, with the launch of the School of Nursing, the Medical College, and Aga Khan University Hospital between 1981 and 1985. Over the next four decades, the University grew rapidly from a small institution in Pakistan to a multi-discipline, multi-campus, multi-country presence in South and Central Asia, East Africa, and the United Kingdom. Its academic and research programmes now include educational development, media and communications, human development, and the study of Muslim civilisations, with a student body of 3,200 and more than 16,000 alumni. The AKU Examination Board in Pakistan provides affordable, high-quality, school-leaving examinations for secondary students. The University has developed research capacities and centres of excellence in diverse fields including maternal and child health, cancer, infectious diseases, and digital humanities. AKU has also vastly expanded its provision of health services across its geographies, with seven hospitals and over 330 outreach clinics caring for over two million patients annually.

As AKU approached its 40th anniversary, it had reached a critical juncture in its development. Looking to the future, AKU weighed unmet aspirations to evolve into a full-scale liberal arts university or, more audaciously, to become a comprehensive institution with an array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programmes. In that regard, the University had invested significant resources and engaged external expertise in planning for a Faculty of Arts and Sciences and for graduate professional schools in six areas: government and public policy; architecture and human settlement; economic growth and development; law; leadership and management; and hospitality, leisure, and tourism. It had acquired sites for new campuses, including large tracts of land on the outskirts of Karachi and in Arusha, Tanzania, as well as for facilities that laid foundations for a regionally integrated health care system in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. More generally, AKU had won international recognition as a multi-national leader in education, research, and innovation with a special mission of improving quality of life in the Global South.

The question therefore became: How was AKU to chart its future course? How should it

¹ Government of Pakistan. The Aga Khan University Order 1983. President's Order #3. March 16, 1983. As amended by The Aga Khan University (Amendment) Order, 2002. <https://www.aku.edu/about/charters/Pages/pakistan.aspx>

prioritise expansion and growth of new initiatives versus continued investment in its foundational programmes and current operations? Where could AKU best align its programmes and activities with the capacity of the wider Aga Khan Development Network [AKDN] and the societies with which it is concerned? What impact would ongoing growth have on AKU's adherence to its core principles of Impact, Quality, Relevance, and Access [IQRA] and on AKU's myriad stakeholders? More generally, given both those principles and the challenging contexts in which the University operates, how best might it sustain both current activities and new initiatives?

In July 2019, the Board of Trustees convened a special session to consider these questions. AKU had twice before conducted externally guided studies to chart its future course. The first study, launched with the formal establishment of AKU and undertaken by a committee led by then Harvard University President Derek Bok, proposed specific paths of development through which AKU might pursue its mission. The "Harvard Report" (1983) served as a critical touchstone for the University in its first decade. Towards the end of that decade, the Chancellor appointed a special commission to review the early development of the University and recommend the disciplines, geographies, and required resources that would define its future direction.² Like the Harvard Report, the Report of the Chancellor's Commission, *The Future of the Aga Khan University: Evolution of a Vision* (1994) provided a common path for AKU's stakeholders for over a quarter century. These documents had served the institution well, but the vision and recommendations they contained were not intended to apply indefinitely.

The Trustees agreed that expert guides could once again help AKU identify the best path forward. They proposed that the Chancellor consider the establishment of a new commission to prepare an updated roadmap for the long-term future of the University. His Highness approved this proposal in December 2019, and AKU began preparing for the launch of a second Chancellor's Commission in early 2020.

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, AKU focused on developing a robust and coordinated response across its multiple operating environments—notably including frontline health care provision for patients and communities affected by the virus; knowledge sharing and advisory services for governments, health facilities, and other partners; and path-breaking research to better understand the virus, improve testing and find innovative solutions and treatments. It had to adapt and innovate rapidly to safeguard the continuity, quality, and reach of its educational and research programmes. Preparatory work on the Chancellor's Commission continued during this period, while the Chancellor and Trustees considered the advisability of launching the Commission during such challenging times. In early 2021, it was determined that the present circumstances underscored the necessity of this future-looking endeavour—both to learn from these unprecedented times and to ensure that short-term decisions in the present would not limit the University's future prospects. Planning subsequently intensified for the Commission's launch in July 2021.

² The Chancellor convened a separate Medical Centre Committee (1991-1993) to provide guidance on the future development and financing of AKU's health sciences education and research programmes and its health care service delivery. The first Commission drew upon the work of that Committee to inform its recommendations.

The Second Chancellor's Commission

The Commission's Mandate

As defined in its Terms of Reference, the mandate of the second Chancellor's Commission was comprehensive in scope. Against the overall vision for AKU as articulated in the 1983 Harvard Report and renewed in the 1994 Chancellor's Commission Report, the new commission's charge was to:

1. Examine and document the University's progress, including its achievements, fragilities, and lessons learned between 1994 and the present time.
2. Assess the University's present conditions against that vision and progress and suggest changes in the conception of AKU that now may appear appropriate or necessary, considered particularly against both the fragilities and strengths that have emerged during the pandemic.
3. Prepare a roadmap for the next 25 years of AKU's development, including programmes or activities the University might undertake or expand.
4. Describe the financial, technical, and human resources and systems necessary for the proposed future course.
5. Recommend appropriate management and governance structures.
6. Identify ways in which AKU could more effectively work with other Aga Khan Development Network agencies and institutions to achieve this renewed vision and strengthen their collective development impact.

This mandate was broader than that of the first Chancellor's Commission, reflecting not only the significant growth of AKU over the past 25 years, but also the decision to integrate consideration of the University's extensive health services provision into the second commission's charge. Due to circumstances detailed below, and our analysis of current and future conditions, the Commission reframed charges 4 and 5, providing guidance on planning principles and operating precepts rather than granular recommendations on resource requirements and mobilisation or on changes to management and governance structures.

Commission Membership and Staff

In their proposal to the Chancellor of candidates for the commission, the Board of Trustees prioritised individuals who could make multi-faceted contributions beyond their direct professional experience or area of scholarly expertise; who had demonstrated insight into the future of higher education and research, especially as regards the Global South; and who shared the University's mission, values, and commitment to its diverse constituencies.

In spring 2021, the Chancellor appointed 15 individuals, including two co-chairs, to serve on the Commission. Ten Commissioners were external to AKU; after strong initial contributions, one member

withdrew due to competing commitments.³ Five more members were AKU Trustees. Dr Carrie LaPorte, former Editor-in-Chief at Aga Khan Foundation Canada, was appointed as Secretary.⁴ Appendix A provides brief profiles of all Commissioners.

The authors and signatories to this report are:

Dr Lisa Anderson, *Trustee and Co-chair*

Dr David Naylor, *Co-chair*

Princess Zahra Aga Khan, *Trustee*

Dr Ali S. Asani

Dr Phillip L. Clay, *Trustee*

Mr Naguib Kheraj, *Trustee*

Dr Mahmood Mamdani

Dr Nergis Mavalvala

Dr Afaf Meleis, *Trustee*

Mr Carlos Moedas

Dr Jamil Salmi

Dr Julia Sperling-Magro

Professor Mary Stiasny

Dr Anita Zaidi

Dr Carrie LaPorte, *Secretary*

Framework and Approach

The Chancellor's Commission launched in July 2021 with a virtual meeting to orient members to the AKDN and AKU; identify the issues it would need to address; and confirm its approach to the work ahead. The commissioners identified the following issues as critical to their mandate.

- Three central themes arose: the ***global higher education landscape***, including the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts in which AKU operates (currently and in future); the ***elements of a comprehensive university***, not only focused on the liberal arts but also professional education, interdisciplinarity and inter-professionalism, and research and innovation; and the ***financial, technical, and intellectual resources and models*** that AKU will need to meet future needs and ambitions.
- Four cross-cutting concerns were also identified: the ***future of health services*** in the Global South and within higher education institutions; ***partnerships*** within the AKDN as well as with public, private, and civil society institutions; ***equity, pluralism, and inclusion*** in a global context; and the opportunities and challenges presented by ***new and emerging technologies***.

To advance their work, the Commissioners developed a work plan that included in-person meetings to enable them to work effectively and efficiently together; visits to AKU campuses and consultations with the University's stakeholders; and flexibility in the Commission's approach so that it could navigate ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. They also endorsed a proposal to divide into working groups around the three central themes to advance their thinking between

³ Professor Emerita Dame Alison Fettes Richard participated in the Commission's early discussions, but other commitments prevented her contribution to the final report. Her insights and expertise helped shape the direction of the Commission's guidance; we are grateful for her support.

⁴ While AKU's administration, faculty and staff were very responsive to information requests of all types, amidst the constant disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic no formal secretariat was established.

plenary meetings. A second, brief plenary session was held virtually in October 2021 to confirm the overall approach to work, a provisional schedule, and working group assignments. The three working groups each met once over the following two months and identified lines of enquiry and research needs.

Altering Course

Two major factors hindered timely progress beyond this foundational work. First, the surge of the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 in Europe, and the emergence and rapid spread of the Omicron variant in late 2021/ early 2022, thwarted provisional plans to convene in person or develop a practicable schedule for the coming year.

Equally important, AKU had changed significantly since the launch of the Commission, including in its leadership at the executive and board levels. The University had a new president, a new Board Chair, several new Trustees, and a reconfigured senior management team charged with guiding AKU through both operational and academic reforms. In September 2021, the new administration launched a comprehensive operational review, which would provide an updated basis not only for their short- to medium-term planning but for the Commission's longer-term forecasting as well. This meant that both the baseline against which the Commission would set its recommendations for AKU's future, and the audience to whom it would address those recommendations, had changed appreciably.

For AKU, the pandemic was in many ways a stark illustration of the challenges that the University would face in the next quarter century, even as the changes in governance and administrative personnel reinforced the urgency and importance of drawing on the advice of a body such as the Commission.

After deliberation and consultation, in April 2022 the Co-Chairs proposed an alternate path forward for the Commission: they would solicit the independent views of each Commissioner on how AKU might best evolve and position itself over the next two decades, given changes in, *inter alia*, higher education, demographics, climatic conditions, the global political and economic order, and the specific contexts within which the University operates now or may operate in future. The Co-Chairs and Secretary accordingly undertook interviews with individual Commissioners. Several Commissioners also contributed essays and commentaries, from which this report has substantively drawn. To support the Commission's work, AKU shared a range of publications and internal planning documents. AKU also facilitated interviews and consultations between individual Commissioners and University's executive officers, faculty, and subject matter specialists.

An in-person meeting set for March 2023 in Karachi, Pakistan was deferred due to potential civil unrest. Finally, in May 2023 a meeting in Lisbon, Portugal was convened to discuss the key themes that had emerged from the Commissioners' collective and individual contributions, and to seek input from the University's leadership on the intersection of the identified themes and ideas with AKU's near-term situation.

Aligning with AKU Planning Processes

As the Chancellor's Commission continued on its altered course, AKU's new leadership had been charged with expeditiously guiding the institution through both operational and academic reforms. In October 2022, the *Report of the University Review Task Force* documented the findings of the

above-noted comprehensive operational review, and the Administration began a process intended to produce a five-year operating plan for 2023-27.

The resulting draft document, *AKU Onwards*, was completed in early May 2023. While it contained tactical details suited to a short-term work plan, many elements were sufficiently ambitious that, in themselves, they could occupy the institution well into the next decade. More relevant from the Commission's perspective, the "Onwards" plan also highlighted longer-term issues that overlapped the horizon of the Chancellor's Commission.

The alignment of the draft plan with the Commission's emerging conclusions was striking and encouraging. In part, this was a function of independent and simultaneous observation of institutional challenges and global trends. However, the overlap also reflected the fortuitous intersection of personnel and material, underscoring the value of having current Trustees on this and any future Commissions. To bring these two parallel processes together and accelerate AKU's ability to draw on the Commission's unique vantage point to inform the University's immediate priorities as well as longer-term strategies, the Commission shifted gears yet again in the weeks leading up to the Lisbon gatherings.

The Co-chairs prepared and circulated two draft documents that synthesised the Commissioners' insights. In brief, one focused on contexts and trends, while the other honed in on long-term guidance for AKU. At its meetings in Lisbon, the Commission reviewed the synthesis documents, identifying key messages, outstanding gaps, and areas of divergence. Sessions with AKU President Sulaiman Shahabuddin and with the Board of Trustees provided opportunities for Commissioners to share their views on the intersections and differences between the University's strategic plan and the Commission's vision of the future AKU.

The Lisbon sessions were extremely productive and, in this post-pandemic world, a strong reminder of the enduring value of in-person gatherings to share perspectives and forge consensus among groups of any size. Those discussions, and consultations with Commissioners who could not attend the meeting, have been incorporated into this final report.

As noted above, we did not take up in detail the "financial, technical, and human resources and systems necessary for proposed future course" nor recommended "appropriate management and governance structures". In part this reflected our inability to meet in person both together as a Commission and with University management and stakeholders as originally planned. That said, the COVID-19 pandemic was also a stark reminder of the rapid changes in the contexts in which AKU is operating. Our analyses of those changes arguably played an even larger role in steering us toward the delineation of planning principles and operating precepts that seemed more promising as a source of both timely and more durable guidance for the present and future AKU.

Organisation of This Report

While encompassing the diverse knowledge, insights, and expertise of its members, these "Reflections on the Future of the Aga Khan University" offer a shared view and vision for the institution. Hence,

while substantial material has been drawn from the written submissions of several Commissioners, it was agreed that there would be no attribution to individual authors.

The next section of this report offers the Commission's analysis of changes in the world at large over the three decades since the report of the first Chancellor's Commission. It addresses the vulnerabilities and opportunities of AKU's operating contexts in South/ Central Asia and East Africa, as well as in the Global South more broadly.

Section 3 focuses on changes in higher education, including those occurring in response to powerful global forces, different trends in different geographies, and also ways and places where universities have been more reluctant to modify traditional policies and practices.

The next two sections are focused specifically on AKU and offer guidance for its trajectory in the challenging years ahead. Section 4 considers the mission, values, and ethos of the institution against its current realities and anticipated operating environments. It also proposes a set of strategic planning principles with elaboration on how they might be applied to charting AKU's future. Section 5 emphasises operating principles that should inform AKU's administrative plans and work. Much of the section is devoted to examples of current and future application of themes such as interdisciplinarity, digital transformation, networks/partnerships, and knowledge translation—almost all with multiple examples. Last, we also examine new priorities for AKU, with particular reference to what might be termed population and planetary health.

Given their continuity with the Founder's vision and AKU's trajectory, our reflections on the mission, values, and ethos might be viewed as affirmation of enduring compass points. Other guidance is offered with due humility given our assessment of the trends and issues affecting AKU's operating environments. It should be seen as provisional navigational guidance for uncharted terrain, crafted with a clear understanding that future Trustees and Administrations may need to change course as the shape of the future world around AKU becomes clearer. And it is in the same spirit that the Commissioners have respectfully side-stepped elements of our mandate that would have seen us opining in implausible detail on governance or on administrative, academic, and operational matters.

A concluding section recapitulates the Commission's key points of guidance and connects them to AKU's current strategic planning process. Appendices A and B contain, respectively, brief profiles of the Commissioners and a list of materials and individuals consulted by the Commission in its work.

Acknowledgements

As implied above, this Chancellor's Commission has reaffirmed the foresight of the Founder's vision and the enduring relevance of AKU's mission. We applaud the remarkable progress and impact that AKU has made in a comparatively short time and in often challenging environments. Those successes—and the strong foundations on which they are based—reflect the compounding effects of excellent values, clarity of mission, visionary governance, nimble and clear-sighted administration, generous support from wide-ranging sources, meaningful partnerships, and above all, the commitment and achievements of AKU's faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

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The Commissioners also wish to acknowledge the succession of volunteers who, over the course of four decades, have dedicated untold hours to AKU's advancement. We are grateful to be part of that tradition, and deeply appreciative of the assistance the Commission has received from so many talented individuals working for or volunteering with AKU. We remain confident that, despite a future that appears to be even more volatile, complex, and unsettled than AKU has experienced to date, this remarkable and resilient institution will continue not only to thrive but also to shape a better world in the decades ahead.

2. Changes in the World Since 1994 and Their Implications for the Future AKU

The end of the Cold War and the dawning of the new information age shaped the context in which the earlier Chancellor's Commission was prepared: it was a relatively self-confident, not to say triumphalist, moment for the West, and many institutions felt emboldened to embrace grand aspirations and expansive time horizons. The unprecedented and accelerating pace of change in the last three decades strongly suggests that planning on a quarter-century horizon is no longer feasible.

Globalisation—abetted by revolutionary developments in information technologies—has altered our horizons in both time and space. The reality of climate change as an urgent challenge of twenty-first century life has highlighted the existential relations of peoples around the globe, with each other and with the planet they inhabit, and raised hard questions about the future of humanity. In like fashion, the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated how profoundly connected are the peoples of this era, for both good and ill. Indeed, movement of goods, the mobility of people, and rapid transmission of information have transformed virtually all aspects of human activity, not least education.

Early hopes that globalisation and new information and communication technologies would herald an age of openness, tolerance, and opportunity have faded. True, there have been remarkable benefits associated with the growth of trade and finance, the democratisation of access to information and ideas, and the increasing mobility of human capital. But there have also been deeply troubling features in this age: e.g., widening economic inequality; nationalist, populist, and sectarian backlashes; and manipulative and mischievous uses of information and disinformation.

In many parts of the world, the era of globalisation is increasingly coming to be viewed as having been little more than a lightly veiled extension of Western imperial hegemony. The decolonisation movement in civil society and education at all levels is a clear response to the associated sense of displacement of autochthonous cultures and institutions. Growing scepticism about the merits of free trade or democratic institutions and increasing moves to undermine and destabilise the global order on the part of both aspiring world powers and local actors alike represent significant challenges to how we understand our world, much less how we articulate and realise the University's universalistic values. The present Commission, in short, has been convened in a dramatically different time with unanticipated turmoil on many fronts. That said, while the growing complexity and instability of the global landscape urges that prudence temper ambition, it also reveals the abiding importance of AKU's founding vision and mission.

Climate Change

Climate change and loss of biodiversity are perhaps the biggest threat to the future of the planet and to humans. Despite repeated warnings and increased awareness since the 1980s, efforts to implement eco-friendly policies, reduce energy consumption, and use renewable sources of energy have proven insufficient: The 2022 *Global Sustainable Development Report* emphasises that “human influence on the Earth’s climate has become unequivocal, increasingly apparent, and widespread. Current changes in the climate system and those expected in the future will increasingly have significant and deleterious impacts on human and natural systems.”⁵ 2020 was the hottest year on record, and one million species are at risk of extinction.

The “Indicators of Global Climate Change for 2022” report shows that over the 2013–2022 period, human-induced warming has been increasing at an unprecedented rate of over 0.2° C per decade.⁶ This has led not only to accelerating increases in temperatures but also to increasing and unpredictable “intensification of many weather and climate extremes, particularly more frequent and more intense hot extremes, and heavy precipitation across most regions of the world.”⁷ In addition, as with the melting icecaps and tundra, geophysical feedback loops that mitigated climate change are being disabled.

The above-noted report no doubt underestimates the severity of the situation because the years under study include the dramatic drop in motor vehicle traffic and industrial emissions during the global economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and related public health measures/restrictions. Little wonder that the authors conclude that this “is a critical decade” given that “human-induced global warming rates are at their highest historical level.”⁸

Climate change and loss of biodiversity imply not only increased risk in terms of extreme events like heatwaves, cold periods, drought, forest fires, flooding, avalanches, and rising sea levels. These cataclysmic developments also pose major threats to human health and well-being, causing forced migrations, declining food production, water insecurity, disruption of life-sustaining ecosystems, and widening social disparities.

Given AKU’s substantial presence in and focus on the Global South, it appears inevitable that climate change will have particularly severe impacts on the populations of greatest concern for the University. Increasing aridity, glacial melt, and changes in the Monsoon cycle will reduce access to steady supplies of water for irrigation and farming. Global temperature increases will make many major cities unliveable, and coastal erosion will threaten countless coastal communities. In the decades to come entire populations will lose access to arable land and fresh water, and they will be obliged to relocate to other regions of the planet. Ancient cultures and rhythms of life will be disrupted *in situ*

5 United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*, 55. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>.

6 P.M. Forster et al, “Indicators of Global Climate Change 2022: annual update of large-scale indicators of the state of the climate system and human influence,” *Earth System Science Data*, 15: 2295–2327, 2023, 2296. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://doi.org/10.5194/essd-15-2295-2023>.

7 Ibid., 2297.

8 Ibid., 2318.

or left behind as these adverse effects of climate change unfold. Farming and herding practices, traditional construction methods, existing social structures and livelihoods, and community identities will all be threatened. And there will be mass migrations motivated not by politics, economics, or choice, but by survival.

We are already seeing significant global changes in energy use and resources. The increasing urgency of reducing reliance on hydrocarbons will have profound implications for the current economic-political power of, and funding flowing from, the Gulf States. This alone will have an impact broadly on international relations, economies, and the higher education landscape.

Global Health: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the world in unprecedented ways. No country was left unscathed; the pandemic's impacts were felt in healthcare and education systems, economies, political systems, and civil society. The World Bank estimates that globally some 120 million additional people fell below the poverty line due to the pandemic, with those in low- and lower-middle- income countries especially vulnerable. While elderly and immunocompromised individuals were at highest relative risk from SARS-CoV-2, it has been marginalised populations, women, and girls who bore the greatest cumulative burden from the combined health, economic, and social impacts of the pandemic.

Since the pandemic first interrupted face-to-face education on campuses all over the world in March 2020, the 220 million students enrolled in 25,000 higher education institutions have faced significant new challenges. The flow of international students dropped dramatically. While many institutions managed to switch to online education very rapidly and did their best to provide continuity in teaching, the digital gap and lack of preparation for online instruction increased educational disparities and created acute social distress, especially among vulnerable students.

In the medium to long term, COVID-19 is likely to negatively affect learning outcomes, mobility, graduation rates, employability, and job prospects of traditionally underrepresented students across the globe. It is also expected to worsen the already-precarious economic health of many higher education institutions. At the same time, the move to online education—if sustained—offers significant opportunities for transforming the learning experience, whether remote or in person. Curricular and pedagogical practices could be reshaped to promote active, interactive, and experiential education, supported by aligned innovations in assessment and more flexible pathways and qualifications.

More generally, the pandemic has revealed the need for substantial changes in the economic models of higher education systems and institutions to increase their resilience. Systems with higher proportions of public funding have shown that they were less vulnerable to health and economic crises than those relying more on private funding. The pandemic has also stressed the importance of strong IT infrastructure and comprehensive financial aid programmes to protect vulnerable students and foster inclusion.

As COVID so dramatically illustrated, infectious diseases that cross geographical boundaries and exact a substantial toll have already become the norm rather than the exception in recent decades.

With advancing climate change and the continued incursion of human settlements on natural habitats, old infectious threats will re-emerge, and new animal-borne diseases will jump to humans. Moreover, as addressed above, climate change poses other threats to the health of populations, with impacts on access to clean water and food, and the adverse effects of hyperthermia on those who are frail or elderly.

The future of global health will therefore require a much larger number of strong, integrated public health systems, particularly in the Global South, where they must also have the human, technical, and financial resources to protect the most vulnerable. Those human resources include a larger pool of creative scientists and clinicians who can anticipate and deal with ongoing and emerging pathogens with pandemic potential, along with epidemiologists, statisticians, and population health scientists who can both steer responses to the latest infectious threats and promote the broader health and wellbeing of societies in the face of climate change, urbanisation, income inequality, and population aging.

Global Demographic Shifts

Wholly apart from the impact of climate change and developments in global health, the world has witnessed significant demographic shifts over the past 25 years, influenced by improvements in maternal and child health; better access to health care, nutrition, and education; and both voluntary and forced migration and international mobility patterns.

Changing Age Profiles: The Youth Bulge and Longer Life Expectancies

Globally, a significant 'youth bulge' is coming, centred in the regions where AKU operates, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where the bulk of population growth is expected over the next two decades. Between now and 2050, over half of global population growth is expected to occur in Africa, with the population of sub-Saharan Africa projected to double by 2050, even if there is a substantial reduction of fertility levels in the near future.⁹ Since the last Chancellor's Commission report in 1994, Pakistan's population has grown from 129 million to 240 million in 2023 and is projected to reach 403 million by 2050.¹⁰ The population in Karachi alone has more than doubled, from 8.1 million in 1994 to 17.2 million in 2023.¹¹

Societies that harness the tremendous potential of that demographic shift will reap significant social and economic benefits. At the same time, we are beginning to see declining fertility rates in

9 See: United Nations, "Global Issues: Population," un.org website. Retrieved August 17, 2023 from: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/population#:~:text=Our%20growing%20population&text=The%20world's%20population%20is%20expected,billion%20in%20the%20mid%2D2080s>.

10 The World Bank, "Population, total – Pakistan," data.worldbank.org website. Retrieved August 21, 2023 from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=PK>; and UNFPA, "State of the World Population Report provides infinite possibilities for Pakistan," pakistan.unfpa.org website, May 23, 2023. Retrieved August 21, 2023 from: <https://pakistan.unfpa.org/en/news/state-world-population-report-provides-infinite-possibilities-pakistan#:~:text=Pakistan's%20population%20is%20currently%20estimated,reach%20403%20million%20by%202050>.

11 Macrotrends, "Karachi, Pakistan Metro Area Population 1950-2023," macrotrends.net website. Retrieved August 21, 2023, from: <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/22044/karachi/population>.

these regions. This can be a positive indicator that parents will be better able to invest in the health and education of all their children. However, it is also a harbinger of the transitory nature of the youth bulge. Increasing life expectancies in the Global South, population movements, and the decline in family members serving as traditional caregivers for the elderly all will require new expertise, policies, and resources to care for aging populations. For AKU in particular, these demographic shifts also have important implications for its ability to have meaningful impact in the societies it serves.

Changing Geographies: Migration, Diasporas, and Muslim Communities

Persistence of armed conflict undercuts any optimistic presumptions that the world has become more safe or secure over the last decades. From protracted conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria to the more recent Russian invasion of Ukraine and the collapse of Sudan in civil war, the political situation in many countries and regions remains insecure, with their populations exposed to violence and armed confrontation. Threats from regional and ethnic conflict, growing numbers of displaced communities, increased poverty, growing economic inequality, and rising levels of crime and corruption all combine to put severe pressures on political and social institutions of all kinds.

Indeed, millions of refugees have been forced to flee their countries because of war or poverty—challenges likely to be exacerbated by climate change and environmental disasters, including flooding, soil erosion, and droughts. UNHCR estimated that, at the end of 2020, at least 82.4 million people around the world were forced to flee their homes, more than one in a hundred of all people on the planet. Among them are nearly 26.4 million refugees, half of whom are under the age of 18. The number of internally displaced people [IDPs] reached 48 million. In Africa, the countries hosting the highest numbers of refugees are Ethiopia (659,000) Kenya (551,000), Chad (453,000), Uganda (386,000), Cameroon (264,000) and South Sudan (248,000)—and these figures do not include IDPs.¹² Pakistan has a refugee population of 1.420 million. Worldwide, only about five per cent of college-age refugees have access to higher education.

In contrast to those displaced, voluntary relocation to different countries or continents has become ever more commonplace over the last three decades of globalisation. This has led to dramatic growth in the size of the South/Central Asian and East African diaspora communities in the Global North. Indeed, many AKU graduates leave Pakistan, especially for North America.

This mobility has contributed to shifting definitions and boundaries of the “Muslim world”. AKU’s original mission statement made specific reference to “primarily serving the developing world and Muslim societies”. A dozen years later, the first Chancellor’s Commission identified worrying fault lines but could not anticipate the full extent to which contemporary experience in and definitions of the Muslim world and its relationship with the Global North have been reshaped since 1994.

Since its establishment in 2000, the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations [ISMC] has provided a locus for AKU to address—with a concentrated educational effort as the essential

12 A. Adepoju, “Migration Dynamics, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa,” UNGA High-Level Summit to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants (September 2022). Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/migration-dynamics-refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons-africa>.

first step—what the Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, described as the essential problem of a “Clash of Ignorance”, rather than of civilisations or religions, that underpinned relations between the Muslim world and the West.¹³ AKU now also has within the AKDN the Global Centre for Pluralism as a potential partner and collaborator on that educational project.

These efforts at promoting understanding remain crucial. But they do not address the reality of demographic shifts that are likely to stretch the boundaries of the Muslim societies that AKU must serve and to multiply Muslim identities in unpredictable ways. While the Asia-Pacific region will remain the home of a majority of the world’s Muslims, the share of the global Muslim population living in Asian countries with large Muslim populations (Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) is projected to decline by nearly 10 per cent between 2010 and 2050. Europe and North America will see their Muslim populations approximately double, to 10.2 per cent and 2.4 per cent of the total population respectively during that same period. Muslim populations in sub-Saharan Africa are expected to more than double, from about 250 million in 2010 to nearly 670 million in 2050, which corresponds to a 24 percent share of the world’s Muslim population, up from 16 percent in 2010.¹⁴ This will inevitably reshape understanding of Muslim societies, prompting debate about geo-political boundaries, as well as differences between Muslim-majority, historically minority and, indeed, entirely new Muslim communities around the world.

In a world of aging populations and large-scale movements of people around the globe—coupled with the rapid changes in the labour market described below—the traditional linear progression from study to work no longer suffices. This makes life-long learning, upskilling, and re-skilling necessary components of higher education, which in turn represents an important opportunity for AKU. The Commission offers guidance on this issue later in the report.

Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence

One of the major drivers of human mobility has been the growth of information and communication technologies that both widen global horizons and facilitate sustained connections across continents and oceans. In the coming decades, information technology and artificial intelligence will continue to fundamentally change not only labour markets, or the future of work, but also how, where, and for what purposes universities educate their students. These developments have translated into tremendous changes in the skill sets needed to succeed in the new work landscape: disappearance of existing jobs, emergence of new jobs, and transformation of existing positions.

In many ways, these developments have already been profoundly disruptive and may continue to transform labour markets and the social order. According to a recent, perhaps unduly optimistic, study by the World Economic Forum, by 2025, Artificial Intelligence is expected to automate 75 million

13 His Highness the Aga Khan, upon receiving the “Tolerance” award at the Tutzing Evangelical Academy, Tutzing, Germany, May 20, 2006. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://the.akdn/en/resources-media/resources/speeches/upon-receiving-tolerance-award-tutzing-evangelical-academy>.

14 Pew Research Center, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.” April 2, 2015. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/muslims/>.

jobs globally and create 133 million new jobs in their place.¹⁵ This transformation of the job market presents both challenges and opportunities for workers and employers alike.¹⁶ For Pakistan and the African countries where AKU operates, this evolution represents an opportunity to accelerate the pace towards improved productivity throughout the economy and more efficient and effective service delivery.¹⁷

For Africa, the World Economic Forum report on employment identified the following high potential sectors as “brain-intensive” rather than capital-intensive: biotechnology, health sciences, creative industries, and new areas of computing. All of these are driven by rapid progress or an intensifying focus on: Artificial Intelligence and machine learning; the Internet of Things, robotics and smart cities; blockchain and distributed ledger technology; autonomous and urban mobility; drones and the airspace of tomorrow; precision medicine; digital commerce; environment and natural resources; data policy; and predictive analytics.¹⁸

Ongoing efforts to create green economies in Asia and Africa are likely to further accelerate the use of digital technologies in priority sectors such as education, health, finance, transport, energy, and increasingly, agriculture. The evolution of the skills requirements for both new and existing jobs will not only affect the professional skills in demand but also determine the generic competencies that graduates are expected to possess.¹⁹ In simple terms, universities need to confront a future where facts will be cheap and rote learning pointless. What will be needed are academic programmes that strengthen the unique syncretic and creative skills of the human mind, leading to graduates whose capabilities can be augmented by machine learning and AI, rather than supplanted by algorithms and digital devices.

Growing Inequality and Shifting Geopolitics

Income inequality will remain a major challenge for human societies in the coming decades. While over a billion persons have been lifted out of extreme poverty since the last Chancellor’s Commission reported, income disparities have also grown rapidly both within and across nations as

15 World Economic Forum, “Machines Will Do More Tasks Than Humans by 2025, but Robot Revolution Will Still Create 50 Million Net New Jobs in the Next Five Years,” September 17, 2018. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.weforum.org/press/2018/09/machines-will-do-more-tasks-than-humans-by-2025-but-robot-revolution-will-still-create-58-million-net-new-jobs-in-next-five-years/>.

16 ESEI International Business School, “The Future of Work: How AI is Impacting Jobs and the Labor Market,” blog, February 14, 2023. Retrieved July 25, 2023 from: <https://www.eseibusinessschool.com/artificial-intelligence-affecting-work/#:~:text=On%20the%20other%20hand%2C%20AI,jobs%20that%20require%20different%20skills>.

17 AlphaBeta, *Building Skills for the Changing Workforce: AWS Global Digital Skills Study*. Commissioned by Amazon Web Services, November 2021. Retrieved July 24, 2023 from: <https://assets.aboutamazon.com/45/39/5ab8d17149a1bab0011202552bb6/aws-en-fa-onscn.pdf>.

18 World Economic Forum, “The Future of Jobs and Skills in Africa: Preparing the Region for the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” Executive Briefing, May 2017. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_EGW_FOJ_Africa.pdf.

19 World Economic Forum, *New Vision for Education: Unlocking the Potential of Technology*, WEF with the Boston Consulting Group, 2015. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEFUSA_NewVisionforEducation_Report2015.pdf.

people have benefited differentially from the rise of the global economy.²⁰ This, in turn, has contributed to social cleavages of growing severity. In a world where the richest 10 per cent of the global population owns 52 per cent of the total wealth, while the poorest half has just eight per cent, income inequality translates into power asymmetries that undermine the foundation of democratic societies. Moreover, indebtedness at the global and national levels—particularly in the Global South—exacerbates these inequalities and will constrain investments in human capital and in both education and health systems more broadly.

Across the world, this growing inequality and alienation has fuelled nationalistic politics, often coupled on the one side with religious extremism and intolerance, and on the other with anti-globalisation and decolonisation movements. To different degrees, these all share a revulsion against a world in which many see themselves left behind as the global elite grows ever richer. Indeed, in its formal, abstract, and mechanical (or perhaps algorithmic) allocation of goods and fortunes, the globalisation of capitalism too often seems to demean or disrespect other important features of human life and community: sociability; art; curiosity; humour; loyalty; time, not spent or managed but simply passed or even relished; and space, not exploited or filled but explored and contemplated.

The backlash has taken many forms, some explicable, others baffling. It has mobilised those who have not shared in the wealth created by neo-liberal globalisation along with those that live in relative privilege but are convinced that their share is too small. It has animated those on the Left who seek redistribution of wealth and those on the Right who seek to protect their wealth by scaling back the welfare state. Ideologically, there is both heightened polarisation and a common rage at the status quo.

In the Global North this backlash against the uneven domestic impact of globalisation encompasses the vote for Brexit in the United Kingdom, the election of Trump in the United States, and the many Occupy movements of the first decades of the twenty-first century.²¹ Elsewhere across the globe, the rise of religious extremist movements in the Muslim world, and among Christian fundamentalists, ultraorthodox Jews, and Hindutva in India—along with resurgent nationalism in the far-right parties in South America, and in Russia and China—both reflect growing awareness of the inequality spawned by neoliberal globalisation and fuel the alienation of those who feel themselves disadvantaged in the modern world. The alignment of these religious movements with nativist politics was evident as early as the 1970s but has spread increasingly across Europe and the United States. Nativist politicians have fanned these fires to win elections or consolidate power in authoritarian

20 Z. Quereshi, "Rising inequality: a major issue of our time," Brookings Institution Research, May 16, 2023. Retrieved August 17, 2023 from: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/rising-inequality-a-major-issue-of-our-time/#:~:text=Current%20inequality%20levels%20are%20high,sharp%20increases%20in%20global%20inequality>. The United Nations notes that while, for the most part, income inequality between countries has declined, income inequality within countries has worsened, with Today, 71 percent of the world's population living in countries where inequality has grown. See United Nations, "Inequality: Bridging the Divide," Factsheet, February 2020. Retrieved August 17, 2023, from: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2020/02/un75_inequality.pdf.

21 See: J. Frieden, "The backlash against globalization and the future of the international economic order," prepared for a Policy Network volume, *The Next Phase of Globalisation: Capitalism and Inequality in the Industrialized World*, Harvard University, February 2018. Retrieved August 16, 2023 from: https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/jfrieden/files/frieden_future_feb2018.pdf. This "backlash" is not necessarily correlated with a large swing in public opinion against globalisation but is rather a result of its politicisation, as argued in: S. Walter, "The Backlash Against Globalization," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2021 24:1, 421-442. Retrieved August 16, 2023 from: <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041719-102405>.

states. Demonisation and scapegoating become more prevalent, with dire consequences for ethnic minorities and strained external relations. The rise in protectionist, isolationist, and nationalist policies have revealed the limits of, and accordingly dashed the hopes for, a cooperative transnational order in many parts of the world.

The overall decline of democracy reflects this dissatisfaction and disaffection as well; 2021 was the fifteenth consecutive year of decline in global freedom. According to the Democracy Index calculated by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the share of the world population living in full democracies has decreased from 12.3 per cent in 2010 to 6.4 per cent in 2021, resulting from a fall in the number of fully democratic countries from 26 to 21 over the same period, while the number of flawed democracies stayed stable at 53, meaning that five countries fell into the ‘authoritarian’ category.²²

Aga Khan University in an Unstable World

There is no doubt, then, that, the geopolitical landscape in which AKU operates today is far more obviously complex and volatile than when the last commission reported in 1994. Since then, AKU has commendably navigated a host of challenges in the wider South/Central Asian and East African contexts in which it operates. Those include the previously identified impacts of climate change, a global pandemic, demographic shifts, rising inequality, and resurgent nationalism.

Now, however, waning US/European interest and influence in those contexts have been accompanied by a rise in the economic, political, and demographic power of China and India. While China’s Belt and Road initiative expanded across much of Africa, the influence of the Atlantic axis waned, as underscored by the chaotic withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2021. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 upset supply chains already disrupted by COVID, and tensions between the United States and China will likely encourage closer ties between Pakistan and China.

In Pakistan, these shifts and events have led to substantial domestic economic and political turbulence. Pakistan is currently in a severe economic crisis with very high inflation, a currency which has collapsed, and a total lack of foreign currency reserves. AKU will see the consequences of this crisis in even more significant brain drain due to cost-of-living concerns, difficulty in attracting international faculty and staff, and other factors. The government’s efforts to restore economic equilibrium may lead to increasing reliance on aid from neighbouring China or nearby Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, since the re-establishment of a Taliban government in 2021, AKU and the wider Aga Khan Development Network have faced restrictions on the delivery of health services and education programming by international non-governmental organisations.

Plans for AKU’s growth in East Africa were premised on the East African Community [EAC] becoming an overarching regional structure. Established in 1999 and headquartered in Arusha,

22 Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2021: The China Challenge*. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf?mkt_tok=NzUzLVJJUS00MzgAAAGMVPKOTsYUBpNDS1MYZBLH2q-vE0-1SbAJNjBB6g7rKXOKNgmnL2EyybBfJere7QfqVjr3gq0Q0Cz9gBWRsBVGdidQ550NpupvUpZeOAXmxYnokw.

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Tanzania, the EAC foreshadowed a new period of harmony in the Great Lakes region, with a common e-passport and freer trade across the six initial member states. However, popular support for integration has waned, particularly in Kenya, which has outsized economic influence in the region. On the ground in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, AKU has faced divergent regulatory regimes and expectations to develop charters and governance arrangements for each locale.

That latter observation is an appropriate segue to consideration of how higher education is changing in this unsettled period of human history.

3. Changes in Global Higher Education Since 1994 and Their Implications for the Future *AKU*

The higher education realm has inevitably been affected by the changes taking place globally on so many fronts. Particularly in the Global South, a transformation has taken place since the first Chancellor's Commission reported in 1994. AKU's position in that landscape has dramatically changed as well, from a small new institution focused on the health sciences in Pakistan to a respected university covering a wider range of disciplines with a multi-campus, multi-country presence in South and Central Asia, East Africa, and the United Kingdom.

Among university leaders, there is understandably a wide consensus that future generations must be prepared to navigate challenges and systems that have yet to materialise. However, that pedagogical consensus on the importance of adaptability and resilience has not consistently produced experimental or inventive approaches to higher education; rather, the sector has often taken what might be characterised as a somewhat defensive and conservative stance, marked by the growing role of the private sector, increasing reliance on global benchmarking and reputation management, and an accent on meeting immediate labour market demands, particularly in STEM fields. A distinct isomorphism in the university sector is discernible.

The Private Sector in Higher Education: Spectacular Expansion and Enduring Disparities

The stagnation of public investment in social services in the last three decades of neo-liberal globalization has meant that most governments in the world are unable or unwilling to support higher education at the scale demanded by either prospective students or employers. The inevitable result has been the growth of for-profit businesses in higher education—investor-owned colleges and universities, test-prep companies, MOOC providers, etc.—that measure their success largely by their bottom lines. The incursion of these enterprises in North America has been modest, leading American and Canadian academics to be somewhat dismissive of for-profit education.²³ However, the sector is proliferating very fast in most of the rest of the world. Today there are many more private than public institutions, and the gap is growing.

²³ See especially, T. McMillan Cottom, *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy* (New York: The New Press, 2018), which argues that profit-driven privatization of higher education is becoming an engine of inequality.

For example, in the Global South in 2018 there were almost 50,000 private providers, up more than 130 per cent since 2006, against fewer than 20,000 public institutions—an increase of just 12 per cent.²⁴ Large public institutions still account for the bulk of enrolments—public higher education accounted for 70 per cent of global enrolments in 2018 and the universities of Karachi, Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam each enrolled more than 40,000 students—but their share has been declining, due to the rising importance of private provision in the Global South.²⁵ This includes the emergence of a small but influential number of high-quality or ‘elite’ private, not-for-profit universities (notably in India and Brazil) that offer new models and innovative approaches to higher education.²⁶

The non-state sector is quite complex, including both for-profit and not-for-profit enterprises. In the Global South, not-for-profit institutions are typically religiously affiliated or established by family foundations, as in Latin America and Turkey, and financing mechanisms range from partial state funding through socially conscious impact investing to dependence entirely on tuition revenues, ancillary fees, and other private revenue streams. However, governments in the Global South have been authorising the establishment of many for-profit institutions in part because they are unwilling or unable to meet the demand for access to publicly financed tertiary education.

Thus, despite the spectacular expansion that has occurred in many parts of the planet in the past decades, severe enrolment disparities persist. This is especially the case in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where enrolment is 10 per cent and 26 per cent of the age cohort, respectively, compared to 41 per cent in North Africa and the European average of 73 per cent. For Pakistan, it is only 12 per cent. Unsurprisingly given the nature of the institutions being approved, statistics also show that a high proportion of students still belong to the wealthiest groups in society in both richer and poorer nations. The issue is not only one of access. Students from traditionally underrepresented groups also have lower completion rates. They are usually enrolled in less prestigious universities, which means fewer labour market opportunities and lower job outcomes.

In short, equitable access to higher education and labour market opportunities are indispensable for easing inequalities and related social problems. Access is particularly important given the demographics of many nations in the Global South where, as noted above, a ‘youth bulge’ is growing to and beyond the age of university enrolment. However, rising cost-sharing and the high number of private higher education institutions in many parts of the world remain major sources of disparities in both access and success in university enrolment.

Benchmarking and Measurement

In this context of rapid expansion of under-resourced private institutions, the dissemination of standards

24 K. MacGregor, “Higher education report charts rise of the Global South,” *University World News*, 12 March 2022. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220311151815827>.

25 Ibid.

26 P. G. Altbach, “The Quiet Global Revolution of Elite Private Higher Education,” *International Higher Education* 115: Summer 2023. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.internationalhighereducation.net/api-v1/article/!/action/getPdfOfArticle/articleID/3727/productID/29/filename/article-id-3727.pdf>.

for quality assurance and accreditation is particularly important. Many national accreditation standards and mechanisms elsewhere in the world are borrowed or modelled on US practice. Meeting those standards—indeed, the very process of being measured against them—demands a serious institutional commitment of time and resources, and few institutions in the Global South are able or willing to make such commitments. Another key challenge with accreditation standards and mechanisms is that they do not sufficiently rely on outcomes, focusing instead on inputs and processes. Moreover, insofar as they seek to enforce established practices, they discourage innovation.

We find similar issues with university rankings, where the growing influence of the private sector is evident even in the United States as *US News and World Report*, Princeton Review, and others provide ranking systems for ‘consumers’ of US colleges and universities. We also now see this trend on a global scale with the international rating of universities by organisations like Quacquarelli Symonds [QS], *Times Higher Education* [THE], and the Shanghai Ranking Consultancy/ Academic Ranking of World Universities [ARWU].

Both accreditation standards and international rankings, like most economically driven devices to assess competitiveness, rely heavily on quantitative measures. This approach privileges those aspects of education that can be counted: numbers of students and faculty, proportion of foreign students and academics, square meters of instructional space, credit hours required, publications per faculty member, citations per publication, etc. These are all worthwhile data. But they do not really measure *education*—indeed they are not even particularly good proxies by which to measure education. In so far as the global rankings measure anything comparable, it is research output, not teaching. (They also tend to favour research published in English, which biases outcomes to institutions in the North Atlantic.)

With respect to research outputs, while AKU performs admirably in some areas, it operates at a substantial disadvantage in terms of external funding. Consider, for example, that in 2023, the Biden Administration in the United States initiated a US\$280 billion increase in science funding over the next decade for American researchers in a range of disciplines. The UK Government committed to a 35 per cent base increase in science funding by 2026, and Germany is well into its second decade of steady three per cent annual increases in research funding.

Whether in Pakistan or East Africa, AKU must deal with scarcity of local funding to support its scientific and scholarly work. For example, it has been estimated that in 2017-18 the entirety of local funding available in Pakistan for health sciences research through the Higher Education Commission, the Pakistan Science Foundation, and the Pakistan Health Research Council was ~Rs. 350 million (about US\$3 million at that time).²⁷ The Kenya Medical Research Institute [KEMRI], the health research arm of the Government of Kenya, receives about US\$15 million annually and does not make grants to private organisations.

Despite constrained support, AKU’s research outputs do elevate its standing when ranked

²⁷ M.A.N. Saqib and I. Rafique, “Health research funding and its output in Pakistan,” *East Mediterranean Health Journal*, 27:9, 906–910. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://doi.org/10.26719/emhj.21.038>. Note that the article appears to use valuations for the PKR against the US\$ for 2019. We re-calculated using posted exchange rates internationally for 2017-18, the contemporaneous dates.

against global peers in similar settings. However, the core problem remains that the outputs of research are relatively simple to assess, while assessing the outcomes of education is a longstanding challenge everywhere. At the time of graduation, it is often uncertain what skills graduates will need and use. Moreover, the metrics we use to assess, accredit, and rank universities rarely capture the growing sophistication and maturity of the students, the value that rigorous exposure to unfamiliar ideas and perspectives may have decades later when still newer ideas must be confronted, or the self-confidence and flexibility of mind that permits young people to rise over time to leadership roles in their communities. These disconnects pose challenges for AKU and every other university that aspires to educate leaders who will make a difference in these troubled and uncertain times.

Novel Pedagogies and Purposes

Even as globalisation has highlighted the variety of the world's peoples and the benefits of their intermingling, the periodic and apparently growing nativist reactions noted above have made explicit commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion [DEI] increasingly common in business, government, and education. While in parts of the United States and elsewhere, academic institutions have recently come under attack for their efforts to redress historic inequities, universities have been at the forefront of recognising, and taking steps to foster, DEI. Many universities now feature chief diversity officers, DEI curriculum requirements, and training sessions on implicit bias as part of a growing diversity infrastructure.

In the Global North, there is also growing recognition of the impatience of a digital generation with traditional university pedagogy. This phenomenon has been accompanied by the emergence of institutions and programmes that emphasise self-directed, experiential, and peer-to-peer learning. Co-op programs, with work-site placements, have become more popular, not least because they can make higher education more affordable if the placement involves employment or at least some compensation. Numerous programmes also exist to help student entrepreneurs start their own businesses.

The sustainability of these innovations in AKU's varied settings and programmes remains unclear given the heterogeneity of environments in which AKU operates, its varied programmes, and the divergent cultures and expectations of students and their families. However it is accomplished though, university pedagogy must in all instances provide students with the mental agility necessary to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. That includes the syncretic and problem-solving skills required to understand and respond to complex new challenges, and the intellectual curiosity that drives life-long learning so that graduates can stay abreast of their field of specialty and assimilate ideas from new fields as they develop. In short, educators and educational institutions must soften the boundaries between disciplines that have existed in the past and adapt their more specialised programmes to ensure that their graduates have so-called T-shaped attributes—both depth of expertise in a particular field, and breadth of cognitive skills to navigate an uncertain future.

Unfortunately, many colleges and universities across the world are being transformed from scholarly institutions, concerned with intellectual pursuits on their own merits, or state resources dedicated to

the formation of citizens and the development of nations, into small business or large-scale industrial enterprises, concerned with the pursuit of measurable contributions to economic life. This trend is reflected even in the public sector, as governments demand that universities support the ‘knowledge economy’, understood almost exclusively in terms of STEM²⁸ disciplines, and everywhere governments encourage meeting the demands of a market for high-tech skills. A focus on employability—often defined less in terms of local labour markets than a global fixation on new technologies—has infused the world of higher education as well as the regulatory context globally.

Flexibility will be increasingly important not only in supporting research and learning across continents and across decades. Increasing mobility, combined with the growing realisation that education does not stop with a terminal degree, has led to an increasing wish for micro-credentials through which individuals could collect and continue professional development.

In fact, the stereotypical undergraduate student at a four-year residential university is a vanishing minority of the students in the world today. In the US alone, the *average* college student is over 26 years old. Barely half of US university students attend school exclusively full-time and just over half of students complete a certificate or college degree within six years.²⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic amplified downward trends in full-time, undergraduate enrolment observed prior to 2020: Between fall 2010 and fall 2021, total undergraduate enrolment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the US decreased by 15 per cent (from 18.1 million to 15.4 million students), with 42 per cent of this decline occurring during the pandemic. While total US undergraduate enrolment is projected to increase by nine per cent (from 15.4 million to 16.8 million students) between 2021 and 2031, the demographic profile of these students—and their global counterparts—and where and how they choose to study, will likely be quite different from their predecessors even a decade ago.³⁰

This, and the increasing demand for continuing professional education, has led to the proliferation of ‘stackable degrees’, certificate programmes, and other non-degree or credit-bearing offerings. Almost all of these include a component of distance learning, whether in hybrid formats, asynchronous modalities, computer-aided instruction, or other features of the virtual world. The potential of increasing access to virtual learning is particularly potent in education in the Global South.

Just as the traditional stereotype of the four-year residential college is no longer the typical student experience, so too the classroom has come to transcend its brick-and-mortar walls, not only through digital technologies but through novel pedagogies that accent ‘real life’ experience. Whether in internships, group consultancies in capstone projects, summer immersion experiences, or other modalities, students are increasingly expected to engage with the world of work and civil society as a part of their education. This engagement is expected to be mutually beneficial: students apply their

28 STEM refers to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, with math standing in for computer and data sciences more generally.

29 New America, “Perception vs. Reality: The Typical College Student,” Education Policy online resource, 2017, [newamerica.org](https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/varying-degrees/perception-vs-reality-typical-college-student/). Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/varying-degrees/perception-vs-reality-typical-college-student/>. See also: J. Freedman, “The Typical College Student Is Not A ‘Typical’ College Student (And Other Fun College Demographics Data),” *Forbes*, September 20, 2013. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joshfreedman/2013/09/20/the-typical-college-student-is-not-a-typical-college-student-and-other-fun-college-demographics-data/?sh=36e91d7e7c5a>.

30 National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Undergraduate Enrollment. Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved July 26, 2023, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cha>.

'book learning' in the field; employers and community groups benefit from the talent and insight of smart young people. Around the world, we see more engagement of communities, organisations, and other institutions in creating learning environments and in contributing actively to educational systems.

This move beyond the walls of the ivory tower is at once a reflection of the reconfigured space of the university and the novel imperatives of the present era. To address the speed required for innovation and the fact that academia will be expected to provide solutions in real time, the balance between theory and practical applications may need repositioning in favour of more action-oriented teaching. These times and challenges are likely to call for a hands-on approach to working directly with sectors and constituencies that need support and cultivating teaching methods based on learning-by-doing.

Global Mobility, Distance Learning, International Networks

Globalisation in higher education has not only changed human spatial and temporal horizons in general; it has also produced rapidly rising numbers of international students (six million in 2019 according to UNESCO statistics), and a growing number of academics moving from one country to the other in pursuit of more attractive professional opportunities. University students in sub-Saharan Africa have become the most mobile tertiary students on the planet with twice the average share of students studying outside their home country.³¹

A growing number of universities in industrial countries have opened branch campuses and other kinds of research centres in developing and emerging economies, mainly in Asia and the Middle East. The durability of these arrangements has been uneven, but some of these campuses and centres have thrived for years. Partnership agreements between universities are far more common, but they too are of uneven quality and durability. Many North American and European institutions are now seeing themselves as nodes in networks of educational and research collaboration—the European Barcelona process was an early effort to harmonise degree requirements so as to permit easy mobility within the European Union—and there are increasing numbers of international collaborations, around professional degrees (the Global Public Policy Network), civic engagement (the Tailloires Network) and, of course, scientific and social scientific research (CERN, JPAL, Human Genome Project). A decade ago, *Nature* magazine reported that:

A fundamental shift is taking place in the geography of science. Networks of research collaboration are expanding in every region of the globe. The established science superpowers of the United States and Europe have dominated the research world since 1945. Yet this Atlantic axis is unlikely to be the main focus of research by 2045, or perhaps even by 2020. New regional networks are reinforcing the competence and capacity of emerging research economies and changing the global balance of research activity.³²

31 W. Kigotho, "Sub-Saharan Africa leads the world on student mobility," *University World News*. 3 December 2020. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=202012020758261>.

32 J. Adams, "The rise of research networks," *Nature* 490, 335–336 (2012). Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://doi.org/10.1038/490335a>.

The Aga Khan University's presence in Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda represents an opportunity to attract international collaborative research projects as part of its research capacity-building strategy as well as to recruit more African students who would otherwise travel to Europe or North America. Properly managed, such collaborations should begin to redress the historical disparities in research partnerships—i.e., 'theory' generated in the North and 'data' in the South, with little or no attribution to the local research partners—and develop research agendas that reflect the priorities and purposes of the people of South/ Central Asia, East Africa, and beyond.

The mobility that permitted and encouraged institutional collaborations reflected the pre-pandemic higher education world's acceptance that face-to-face teaching was the norm and also the only desirable mode of study (and teaching). Obviously, the pandemic both stalled in-person student and faculty mobility and stimulated digital education. The extent and timing of any rebound in elective student mobility—individual direct enrolment study abroad programmes, for example—is difficult to predict but many universities in the Global North are once again beginning to promote various kinds of study abroad experiences.

Research collaborations can be effectively supported by digital communications technologies; remote digital learning may have left its infancy but at best is in an adolescent phase. The pandemic demonstrated that it can be done, and in certain circumstances, very effectively; but in many institutions, it remains associated with crisis education, suitable for pandemics, refugees, and other circumstances that limit access to in-person, face-to-face instruction. Over the course of time, however, and particularly as the strengths and weaknesses of Artificial Intelligence become clear, universities will inevitably deploy digital strategies to deliver instruction in a more flexible and accessible format.

In general, digital learning increases the reach of educational institutions exponentially, makes access more democratic, allows teachers and students to tailor their hours according to other responsibilities, widens the scope of access to educational materials to almost limitless proportions, and means that any child or student with access to a connected device can learn and grow to their maximum potential. A defining issue within the higher education landscape over the next 25 years will be the merging of the digital and the physical—and the resulting impacts on university infrastructure and the ways in which institutions engage and work with its students, including strategies to overcome a significant, gender-based digital divide in the Global South.

Research and Innovation as Revenue Sources

Alongside a focus on the production of STEM graduates, many governments in the Global North have emphasised the need for universities to be partners with industry in applied research, sources of commercialisable intellectual property, and incubators for start-up enterprises. This trend was given momentum in 1980 by the Bayh-Dole Act, which lifted the earlier requirement that the US government be the default owner of all intellectual property arising from federally funded research. Scores of universities in multiple jurisdictions have benefited financially from the commercialisation of discoveries made on their campuses or in partner research institutes. The inflow includes royalties and licensing fees, proceeds of sale of intellectual property, capital gains from sale of equity held in start-

ups that are acquired or listed and traded publicly on stock exchanges, and major philanthropic gifts from faculty and alumni who have successfully commercialised research completed under university aegis.

In reality, however, most university technology transfer offices in the US do not cover their costs. Instead, they create useful incentives for entrepreneurial activity on campus, including fostering small business incubators and accelerators that serve students, alumni, and local communities.³³ Partnerships for applied research arguably are more consistently beneficial. Most major research universities have a substantial portfolio of research that is sponsored by and/or carried out in collaboration with investor-owned enterprises. That said, these partnerships in general have been criticised as eroding the independence of institutions and constraining the academic freedom of faculty, research trainees, and graduate students. Specific conflicts can arise over directions of research, publication rights, and ownership of intellectual property. For institutions in the Global South, the limited number of industrial partners engaged in advanced research also constrains these prospects—a specific challenge for AKU as regards its portfolio of health-related research. Moreover, where such partnerships are accessible, the company seeking them may not be focused on products and services addressing matters of greatest community need. In short, for institutions like AKU, the probability of large financial yields from university intellectual properties and related entrepreneurship is low and appropriate care will be needed in operationalising research partnerships with industry.

These caveats aside, the opportunities for universities to contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship in the Global South are substantial. Low- and middle-income countries [LMICs] leapfrogged cable-based communications with the rapid adoption of mobile technology. Hubs in Africa and India have developed prosperous operations doing software development for enterprises in the Global North. It is likely that the energy sector will follow a similar trajectory with local solar and wind power and the emergence of large numbers of microgrids. Put simply, the future AKU's commitment to impact through entrepreneurship may run the gamut from traditional investor-owned start-ups to large-scale programmes of social innovation with community partners.

33 R. Pérez-Peña, "Patenting Their Discoveries Does Not Pay Off for Most Universities, a Study Says," *New York Times*, November 20, 2013. Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/21/education/patenting-their-discoveries-does-not-pay-off-for-most-universities-a-study-says.html>. Also see for example: "Entrepreneurship at NYU," retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://www.nyu.edu/about/university-initiatives/entrepreneurship-at-nyu/accelerators.html>.

Academic Freedom and Intellectual Integrity

The global threats to democracy, the growth of private, proprietary research and educational enterprises in the tertiary sector, the demands for measurable outcomes, and the accelerating speed of technological change all represent grave challenges to higher education institutions. This means there is less academic freedom, less independent thinking in the pursuit of truth, less institutional autonomy, and less tolerance of research on socially sensitive issues (gender, race, decolonisation of the curriculum, etc.). Paradoxically, these developments also mean that the role of a multi-national institution with a commitment to pluralism has never been more urgent.

Given its longstanding orientation to partnerships with North American, UK, and European institutions as well as its past emphasis on recruitment of trustees, university leaders, and faculty from those geographies, AKU faces both dangers and opportunities in this changing landscape. A growing movement in academia, and from diaspora scholars, has focused on decolonising global health and higher education. With a range of activities and discourse, this movement represents a push back against Western-driven educational and health imperatives. AKU can model how to resist both the legacy of Western imperialism and the temptations of nativist backlash.

This requires particular sensitivity to local and regional histories. The clash between ‘globalisation’ and ‘nativism’ is as real in East Africa as it is in South and Central Asia, but with very different trajectories. In pre-independence South Asia, the British saw the university as central to its civilising mission. Universities were also seen as turnkey projects: no matter where in world an institution was, it did same thing. By the time the British came into East Africa, universities were seen as a problem, not a solution: they produced radicals, lawyers, and were centres of dissent. As a result, Africa had very few universities before independence compared to British-controlled India. Nigeria had only one university. In East Africa, there was only Makerere. There was a two-phased explosion of universities after independence in Africa. At first, universities were mainly public institutions, funded by the government. As noted earlier, in the second phase, and continuing to the present day, growth has mainly been in the private sphere.

Decades after independence, research into HIV-AIDS in Africa was driven disproportionately by international researchers, not local scientists. The COVID-19 pandemic provided encouraging signs of change in that situation, as South African infectious disease researchers made prominent contributions to guide that nation’s pandemic response and published very important research findings, including the characterisation of two major variants of concern that spread globally. Those achievements, however, were more the exception than the rule. While AKU responded strongly, few institutions in the Global South had the research resources, partners, or enabling environments to develop and implement innovative local responses to the pandemic.

Given its operating contexts and fields of activity, the decolonisation movement may have implications, and opportunities, for the future AKU. In the present donor landscape, foundations and multilateral institutions have not seen direct investments in higher education as a good use of resources, but this may change as it becomes clear that climate and health are research and policy arenas than cannot be contained within state or even continental jurisdictions. At the same time,

hyper-nationalist postcolonial governments and political movements can make difficult demands themselves (monitoring 'foreign' funding, mandating curricula, etc.), as AKU has seen in virtually all the jurisdictions in which it operates. Balancing these competing claims while sustaining the foundational values of academic freedom, pluralism, and integrity will not be easy, but it is both urgent and important for the world as a whole.

AKU in These Contexts: Navigating Uncertainty and Change

All these observations suggest that we have entered an era of unusual uncertainty or, perhaps more accurately, a time in which the future seems unusually uncertain to us. Whether we are preoccupied by climate change or artificial intelligence, nativist war-mongering, or growing income inequality, nearly everyone concedes that the future is likely to be volatile, complex, and unsettled. The safety, security, and well-being of peoples around the world is in jeopardy.

At the same time, new technologies and a reimagining of higher education—internationalised, decolonised, inclusive—give many reasons for optimism. AKU has the potential to be a model of that reimagining. It has operated with integrity and resilience in volatile contexts and served vulnerable communities in challenging times. The values and ethics that defined AKU's past will serve it well in this uncertain future, and its Founder's clarion calls for pluralism have never been more relevant.

Against the backdrop of this fraught and puzzling landscape, and as part of a higher education sector struggling to keep pace with global changes, the current Chancellor's Commission has determined that the 25-year horizon contemplated for its guidance is both arbitrary and implausibly distant. We turn accordingly to more specific guidance for a future AKU—principles that might inform decisions by Trustees and the Administration, delineation of opportunities and pitfalls, and, with no expectations as to their durability given our tumultuous times, some recommendations about priorities and programmes.

4. *Navigational Aids for the Future AKU: Mission, Values, and Planning Principles*

The previous sections surveyed the evolving contexts and major trends shaping the future of AKU. In this section, the Commissioners return to the core mission and values of the University. We asked ourselves: Are these founding precepts cornerstones for future development that have proven resistant to ‘the teeth of time’? The answer in brief is strongly affirmative. The foundational conception and ideals of AKU have not only been a lodestar for the institution over the course of the last forty years but remain highly apposite and should continue to serve as its navigational guide in charting a course for the decades ahead.

While AKU’s core values in themselves have broad planning implications, both the Commission’s guidance in the next section and especially the Administration’s recent *AKU Onwards* strategic work plan are grounded in more granular considerations. Thus, this section also sets out some strategic planning principles and processes for and during the years ahead.

Mission, Vision, and Values

The Aga Khan University describes itself as: “an autonomous, international institution of distinction, primarily serving the developing world and Muslim societies in innovative and enduring ways.” Its mission is:

the development of human capacities through the discovery and dissemination of knowledge, and application through service. It seeks to prepare individuals for constructive and exemplary leadership roles, and shaping public and private policies, through strength in research and excellence in education, all dedicated to providing meaningful contributions to society.³⁴

The Chancellor’s Commission endorses these statements, deeming them no less germane descriptions of the aspirations and purposes of the University in the twenty-first century as they were at its founding.

So, too we endorse the enduring values of the institution:

As an international institution, in achieving its mission Aga Khan University operates on the core principles of **Impact, Quality, Relevance** and **Access**.

Inspired by Islamic ethics, humanistic ideals and the philosophy of Aga Khan Development Network, the University is committed to building an environment that fosters intellectual freedom, distinction in scholarship, pluralism, compassion, and humanity’s collective responsibility for a sustainable physical, social, and cultural environment.³⁵

34 “Our Vision,” <https://www.aku.edu/about/at-a-glance/Pages/our-vision.aspx>. Accessed 15 May 2023.

35 Ibid.

Combined with the University's identity statement and mission, these values permit, indeed, demand a distinctive profile. In past decades, AKU has established its philosophy and identity as an innovative university that offers a rich student experience with unique strengths in specific vocational areas such as medicine and nursing as well as the training of future educational leaders. Over the last decade, the University has been expanding its programmatic offerings to include media and communications, human development and, most recently, the long-awaited launch of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Today, the fast-changing global environment and higher education ecosystem offer renewed opportunities to expand AKU's scope as a university keen on applying its deep social responsibility towards the resolution of the world's challenges. These opportunities can be usefully explored within the University's four core IQRA values *qua* operating principles.

Impact

As we have seen, higher education is expanding rapidly in the Global South, often to meet demand for credentials rather than education, but this provides an opportunity for AKU to serve as a model—one might say an inspiration—for ambition, excellence, and responsibility.

That the global higher education community is primed for such leadership is suggested by the launch of the Shanghai principles in 2017, which were intended as a reminder to the leaders of top universities to put the social responsibility of their institutions of higher learning at the core of their vision and mission.³⁶ Echoing the philosophy of intellectual independence, academic freedom and institutional autonomy defended by the Magna Charta signed in 1988 by 388 heads of European universities, the 2017 Shanghai principles focus on social inclusion, scientific truth, ethical values, and responsible research as moral pillars to orient the strategic direction of universities like AKU.

As a small institution, AKU has sought to achieve an outsized impact by educating leaders and change agents who will go on to transform their professions—as has been well documented in the field of nursing in Pakistan—and take on societal challenges. **The Commission reaffirms this strategy: we want AKU graduates who are innovative and inclusive, who are knowledge creators and integrative thinkers; who have the ability to productively engage with diversity; and who will be citizens of the world and 'citizens of their disciplines' (i.e., those who seek to make their discipline better socially and scientifically).** Focusing on these types of graduate attributes rather than on more narrow curricular elements would give AKU a strongly student-centred orientation and should be factored more systematically into how AKU measures its impact. Individual metrics are important: where AKU students go after graduation, how they apply their education and training to address challenges in their countries of origin or globally—in sum measuring the institution's success in creating agents of change.

In this vein, **the Commissioners recommend that AKU delineate the core competencies that it hopes to foster in all its graduates, and track progress in implementation of pedagogical,**

36 P. De Maret and J. Salmi, "World-Class Universities in a Post-Truth World". In Wu, Y., Wang, Q., and N. Cai Liu (Eds). *World-Class Universities: Towards a Global Common Good and Seeking National and Institutional Contributions*. Leiden and Boston: Brill Sense, 70-87.

extra-curricular, and experiential learning opportunities that might reinforce those competencies.

For example, consistent with the University’s mission statements, one might hope that many graduates from AKU would become change agents globally—and be seen to be so. A list of competencies might therefore include integrative and critical thinking, effective self-expression, and capacities for effective leadership and followership. All these determinations are best made by AKU’s leadership and may well evolve over time. However, **the Commissioners have strong views on one attribute: AKU’s graduates should be imbued with a spirit of pluralism**—and serve as a small but potentially influential counterforce to the divisive nativism, partisanship, and bigotry that are again becoming prevalent in this unsettled period of human history.

At the same time, AKU is faced with the reality that programme growth has not kept pace with population growth in its operating environments. For example, if student numbers in the medical (MBBS) programme in Karachi continue to stay at 100 per annum, the University will have diminishing influence and impact even if programme quality remains high. For AKU to remain relevant for growing populations of South/Central Asia and East Africa, it will need to get bigger in terms of numbers even as it strives to maintain its current high standards.

In serving as a model of responsible leadership in higher education and research committed to impact not only within its community of faculty, students, and alumni but in the broader societies it serves, **AKU has a unique asset in its association with the Aga Khan Development Network. This should be deepened and strengthened, especially as AKDN’s efforts are guided by principles that are highly relevant to a future AKU’s approach to education and research:**

- Responsible stewardship of the environment, ensuring that the Earth can sustainably support future generations.
- Focusing on improving the quality of life and well-being (broadly defined) of the poorest and most vulnerable, in geographies of strategic importance.
- Demonstrating proactive, socially responsible, and values-oriented leadership on the most urgent civilisational— even existential—issues of our time.
- Leading by example, and sharing our experiences with others, to influence policies, raise awareness, increase impact, and effect social transformation.

We recognise that calls for AKU to foster close, meaningful collaborations across the AKDN are longstanding, and that cooperation can be challenging even when partners share guiding principles, values, and governance structures. Nonetheless, closer alignment with AKDN agencies and institutions holds greater potential to achieve sustained improvements in quality of life in AKU’s operating contexts than any other resource it could deploy.

Partnerships—broadly defined to include other universities, governments, the corporate sector, professional associations, and AKDN entities—will be an essential consideration in developing a strategic roadmap for AKU. Indeed, in a world in which universities increasingly understand the necessity of networks of collaborative research, education, and service, the AKDN represents what might be called a “shadow endowment” for AKU—an enormously valuable source

of knowledge, networks, and good will in many of the communities in which the University operates.

AKU has used collaborations with relatively wealthy institutions and prestigious collaborators as opportunities to strengthen both its academic performance and reputation but has been utterly steadfast in its commitment to operating in challenging geopolitical environments. AKDN for its part works with some of the world's most vulnerable communities, adversely affected by environmental degradation and climate change. Unlike in the past, many universities in the Global North are now willing to embrace more symmetrical, and equitable forms of partnerships with universities in the Global South, a trend that has unquestionably benefited AKU. However, "South-South" collaborations are increasingly visible and will take on ever greater importance for AKU in the years ahead, especially given the changing geopolitical order as outlined in the preceding contextual review. The Commissioners strongly endorse AKU's commitment to social responsibility and focused responsiveness to challenges facing the Global South. We commend AKU's longstanding commitment to partnering with a wide range of institutions and agencies and urge closer alignment with AKDN and attention to its values. **We recommend that AKU consider a strategic geopolitical balance (Global South and North, East, and West; in-country and international) in the partnerships it forges.**

Quality

The poet and literary critic T.S. Elliot once asked: "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?" The same question could guide AKU as it seeks ways of improving its performance without defining academic excellence only in the terms imposed or influenced by the global rankings. The Commissioners understand the appeal of these league tables and their potential utility for a variety of audiences. **Nonetheless, the Commissioners recommend that AKU develop its own parameters of quality, viewing the global rankings of universities with interest but remaining wary of measures that do not also reflect its own values of impact, relevance, and access.** Put another way, when there is tension between upholding the values articulated by the Chancellor and AKU's aspirations to be internationally competitive by standards set largely in the Global North, those values must be the bedrock of the institution's vision.

An ostensibly positive step away from the usual metrics has been the initiation of 'Impact Rankings' by one prominent agency, Times Higher Education, with a series of domains based on the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]. However, participation in this ranking is based entirely on self-selection by universities, and there are obvious elements of subjectivity in weighing multiple domains. Indeed, the inclusion of four Canadian and three Australian universities in the latest top 10 is striking *prima facie* evidence that this is more a virtue-signalling opportunity by universities in relatively egalitarian liberal democracies than a measure of real impact in the challenging contexts where lagging progress first galvanised the movement towards creation of SDGs. In contrast, **AKU could frame its quality indicators around the SDGs in a way that speaks more authentically to impact on its communities— those on campus, those adjacent, and those served by the healthcare facilities that it oversees.**

Along with measuring quality, there is also the matter of safeguarding it as the institution evolves. The current breadth, coherence, and quality of research and educational programmes at

AKU are impressive—and there is room for deliberate growth so long as care is taken to safeguard the quality of AKU’s existing offerings and services. Put simply, **expansion must not lead to diminution of excellence in areas of current strength for AKU; care must be taken to maintain the high quality of existing programmes even if that means slower and more deliberate growth than might be urged by the compelling needs of AKU’s varied and deserving constituencies.**

Relevance

Academic relevance is sometimes—and regrettably—defined narrowly by a university’s ‘production’ of graduates who will be part of highly trained and specialised workforces. To be sure, skills matter. However, the Commissioners observe that a broad education can help shape smart, nimble, and flexible graduates: future workers coveted for their adaptability and resourcefulness, and future leaders who will not only create the enterprises and institutions that afford employment for such graduates but will serve the public interest at home and abroad. At the same time, **AKU has both great opportunity and an obligation to move beyond timebound notions of education as the precursor to a profession or vocation and identify areas in which it can position itself to deliver life-long learning programmes, including re-skilling and upskilling, essential for those future workers and leaders.**

To ensure relevance, the Commissioners believe that **AKU’s current programming and its growth in the coming decades should be informed by the health and social needs of the University’s communities and constituents, and by careful consideration of how AKU’s capacities might sustainably be mobilised to help meet them.** Those capacities currently encompass foundational strengths such as health sciences, educational development, human development, Islamic civilisations, and latterly, arts and sciences—as well as the University’s AKDN connections, including entities such as the University of Central Asia and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

AKU has both an opportunity and responsibility to reflect its identity as a university underpinned by the values of the Muslim world. AKU’s Muslim identity is enhanced and enriched by its locations where Muslims are both majorities and minorities, where pluralism is both an historical legacy and a contested notion, and where the values and ethics that underpin its mission (and potentially contribute to its curricular richness) reflect the faith-affiliated roots of a non-sectarian institution. **Positioning AKU as a university that embraces the humanities, promotes pluralism, addresses the urgent challenges of climate change, and is committed to fostering sustainable development is a way of both honouring and extending its Muslim heritage and ethical commitments.**

In particular, AKU’s diverse contexts provide an unusual opportunity to reprise the Chancellor’s lifetime commitment to pluralism. **If pluralism were a key component of the curriculum across AKU’s faculties and a distinguishing attribute of its graduates, AKU would be uniquely positioned to play a leading role among institutions of higher education.** This shift would affirm that the ability to productively engage with diversity is a crucial life skill for the educated citizen in the twenty-first century. It would also affirm that in a world where strife and warfare are increasingly prevalent, education centred on pluralism is not simply an intellectual concern but, in many instances, an existential one.

Similarly, **the Commissioners believe the urgent challenge of climate change, particularly in the geographies AKU and the AKDN operates, necessitates the development of programs that address environmental issues across the University – touching education, research, and service in virtually all schools and programmes.** The new challenges that humanity will face due to climate change will require a new generation of leaders equipped to help develop and/or implement appropriate solutions.

Last, as a broad principle, the Commissioners are staunch proponents of independent research by university scholars and scientists, including upstream lines of inquiry and basic research in all disciplines that might at first seem wilfully irrelevant. They support the many warnings that have been issued against drawing sharp distinctions between basic and applied research, given the extent to which, over time, basic and applied research efforts feed off each other with major social and economic payoffs that are totally unpredictable. That said, **given its size and its operating contexts, AKU must be prudent in allocating its research-related resources and should unapologetically commit the lion's share of those resources to research that may have positive near-term impacts on the health and broader well-being of those living in the Global South.**

Access

The Commissioners see three fundamental ways in which issues of access might inform the Commission's vision of AKU's future. In the first instance, **the University should be deliberate in its development of strategies to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in all its operations, from student recruitment to research development and staff well-being.** In particular, the historical commitment to equitable inclusion of women, central to the Chancellor's vision in founding AKU, should be celebrated and sustained. More than ever, **a future AKU must focus on gender inequities, the status of women locally and globally, and provision of support and resources for women to achieve upward mobility and work to their full capacity.** We elaborate upon the planning implications of this DEI focus below.

Second, **access is also about ensuring that the University curricula and research programmes are delivered in formats that permit more flexibility to prospective students and partners.** Section 2 highlighted this shift as a global trend, with more growth in distance learning, asynchronous classes, micro-credentials, stacked course modules, or other devices. Distance learning has enormous potential, not least for a multi-country, multi-campus institution such as AKU. Moreover, as the strengths and weaknesses of Artificial Intelligence become clearer, universities world-wide will inevitably deploy digital strategies to deliver instruction in more flexible and accessible formats. Bringing learning into the home, rather than the student into the classroom, increases the reach of educational institutions exponentially, makes access more democratic and affordable, and allows teachers and students to tailor their hours according to other responsibilities. It also fosters the development of virtual learning communities across borders and continents and widens the scope of access to educational materials to almost limitless proportions.

That said, a *caveat* is essential. While pandemic exigencies illustrated the enormous power of long-distance interchanges via audio-visual connectivity, they have also highlighted some of the

limitations of remote learning. Younger learners in particular benefit from in-person socialisation and immersion in the group dynamics that occur in a seminar room or through informal interchanges and peer learning on a university or college campus. In short, the Commissioners encourage AKU to **develop a strong suite of digital learning options for learners at all stages, without weakening its commitment to a rich panoply of on-campus experiences and the development of a wide range of experiential learning opportunities.**

A third dimension of access, which intersects with the first two and has implications for the long-term sustainability of the institution, concerns the substantial financial and logistical barriers to higher education opportunities or healthcare services faced by most citizens in the Global South. AKU's commitment to needs-blind admissions and financial assistance has been critical in opening access to lower income and first-generation students—notably women and individuals from rural or marginalised communities—and especially vital in the fields of nursing and educational development. AKU and other AKDN institutions also have significant expertise, contextual knowledge, and community connections to assist displaced persons and improve their life prospects through education and employment. Such programming, moreover, might well be supported by large-scale grants from global philanthropic foundations or multilateral organisations. Still, the Commission understands that almost 50 per cent of the student body receives financial assistance, and overall cost recovery from tuition fees is only 12 per cent. The new undergraduate Arts and Sciences programme will have additional substantial costs, and its potential to be self-sustaining is negligible, especially if AKU maintains its current financial aid policies.

Indeed, maintaining AKU's financial aid policy will therefore become more difficult as enrolment grows and becomes more representative of the populations in locales where AKU operates. Similarly, on the healthcare side, AKU's Patient Welfare programme has been critical for broadening access to quality care and services. AKU's current financial model relies heavily on revenue from health care services, an approach that the Commissioners perceive as unlikely to sustainably meet the University's needs over the long term.

Access concerns extend to the digital divide prevalent in many parts of the Global South. If AKU moves in the direction of an increasingly virtual presence with related educational opportunities, digital access may still be constrained by income, gender, and geography. The University has the benefit of learning from its largely successful pivot to online learning during the pandemic and may be able to identify some immediate and longer-term solutions to technical barriers. Social barriers, some grounded in biases against higher education for women, may be harder to overcome.

It is plausible, however, that a future AKU may focus less on physical infrastructure and more on its info-structure. Fundraising previously focused on campus development could then pivot to growing the endowment in general and enlarging support for student grants and loans. In the interim, **AKU may need to adopt needs-sensitive admissions strategies with a view to optimising access broadly while continuing to help students with the most limited resources. The same logic may apply in sustaining access to AKU's healthcare services. Development and deployment of a range of novel financing mechanisms, including micro-insurance schemes, could equitably shift a meaningful fraction of uncompensated services to limited cost-sharing.**

Summary

AKU's mission and foundational values—Impact, Quality, Relevance and Access—have underpinned the institution's operations over four decades. The Commissioners strongly endorse the institution's mission and believe its four core values remain highly apposite. There are inevitably tensions among those values. That said, the Commissioners also see these values as strongly aligned in most respects. We recommend them as continuing touchstones in stock-taking and planning as AKU builds on its legacy of distinctive contributions to education, research, and service in the decades ahead.

Planning Principles and Processes

Drawing from its review of AKU's contexts and trends likely to affect them, as well as its assessment of the institution's mission, values, and ethos, the Commission turns now to guidance on planning principles before addressing more concrete suggestions and recommendations. Taken together, we hope these may serve as medium- and long-term navigational aids for future Trustees and Administrations. We are deliberate in the choice of the words “may serve”, and in eschewing any implication that our guidance should endure for 25 years until a next Chancellor's Commission is appointed. On the contrary, among our key recommendations is the need for very different navigational systems for the AKU given the unprecedented pace of change on so many fronts relevant to the future course of the institution.

Focused Agility informed by Continuous Evaluation

First, while AKU has been a remarkable success in many ways, it remains a small private institution with a modest endowment and other revenues constrained by its commendable ethos of access, operating on multiple sites and continents. **AKU must avoid the pitfall of attempting to be all things to all constituencies, lest there be erosion of the quality of its educational offerings and the health services it has provided to so many. Focused excellence is crucial to both the sustainability and impact of AKU.**

There are logical corollaries of that enjoinder against diffuseness. The Commissioners see the creation of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences [FAS] in Karachi as a major and indeed commendable milestone in AKU's evolution and growth. That said, FAS poses distinct challenges in student recruitment, student experience, pedagogic breadth, and faculty recruitment and development; even its curriculum could be a flashpoint for sectarian tensions. It is crucial to AKU's reputation that efforts be focused on the successful launch of this distinctive new Faculty. Accordingly, **the Commissioners recommend prudence and strategic selectivity in the launch of other educational and research programmes while FAS is being established.**

More generally, there have at times been references to AKU's future as a ‘comprehensive university’. The last Chancellor's Commission envisioned new schools and programmes, most drawing input from expert panels or ‘thinking groups’ with distinguished membership. **The Commissioners recommend that AKU's future models for growth be less top-down (‘thinking groups’ followed by recruitment of leaders to build according to the blueprint) and more incremental, building from and budding off existing capacities in response to clear community needs including**

student demand. Growth through de novo creation of fixed structures with new administrative overheads—departments, colleges, schools, faculties—should be avoided where possible.

As will be elaborated below, the Commissioners envisage the future AKU as a highly integrated organisation operating in partnership with and through numerous networks. Agility and adaptability will be crucial. In this spirit, **AKU should consider using ‘centres’ as what amount to experimental units.** Some might flourish and grow out into larger and more stable units. Others could thrive at smaller scale. Many would perforce be closed, merged, or reworked—a fate that should be understood not as failure but among the expected outcomes of a worthwhile experiment. In general, AKU should avoid overstretching its administrative and fiscal capacity in pursuit of ‘ideal types’ for universities that arose in very different times and places.

This suggests **strategic planning should continue to focus on diversification of personnel for the University’s governance and leadership, as well as institutional partners and networks, away from the past preponderance of the Global North and West. To elaborate: as with partnerships, the Commissioners recommend that AKU maintain a strategic balance—geopolitically, and between within-country and international candidates in recruitment of future trustees and senior leaders.** A blended leadership corps is also propitiously aligned with the concept that pluralism that should become a more active leitmotif for the future AKU.

Given the accelerating pace of change, **AKU needs to reconsider the nature and timing of its planning cycles.** Resilience and adaptability—in the institution, in the communities it serves, and in its graduates—will be particularly critical in the years ahead. The COVID-19 pandemic, the ensuing hectic inflation across the world, and upheavals in many of the countries in which AKU operates serve as stark reminders of how quickly the *status quo* can be upended. Clearly, a quarter-century between Chancellor’s Commissions or their equivalent no longer makes sense. Even routinised five-year reviews of key programmes or academic units, while obviously valuable, are more likely to harden the walls of existing silos than to galvanise imaginative reinvention or integration that unlocks momentum-building synergies.

What seems essential, instead, are mind-sets and mechanisms that work not in predetermined planning cycles but are constantly acquiring and integrating information bearing on the institution’s short- and longer-term operations. In effect, **AKU must develop new navigational systems, with continuous scanning of its contexts, forecasting and scenario planning, risk management with table-topping of responses to different crises, and integrated analyses of the comparative performance and relevant benchmarks for improvement of all the operations of the institution.** This functionality will better position both the academy and health services operations to be responsive and resilient in the face of a very uncertain future.

A review of the University’s performance during the past three years of pandemic disruption may be one way to launch this navigational function, not least because of the multiple shocks that AKU has withstood in this period: e.g. the COVID-19 health emergency, the pandemic’s financial consequences, the rise in energy prices brought about by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the accelerating changes in Afghanistan following the American withdrawal, and the catastrophic

floods that hit Pakistan in 2022. What aspects of the health care, education, and business models of AKU have proven to be “crisis-proof” and which ones showed elements of vulnerability that need to be addressed? That said, while looking back on past crises is very helpful, foresight—with careful scoping of alternative futures—is essential for long-term institutions such as universities and must be part of the mandate of any new ‘navigational’ unit.

An oft overlooked part of university planning processes is canvassing key stakeholders in the jurisdictions where the institution operates, as well as soliciting input from alumni, howsoever far-flung they may be. AKU’s disparate geographies and diverse leadership make these consultations all the more essential—and lead us to further considerations of the University’s planning processes in relation to growth.

Embedding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Pluralism Across the Institution

As a logical outgrowth of its commitment to access within a reconfirmed IQRA framework for institutional values, AKU should ask what more it could do to **ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, and pluralism are valued in its structures, processes, governance, and institutional culture.**

A commitment to enrol students from traditionally underrepresented social groups must be matched by efforts to ensure they have a strong sense of belonging at AKU. This is particularly relevant for first-generation university students, often from rural or remote areas or underrepresented groups. Along with the focus on academic excellence sought by the University, close attention must be paid to how well AKU does in terms of outreach, admission, retention, and support for the transition of all its graduates to the labour market.

While the future AKU should broaden its definition and approach to equity and inclusion, a continued focus on gender equity and women’s empowerment is essential. This is true across the institution, from health science to student wellness and career services. Just as a focus on supporting women to achieve upward mobility and work to their full potential was integral to the founding vision of AKU, so also must a future AKU sustain a focus on gender inequities and on the status of women locally and globally, with advocacy for women institutionalised throughout the University’s fabric.

A key step towards embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, and pluralism across AKU is to enhance transparency around structures, processes, and outcomes with gender- or other equity-based disaggregated data on students, graduates, staff, and faculty. Progress can be monitored and accelerated by an executive team member focused on DEI or by internal councils. That said, DEI initiatives often fall short when they are defined by headcounts. Inclusion is more important, defined holistically by the degree to which students, employees and leaders are embraced and enabled to make meaningful contributions to AKU. **Once AKU has strengthened transparency and set in place some supportive DEI resources, the University can go on to look to more transformative measures such as capacity building and role modelling.**

Strategic and Efficient Growth

First, small programmes in any new jurisdiction can lead to disproportionately large overheads (Charters, Governing Councils, local leadership, and travel costs). **The Commission advises against rapid expansion into additional countries at this time. Portugal is a different case, given the presence of the Imamat in Lisbon. However, even there, the Commission would suggest partnered programming on a trial basis with institutions of higher learning before substantial investments in freestanding institutional operations.** Expansion into other East African jurisdictions seems untenable for many years given that new programmes and facilities in Nairobi and Kampala require close attention, and renewed engagement with the giant Arusha campus in Tanzania is still unfolding.

Second, with the relatively new initiatives in undergraduate Medicine and Nursing in Nairobi, the East African and South/Central Asian hubs in Nairobi and Karachi are well balanced. There is, however, no compelling reason why these sites, or any others, should mirror one another in programming, particularly given the lack of clear economies of scale. AKU's presence in the UK is distinctively grounded in the humanities and Islamic studies. For other sites, there are residual uncertainties, e.g., when, and how to optimise the use of the vast tract of land in Arusha, the physical limits of the University's current or potential footprints in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, and how much can prudently be invested in building out the Kampala Nakawa campus. Each site may very reasonably follow a unique developmental trajectory.

The Commissioners are keenly aware that AKU is gestating exciting expansion opportunities. More will be said about the growth and development of the University in the next section, including focused expansion into interconnected fields of population and planetary health. However, as already argued, a new growth ethos is also needed. **In expanding its enrolments or its offerings, the University must try to avoid misguided mimicry of comprehensive universities in the Global North or geographic replication based on the misplaced assumption that it is more efficient and equitable for sites to largely mirror each other's academic activities.**

We have already signalled our concern about AKU's top-down mode of planning and implementing new programmes. That said, **it makes no sense to ignore the recommendations and proposals, often quite well developed, that AKU has commissioned over the past 15 years with the support of distinguished external thinking groups. Any new integrative planning mechanism should accordingly have a mandate to revisit and draw on these reports as appropriate.**

Through this latter mechanism the University has considered expanding its academic reach with graduate professional education in government and public policy; management and leadership; architecture and human settlement; and hospitality, leisure, and tourism. Law and economic growth and development were other possibilities. Due to shifting circumstances, the case for many of these initiatives has been modified substantially. However, pursuant to our endorsement of organic growth, experimentation, and evaluation, among the options to consider in future is whether 'incubation' of some of these initiatives in modified form is feasible as programmes in the Arts and Sciences, Population Health, or the Environment:

- AKU could create a business programme focused on social enterprise and development economics, drawing in part on insights from the Leadership and Management thinking group.
- It is unlikely that a new School of Hospitality, Leisure, and Tourism is in AKU's future. However, colleagues with expertise in environmental sciences and sustainable development might explore how tourism evolves in a world where climate change is affecting so many natural and human-made environments.
- Low-income populations often do not have access to official identity documents, which prevents them from accessing healthcare, education, legal employment, voting rights, inheritance, property acquisition, loans and mortgages, and the judicial system. A law programme focused in these areas would fit well in a university committed to addressing sustainable development.
- The Commission is not supportive of early implementation of a School of Government and Public Policy. However, the nidus for such a School might be developed in health and/or environmental policy as part of new initiatives endorsed by this report.

This is obviously a brief and incomplete list of options. The point here is simply that plans developed in a different time are unlikely to be adopted but it is always worth considering whether and in what forms they might be adapted to AKU's current priorities and the needs and circumstances of those living in the communities it serves.

Second, we noted earlier that the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, adopted unanimously in 2015, offer an important set of signposts that link AKU's longstanding commitment to improving conditions for those in the Global South to its future commitment to address urgent issues of climate change and environmental stewardship. The UN characterizes the SDG initiative as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries—developed and developing—in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.³⁷

Since its inception, AKU has had a focus on aspects of sustainable development and is now poised to greatly intensify that commitment. The appeal of the SDGs lies in their transparency and comprehensiveness—including their overlap with the health fields where AKU has already established itself as a regional leader and is contemplating further expansion. In this regard, with AKU already contemplating new post-pandemic programming in public health, **the SDG framework nudges the University towards a broader conception of population and planetary health that links the environment, population health determinants, and more traditional public health theory and praxis.**

The SDG framework might also help AKU define an agenda of applied research aimed at solving real-life problems and address the local and global challenges embodied in the SDGs.

37

United Nations, "The 17 Goals: History." Retrieved July 26, 2023 from: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals#history>.

As such, it may be a useful complement to the more rigorous planning and evaluation around AKU's research portfolio recommended at various points in this report.

For example, when a new field of research investment or educational programme is under discussion, AKU might do well not only to test the fit with its overall mission but also to ask: how the theme aligns with the SDGs and their performance indicators; whether AKU is best positioned to address this effort, and if so, how; whether the theme has SDG impacts as well as operational efficiencies arising from synergy with fields in which the University is already active; what other high-impact efforts must be delayed or foregone in prioritising the initiative under consideration; and, given the latter opportunity costs, whether the sequencing and trade-offs are appropriate.

In sum, **the Commissioners believe the SDG framework offers what might be described as an integrative geolocation system to help AKU as it navigates the decades ahead.** It bridges disciplines important to the University's future, and reflects the University's values of Impact, Relevance and Access even as its Key Performance Indicators provide metrics for measuring progress in several dimensions of Quality.

5. *Envisaging a Future AKU: Operational Planning and New Initiatives*

It will have been evident thus far that successive sections of the Commission's report have progressed towards increasingly specific guidance: from general context setting to an overview of trends in the global higher education sector; and from overall considerations of the applicability and implications of the University's mission and values, to delineation of strategic planning principles with many specific applications as examples. In this penultimate section, we continue this progression, delving first into operational principles and their applications to multiple elements of the current and future AKU, and then setting out further guidance on new priorities for the University.

Operational Principles and Applications

Interdisciplinarity and Knowledge Integration: The Arts and Sciences as a Case in Point

Questions to face future generations and the complex problems they will encounter cannot be resolved through any one discipline. It is imperative that we have a university with permeable boundaries that are easily crossed for students to combine majors and minors, with faculty who are comfortable as part of inter- and multi-disciplinary teams of teachers and researchers, and with courses that model integrated knowledge and its application in a range of settings. The Commissioners see this as an organising principle that must guide the future AKU. **Reflecting its commitment to confronting global challenges and fostering ethical citizenship, AKU should embrace interdisciplinarity and knowledge integration in its teaching and learning, its research and innovation, and its service to society.**

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences will be welcoming its first intake of faculty and students in the Fall of 2023 and should be an exemplar of the above-noted principle. Launched but still nascent, FAS represents an enormous opportunity for the University. After all, how can AKU graduates change the world if they don't understand it? And to understand the world, they should have some knowledge of the natural world (along with quantitative reasoning), of the societal imperatives and institutions that govern modern societies, and of the historical, economic, and geopolitical contexts in which those institutions exist. It is this knowledge that enables societies to imagine alternative futures. Indeed, the capacity for critical thinking and constructive engagement serves as the basics of people having respectful, courageous, and open-minded interactions—and therefore as the basis for peaceful dialogues and collaborative actions.

By way of example, the same historical event can be taught through the lens of politics, geography, science, art, literature, music, economics, ethics, religion, or in rare bland cases, simply as

an occurrence with little contextual connection. Scholars on the Commission emphasised that some of the most successful courses are those that blend multiple fields. FAS at AKU is well-positioned to take this multidisciplinary approach while advancing scholarship on issues that are germane to the contexts in which it operates.

These observations bring us back to the goal, articulated by the Chancellor and past Commissions, that a future AKU should evolve to include a liberal arts education among its programming. It is worth emphasising that the term ‘liberal arts’ is a misnomer if ‘liberal’ is taken to refer to a political or economic orientation, or ‘arts’ is taken as constraining the curriculum to the humanities. The term instead denotes a pedagogical orientation; hence it is sometimes replaced with the more anodyne but more descriptive ‘general education’. A liberal or general education does not preclude specialisation but requires meaningful exposure to a range of disciplines, with the goal of creating an independent-thinking, well-rounded, and socially engaged person. Our rapidly changing world instead demands not only skills but the creativity, adaptability, and intellectual flexibility that is fostered by a liberal arts orientation in undergraduate education.

A Robust Virtual Presence

Today and in the future, the physical campus may not be as important as it was forty years ago. The pivot to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated both the potential and the limitations of reliance on long-distance digital interchanges. This shift, however, has a rationale that goes well beyond pandemic exigencies. It reflects AKU’s integration within the AKDN, its multiple campuses on different continents, the diverse and distanced communities it serves, its global reach, its many partners, and the growing capacity of available technologies. Accordingly, **the Commissioners recommend that early consideration be given to the ways in which a future AKU may be more effectively structured and governed as a digitally networked organisation.**

Given the geographies in which AKU operates and the financial constraints faced by many students, the University should take seriously the imperative to blend the digital and ‘real life’ in its education, research, and service programmes. Universities today are often siloed organisations with their subject-specific courses, rigid schedules, cohort-based progression, and strictures of physical location. In contrast, one could envision a world where any student could select their fields of study based on interest and aptitude, rather than prescriptive educational and societal norms. Students would also progress at their own rate in fields of their choice and combine subjects in novel and interesting ways.

The Commissioners appreciate the importance of socialisation with peers as part of the learning process, especially for undergraduate arts and science education and in many professional programmes. However, strategic departures from classroom-based pedagogy have the advantage of allowing teachers and instructors to reimagine the content and delivery of their classes. Instead of teaching the same curriculum on the same schedule in the same way year on year, teachers should prioritise active over passive learning and experiment with novel pedagogies. Educational institutions like AKU should identify the most capable and engaging instructors and record best-practice lectures and classes for a wide audience, while encouraging active learning in synchronous in-person study sessions.

Of course, virtual learning is not applicable in contexts such as surgery and critical care, but much of the academic and foundational learning in healthcare and education could be undertaken through distance learning technologies. The endpoint would be a blended approach, maximising active learning, while moving most reading- and lecture-based components online. **The Commissioners recommend that AKU review its educational offerings to determine which segments of the curricula should take place in person, and which could be accessed through online synchronous and asynchronous teaching.** AKU's reach and impact would be greatly expanded by such an evolution. And while issues of access to connectivity will pose a problem in some of AKU's core communities, multi-purpose and connected learning spaces sponsored by the University could resolve much of this problem in a cost-efficient manner.

For AKU such an approach would break down the barriers between campuses and cohorts, mitigate geographic duplication, and provide access to the best faculty and classes, be they in Nairobi or Karachi or elsewhere. Furthermore, students with an interest in diverse topics could combine fields of study in new and innovative ways, leading to interdisciplinary collaborations across science, technology, and medicine—as well as with and between the humanities and social sciences.

To be clear, meaningful challenges remain with a blended in-person and virtual educational environment, such as ensuring the quality of educational outcomes, managing admissions, gaining accreditation for Degrees and Diplomas, and maintaining both academic standards and equitable access given differential uptake of digital technology. All these and other issues must be carefully considered before AKU adopts such blended-learning systems. However, in a context where the physical location/residence of faculty and students becomes less relevant, universities such as AKU could greatly improve their access to faculty members from around the world and educate a student population that spanned many countries and regions. Such reach would be hugely beneficial to the countries where AKU works, and to the people who live in them.

A large focus of the first Chancellor's Commission, and a preoccupation of the first 40 years of the University's development has been its physical presence and facilities, reflecting the Chancellor's deep understanding of how architecture contributes to quality of life and the educational experience. As noted earlier, over the next quarter-century the priority given to the physical campus is likely to change given the importance of remote learning and virtual instruction, and the potential for AKU to expand its digital educational offerings beyond full-time degree programmes. In that event, **AKU will need to consider how its physical spaces have developed, how they are being used today, and how they will need to evolve to reflect the needs of an increasingly important virtual university community. In particular the University will need to correct its systematic under-investment in the maintenance of its estate to ensure that the distinctive features of its campuses and its high-quality buildings are not degraded. Allocating more funds to maintenance will also constrain the funding available for new initiatives.**

A Networked, Learning Health System

Strategic partnering and network building, both longstanding strengths of AKU, can and should be enhanced by leveraging digital connectivity and by much closer integration with

the powerful network to which AKU already belongs: the worldwide Aga Khan Development Network. These operating principles are particularly relevant to the future of health services within AKU.

In particular, with the appointment of a senior executive from the Aga Khan Health Services as President of AKU, the stage is set for much closer ties between AKHS and the hospital and clinic operations that are governed and managed under the aegis of AKU. From the standpoint of health professional education, immersion in primary and secondary care settings more prevalent in AKHS has major pedagogical advantages over adherence to the traditional model of concentrating experiential learning in tertiary referral centres that are technology intensive and specialty dominated.

Expansion and improvement opportunities within AKU's existing operations are limited but could include offering a greater number and variety of laboratory services beyond AKU, continuing to expand outreach clinics, and—subject to licensing restrictions—enabling doctors to provide telemedicine services in radiology and pathology globally. While access to capital may be a challenge, building out smaller hospitals in smaller centres also merits consideration given the pedagogical advantages noted above. Closer integration with AKHS may also be a key to more sustainable and equitable operations in East Africa.

Drawing on examples from the Global North and South alike, **AKU and AKHS could consider developing a non-profit health insurance product/scheme for the East African communities it serves—potentially in collaboration with AKDN-affiliated insurance companies and micro-insurance banks.** Such arrangements could reduce financial barriers to access while generating additional revenues for AKU.

Additional advantages of a more integrated system include enhanced access to services, both in person and virtually, along the continuum of care and across life stages for enrollees; promotion of team-based care with health professionals using their full range of skills; empowering individuals through improved health literacy; earlier identification of risk factors to prevent disease; supporting community health interventions that address social determinants of health; and developing capacity for climate resilience in both the system's own services and in the communities it serves.

Looking downstream, the Commission repeats its earlier observation that demographic shifts are afoot even in the comparatively young populations of the settings where AKU currently operates. Thus, policies and strategies to care for ageing populations will become a priority, given further urgency by the vulnerability of the aged to the exigencies of global warming. Informed by insights from new schools of population health, **AKU-trained scholars, scientists, and health professionals should lead the development of new models, systems, and policies for the Global South that will be culturally appropriate, context sensitive, and congruent with healthy aging as well as provision of excellent health and social care to older individuals.**

Substantial developmental work would be needed to design and launch this type of networked enterprise. However, across the world, the most successful healthcare systems are those that integrate and manage operations with a view to providing continuous, high-quality, cost-effective, and accessible care for the chronic conditions that are becoming ever more common as populations

everywhere proceed through the demographic and epidemiologic transition already underway in most nations in the Global North.

By integrating its network's offerings and strengthening digital record-keeping, AKU Health Services will be better situated to conduct innovative original research as well as translate research findings from abroad into optimal care for the local communities that AKU and AKHS aim to serve. And by shifting its translational research activities towards such local applications, AKU will also meet institutional objectives of equity and inclusion as outlined above, even as it qualifies for research grants and contracts from institutions and enterprises eager to understand the effectiveness of specific healthcare interventions across the diverse populations served by an integrated system.

A Networked Institution for Lifelong Learning

Almost thirty years ago, the first Chancellor's Commission urged AKU to exercise caution in the realm of diploma programmes and related re-skilling/upskilling initiatives. It described these offerings as "at the lower end of the range of post-secondary professional" for a university that aspires to international significance. However, the Commission also acknowledged the need for flexibility to respond to exigencies of its operating context, citing the major contributions that the School of Nursing had already been able to make through its diploma programmes.³⁸

Today, in recognition of the fact that the world of work is changing rapidly and that all professionals need to update their knowledge, competencies, and skills on a regular basis, **it is very clear that AKU should expand provision of professional development and continuing education for retraining and re-skilling.**

The Commissioners emphasise that this initiative has wider implications than ensuring distanced access to its extant degree programmes. **An active institutional response to the lifelong learning imperative demands new programmes, new diplomas, and degrees (including more nimble credit generation modalities identified earlier, as well as recognition of competencies acquired online or through past work experience), and new pathways combining periods of study at the university and periods of study in a work setting.** In the latter regard, AKU has access to an extraordinary resource for experiential learning and professional development given the myriad activities in diverse locations undertaken by the AKDN.

There is evidence of increasing interest from political bodies and professional bodies globally for these smaller but accessible forms of study, including from other AKDN institutions and agencies. **The nature of the study journey should be expanded by providing continuous study for adult learners and continuing professional development [CPD] via micro-credentials. The latter element is particularly relevant from the standpoint of equity and diversity.** In both Central Asia and Pakistan, a new generation of women that left the workforce to raise families is now interested in returning to work, but they lack access to skills training and credentials to facilitate that step.

This broader digital initiative also has positive implications for strengthening the fabric of AKU as a high performing, networked, and integrated institution. **Greater opportunities for professional**

38 The Future of the Aga Khan University: Evolution of a Vision. Report of the Chancellor's Commission, 1994, 53.

learning and exchange across campuses would strengthen AKU's own human capital by further developing the intellectual community of students, staff, and faculty alike. This may contribute to staunching the flow of academics and health professionals who leave the emerging countries where they trained for reasons of professional development, including opportunities to upskill and expand their intellectual horizons. An increased emphasis on providing such opportunities in their home countries could help in preventing this damaging loss of highly skilled personnel.

We also see significant opportunities to link lifelong learning to first-degree education, especially in its medical and nursing programmes, where AKU could set clear expectations that a student's first professional training is part of continuum that would extend beyond graduation and into their professional life. This could also, in part, mitigate the concern noted earlier that programme growth in these fields has not kept pace with population growth in AKU's operating environments, thereby diminishing the University's ability to impact and influence quality of life.

While financial considerations should be secondary here, lifelong learning delivered online to individuals employed in diverse sectors has potential to generate fee revenue for AKU. Above all, investment in *quality* lifelong learning aligns squarely with the mission and values of the University.

Knowledge Integration through Research, Experiential Learning, and Innovation

Around the world, the importance of experience-based learning is increasingly recognised well beyond the clinical contexts in which it has long been practiced. **AKU has ample opportunity to extend its curricular offerings and ensure that all students get 'hands-on' experience in their field of study.** Its geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts are diverse, and, as noted already, the AKDN in itself offers a range of experiential learning opportunities that could be developed to mutual advantage with AKU.

Building capacity in the sciences, and educating leaders in these fields, would make a significant contribution to the countries and regions where AKU is present. Teaching sciences in a framework which is grounded in and directly relevant to South and Central Asia and East Africa would allow the stakeholders most directly concerned not only to lead research and develop strategies in these fields, but also to test and disseminate their findings in applied, real-time conditions. At the minimum, AKU can begin training on the principles of measuring and reducing carbon emissions, estimating sustainable solutions for resource use as well as means to protect the environment as relevant to each sector.

That said, it will be difficult to build science capacity or generate expert syntheses of science-based information for wide use without some spires of research excellence at AKU. At present, the health sciences are by far the most active disciplines generating research findings under the AKU banner, with the University widely recognised as a leading research institute for maternal, newborn and child health [MNCH] and nutrition globally. Currently, the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Division of Women and Child Health, and the Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health together attract approximately US\$20 million dollars of extra-mural grant money annually, which

represents 70-80 per cent of all research funding at AKU. Annual total research output in international journals with an impact factor is 800-900 publications, the vast majority from the Medical College, Pakistan, with MNCH-related publications accounting for the most impact. Much of this MNCH work has directly resulted in policy wins and implementation—exactly as might be hoped given the values of AKU and the integrative ethos endorsed above.

While there are other noteworthy strengths in health sciences research at the Medical College in Karachi, and encouraging evidence that faculty at the School of Medicine in Nairobi are now mobilising more research funding, the Commission is sobered by the constrained funding available for research in South Asia and East Africa as summarised earlier. Other challenges to high quality health research at AKU include limited core or intra-mural funds for research projects, a very small graduate student body, lack of postgraduate doctoral programmes, difficulty in recruiting and retaining research faculty and technical staff, modest administrative research capacity, import policies which impede undertaking clinical trials, and difficulty in obtaining reagents, supplies and equipment. For clinical faculty, the ability to earn much higher revenues from clinical work compared to risky research careers also creates significant disincentives.

Some of these latter barriers may be less relevant to research in other disciplines, such as those represented in ISMC. However, it is clear to the Commissioners that **strategic selectivity about research priorities is essential with, as already emphasised, a clear focus on applied research grounded in challenges facing the communities that AKU services, and advance consideration of the available partners and funders.** Simply put, with new initiatives looming in Arts and Sciences, and the Commission's proposed new directions in Climate Change/Sustainable Development, and Population and Environmental Health, AKU cannot afford to recruit faculty who arrive with unsupportable expectations of research support or whose lines of inquiry are incompatible with the relevance and impact values of the institution. The Commission was struck by the fact that AKU remains unclear about the extent to which faculty are expected to do research to advance in the ranks, how applied research bordering on knowledge translation and creative professional activity might be fairly evaluated, whether and how it will derive research priorities from assessment of the needs of partners and adjacent communities, and how it will define unique foci of comparative advantage and strength for enhanced recruitment and investment. All these matters seem to require early and ongoing attention. For the longer-term, the Commission recommends that such assessments be systematised: **AKU should develop and regularly update a strategic roadmap for research activity on its campuses and in its healthcare facilities, paying particular attention to partnering and funding opportunities as well as community needs assessments, and regularly seeking expert advice and reviews to guide its research efforts and investments.**

The creative abilities of the next generation of students and faculty—and perhaps even small-scale entrepreneurs among alumni or community members—could also be nurtured and harnessed if the University were to develop a convergence-oriented innovation centre. This centre by design would be wider angle than traditional university incubators focused on start-ups targeting various marketplaces. It would also nurture social innovations and enterprises and be as interested in ideas and services for civil society as in filing patents with a view to monetising a

discovery by AKU scientists. In this respect, the Commission observes that many universities have created incubator facilities with a view to rapid revenue generation. These aspirations are unrealistic unless there is a surrounding ecosystem with serial entrepreneurs and abundant risk capital. The centre we envisage may, however, foster the emergence of such an ecosystem, and can have a meaningful impact in many dimensions beyond licensing revenue or lucrative equity holdings in successful start-ups.

Returning to earlier themes of interdisciplinarity and knowledge integration, a convergence-oriented centre can provide opportunities for students and faculty from different disciplines to work together. Among other advantages, such a centre can be a magnet for collaborative work with both social purpose and more traditional market-facing enterprises. These partnerships will create a flywheel effect along with giving students opportunities for experiential learning. The Centre may also be useful as a testbed for important policies related to intellectual property, commercialisation, and protection of academic freedom in collaboration with industrial partners.

As always, universities by their nature are most effective when focused on people, not patents, and on talent, not technology. One of the key roles of AKU and similar institutions in the Global South will be to educate leaders who understand the available technologies and can innovatively adapt them to local contexts and resources. Social entrepreneurship and social purpose enterprises are often relevant avenues for such deployment; the Aga Khan family of institutions itself is a shining example in that regard. One AKDN initiative with high potential for further AKU collaboration and a resource for its students and graduates is Accelerate Prosperity.³⁹

In sum, appropriately planned and resourced, an innovation centre could catalyse cross-disciplinary creativity and entrepreneurship in the AKU community through seminars, workshops, and incubation pods. It could also provide valuable support to innovators as they seek uptake of their ideas, services, and products by a variety of sectors.

New Priorities: Healthier Populations on a Healthier Planet

Before turning to new priorities, the Commissioners out of an abundance of caution will repeat: AKU's reputation has been built based on excellence in health professional education (nurses and physicians, including postgraduate specialisations for both professions), health care services, some spires of excellence in health care research, and highly effective programmes for teacher training and development of educational leaders for primary and secondary schools. These programmes all have great relevance and strong impacts. Protecting their quality must be a priority. More generally, university research and teaching should be firmly grounded in demonstrable demand, realistic capacity assessments, and as always, commitment to AKU's mission and values.

In the same spirit, new launches already in train must be carefully and selectively nurtured. The very new undergraduate medical education (MBChB) and undergraduate nursing education

³⁹ A joint initiative of the Aga Khan Foundation and the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development's Industrial Promotion Services, Accelerate Prosperity promotes entrepreneurship, supports the creation of innovative business models, coaches promising young entrepreneurs, offers networking and mentorship opportunities, and accelerates business growth in Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. See <https://accelerateprosperity.org/>.

(direct-entry BScN) programmes in Kenya have the major advantage of emerging alongside a well-established postgraduate medical programme and a rigorous nursing programme that has granted practice-qualifying diplomas for 20 years and latterly offered specialty diplomas in key fields. However, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in Pakistan in many ways is *sui generis*, and its success is crucial to the reputation of AKU. Only after that programme has had several years of operations would it make sense to contemplate a similar operation in East Africa.

There are, however, two new fields for expansion that the Commissioners strongly endorse—climate change and sustainable development, and population and public health.

These two fields are massively relevant to the Global South and strong candidates for support by multilateral agencies as they take root. They have the additional advantage of areas of synergistic intersection with each other and with multiple other disciplines already represented at AKU, consistent with our guidance about growth by cross fertilisation and ‘budding’, even as they have ample room for distinct elaboration and growth over time.

Our earlier review of the global context underscored the threat posed by climate change and the salience of work in this field to the mission of AKU. This is a cross-cutting imperative that bears on all academic programmes including research, is already driving the reconsideration of the environmental footprint of AKU's varied operations, and, in its powerful intersection with population health and healthcare, exemplifies the ideal of integration of streams of knowledge as an organising principle for the future AKU.

The Commissioners do not recommend that a Faculty of Environmental Science suddenly be stood up at AKU, for several reasons. First, from a scholarly standpoint, the University in many ways is just starting out on this front. It is true that advances in science, technology, communications, and data science are clarifying both the magnitude of the threat and the broad pathways to mitigation of some of the most serious effects of climate change in the decades to come. **While AKU cannot and should not seek to become an institution with a major upstream focus on advancing earth science analytics and related technology, it can and should build on existing strengths. A focus on climate resilience and local mitigation would foster closer integration with the new Faculty of Arts and Sciences in Pakistan and the extant Faculties of Health Sciences in Pakistan and East Africa.** Programming in sustainable development could also be facilitated by collaboration with AKDN and a variety of local agencies. Thus, with apologies for the double entendre, organic growth strikes us as the sustainable way forward, with multiple exciting initiatives set in motion, perhaps organised in time-bound research centres and curricular initiatives, cross-fertilising over time, and ultimately coalescing under the umbrella of a multi-sited school or faculty.

We turn now to brief consideration of educational and research capacity in the broad realms of population and public health. The relevance of these fields has obviously been underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast to a strategic initiative in climate change and sustainability, there is already a substantial supportive matrix of faculty with relevant expertise in two Faculties of Health Sciences, and potential for rapid enlistment of professional master's students with strong employment prospects. That matrix, intriguingly, could extend to helping establish AKU's climate change initiatives

if a public health school were to be launched with a wide-angle vision of the confluence of planetary and population health.

Global warming, unpredictable weather patterns, droughts, floods, and fires are already having profound effects on the health of many communities. Moreover, the emergence of new pathogens with pandemic potential such as SARS-CoV-2 is being accelerated by human encroachment on and disruption of natural environments. **AKU is well positioned to lead the Global South in developing the science to anticipate, prevent, and mitigate the consequences of climate change for the health of populations interlinked with attention to the broad social determinants of health and illness. We accordingly propose that new initiatives in this field be entitled Population and Environmental Health, or as an alternative, be subsumed under the broad rubric of Planetary Health.**

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences should be expected to—and indeed staffed with an eye to—contributing to these initiatives as they all develop together. Local climate adaptation and resilience, as noted above, can also be facilitated by insights into the social, economic, and political forces on which FAS will be developing expertise. Over time, the statistician in Population Health may teach a course in FAS, and also consult on study design to an East African team seeking to compare the yield and soil effects of different modes of regenerative agriculture. The philosopher in FAS may teach the ethics of development in a centre focused on responsible environmental stewardship, or work with colleagues in the Faculty of Population and Environmental Health on the epistemology of misinformation during the next pandemic. A development economist working in a sustainable agriculture unit situated in Arusha may teach virtually in FAS in Karachi and collaborate with a population health node in Nairobi or Kampala to delineate the cost-effectiveness of an urban health outreach programme.

The broad competencies of a liberal arts education will thus be highly relevant to galvanising changes at all levels required to slow the pace of global warming or at least mitigate its local impacts. One might imagine a future AKU as the go-to institute for the training of educators and scholars who embody the knowledge and the innovative strategies to mitigate the environmental crises that the Global South is facing. Likewise, AKU/AKDN healthcare systems in East Africa and South/Central Asia could become living laboratories for innovations in health service delivery and health professional education focused on meeting community needs. AKU's outstanding record of scholarship through outreach work in maternal and infant health is a strong case in point.

The siting, structures, and trajectories of these new initiatives bear brief consideration here, with the caveat that siting was not considered in detail by the Commission as a whole. Schools of public health in many countries follow widely accepted accreditation standards, tied to the granting of professional Masters' degrees for public health practice. While AKU may initially choose to eschew this formalism, it may be prudent to fall in line at some future date. This points toward earlier establishment of a new School of Population and Environmental Health inside one of the extant Faculties of Health Sciences.

Fortunately, such schools are usually home to a wide variety of other disciplines that bear on the health sphere and health equity, such as medical sociology and the study of broader social

determinants of health, health economics, and healthy public policy. This disciplinary breadth points toward the first instance of population and environmental health being situated in Karachi for maximum synergy with the new FAS there. A further advantage is the pre-existence of a Department of Community Health Sciences, which could be brought into the new School along with its environmental health programme. This siting leaves more breathing room for the Faculty of Health Sciences in Nairobi to get its new MBChB and BScN programmes successfully launched—not a small task for the next six years.

On the topic of bandwidth, however, it should be noted that AKU in Pakistan will have its own challenges concurrently securing the standing and sustainability of the new FAS and launching a new School of Population and Public Health. East Africa accordingly seems more propitious as the initial siting for several centres addressing diverse aspects of climate change in relation to sustainable development. The scales arguably are also tipped in that direction insofar as the geography of AKU's nodes in the region lend themselves to wide-ranging field work. Another major asset in East Africa is the Arusha campus, which has enormous potential as a field station and site for experimentation with regenerative agriculture and related sustainable practices. Furthermore, over 50 per cent of the African continent's population depends on agriculture for a livelihood—a massive vulnerability as climate change progresses.

In the decades ahead, AKU should aim to be home to major initiatives in population/public health and climate change/sustainable development in both South/Central Asia and East Africa. For now, however, AKU has an extraordinary opportunity to prioritise new and synergistic fields of study that will be critical for the health and well-being of the communities it serves, and to provide its students in different faculties and schools with access to an impact-focused education unlike any other current offerings by other institutions in its operating contexts.

New Priorities: Pluralism Internalised

Many of the world's greatest global universities were strongly rooted in faith traditions, and AKU should be no less confident in its foundational identity as a “university of and for the Muslim World”. The University has always been open to all who are qualified to learn and teach within it, and its Founder has been an inspiring champion of pluralism throughout his many decades as leader of the Ismaili faith and community.

Indeed, this history, together with its position in the Global South, gives AKU an important opportunity to refine its identity by incorporating the array of differences in its operational contexts; perceptions of affinity and difference within the Muslim world; the inclusion of countries with growing Muslim minority populations, including jurisdictions in Europe and North America; and AKU's position within the wider Aga Khan Development Network. An important component of the connection between AKU's identity as a university for the Muslim world and its future direction is the scope, role, and mandate of the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations [ISMC]. In establishing that Institute, the Chancellor foresaw the complexity of these issues in today's world.

In this spirit, an innovative and effective way of clarifying AKU's identity might be the introduction of a common university-wide pluralism curriculum. Among global institutions of

higher education, AKU is uniquely positioned to serve as a model for a curriculum affirming that the ability to productively engage with diversity is a crucial life skill for the educated citizen in the twenty-first century.

AKU can be justly proud of the diversity of its faculty, staff, and students. However, diversity alone does not constitute pluralism; pluralism is an ethic of active engagement with diversity,⁴⁰ in effect bridging diversity and inclusion. A pluralism curriculum would permit students from diverse backgrounds across the university's multiple campuses to learn with, and from, each other, while enabling faculty from different disciplines to collaborate beyond their subject specialisations and engage with students and faculty from other disciplines, connecting their work to the language and history of decolonisation, approaching the subject not solely as a moral imperative or museum project, but one that continues to be animated by ongoing debates and contestation. Such an initiative can help ensure that even students who are receiving highly specialised education remain 'empathetically open' to others and equip and empower them as global citizens and citizen leaders to become agents of moral and ethical change in civil society.

The pluralism curriculum could be linked to related initiatives within and beyond AKU, such as the global structure of the AKU Network of Quality, Teaching and Learning; the Outcome Based Education (OBE) Approach being promoted across AKU; and various initiatives on community-based and socially engaged learning. In addition, the AKDN, including the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the University of Central Asia—as well as the Global Centre for Pluralism—could be a significant collaborators or partners in this initiative.

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D. Eck, "Pluralism Project celebrates silver anniversary," *Harvard University Gazette*, 19 September 2016.

6. Conclusion: *AKU Onwards*

Overview

Obstacles to AKU's ambitions will not cease to arise in the years ahead. Change in our various contexts will be ongoing – if anything, it looks likely to accelerate. The University must keep one eye fixed on the horizon, evolving and adapting to new circumstances. At the same time, it must keep its founding vision firmly before it. A great university is not built in a few decades, or even in a lifetime.

AKU's purpose must remain lucid and constant, transcending the generations even as it is reborn in each new generation's passion and commitment.⁴¹

Over the past two years, the Chancellor's Commission has observed AKU navigate exceedingly turbulent waters—a global pandemic, economic and political turmoil, and devastating crises caused by a changing climate—with extraordinary deftness. We have also reflected on the tremendous progress and impact the University has made in a comparatively short a time. Its achievements are a testament to the foresight of His Highness the Aga Khan's vision for the institution, the enduring relevance of its founding mission and values, and AKU's inspired leadership, dedicated supporters and partners, and remarkable faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

That record of progress has inspired confidence in the Commissioners that bold ambitions are not only possible but essential to meet the needs and opportunities of new generations. That said, we are clear-eyed about the significant constraints and uncertainties that lie ahead, and the difficulties these pose in setting even short-term plans for the institution, let alone a course for the next quarter century. Throughout our deliberations, we identified a number of significant 'paradoxes', or tensions and trade-offs, that AKU's leaders will have to address in the decades ahead, particularly in balancing its core IQRA values and its developmental mission in the Global South with the institution's financial health and long-term sustainability. We have situated our recommendations on issues of finance and other resource requirements, including those most essential resources—the time and energy of those who work at and with AKU—in an academic and strategic context.

Accordingly, this second Chancellor's Commission has largely framed its guidance around strategic planning and operating principles for the University, rather than specific proposals for new components of the future AKU. This approach builds on our assessment of the trends and issues affecting AKU's operating environments, and the understanding that future Trustees and Administrations may need to shift course rapidly to respond to unforeseen developments or emerging opportunities. We have also deliberately sought to present guidance that would contribute to AKU's current development of its five-year strategic work plan, *AKU Onwards*, without infringing on governance, administrative, academic, or operational concerns.

41 Message from His Highness the Aga Khan, Chancellor of the Aga Khan University, on the inaugural Founder's Day, the 40th anniversary, and the convocation of the Class of 2022. Delivered in Karachi, Pakistan, March 18, 2023. Retrieved August 4, 2023 from: <https://the.akdn/en/resources-media/resources/speeches/a-message-from-his-highness-the-aga-khan-chancellor-of-the-aga-khan-university-on-the-inaugural-founders-day-the-40th-anniversary-and-the-convocation-of-the-class-of-2022>.

AKU in Unusually Uncertain Times

The Commission's observations on global geopolitical, economic, and social conditions reveal a far more complex and volatile operating environment for AKU than when the last commission reported in 1994. Moreover, AKU itself has changed dramatically in that time. No longer a small institution focused on the health sciences in Pakistan, both the present and the future AKU must be carefully attuned to the local and regional impacts of global forces, whether they be climate change, geopolitical and demographic shifts, artificial intelligence, economic crises, inequality, or resurgent nationalism.

Similarly, our scan of the global higher education landscape in which AKU operates finds a dramatically changed and unsettled sector, particularly in the Global South. From the proliferation of private universities to fundamental shifts in the design and delivery of academic programmes—accelerated by the global COVID-19 pandemic as well as advances in information technology and AI—AKU will need to reassess how it benchmarks and evaluates its programmes; where it finds its peers, partners, and networks; and how it continues to deliver quality education, research, and healthcare that is impactful, relevant, and accessible to the increasingly diverse constituencies it serves.

Our analysis of the changes in the world and in the state of higher education globally offer a framework more relevant for near-term decisions that the University must make than a confident forecast of what circumstances the future AKU will encounter. With a renewed commitment to its mission and values, a set of proposed 'navigational' principles, and growth focused in areas of greatest opportunity and need, we are confident that the future AKU will be the 'great university' envisioned by its Founder.

A Renewed Commitment to AKU's Mission and Values

The Commissioners strongly endorse the institution's mission and believe its four core values—Impact, Quality, Relevance, and Access [IQRA]—remain distinctive and highly relevant to AKU's global and local operating contexts. We recommend them as continuing touchstones in reflection, planning, and evaluation in the decades ahead. The Commissioners base the following recommendations on a renewed commitment to IQRA.

Impact

Recommendation 1: Identify the attributes and core competencies AKU seeks to develop in all its graduates, in light of the impact they could have as leaders, change agents, citizens of the world, or citizens of their disciplines. One attribute the Commission proposes: AKU's graduates should be imbued with a spirit of pluralism. Track progress in implementation of pedagogical, extra-curricular, and experiential learning opportunities that might reinforce those competencies.

Recommendation 2: Consider partnerships—broadly defined to include other universities, governments, the corporate sector, professional associations, civil society, and other AKDN entities—as essential in developing a strategic roadmap for AKU. In particular, deepen, strengthen, and diversify AKU's connections to other AKDN agencies and institutions to enhance its impact on quality of life in the Global South. And as South-South collaborations will take on even greater

importance for AKU in the years ahead, avoid overreliance on institutions in North America, the UK, and Europe, striking a geopolitical balance (Global South and North, East, and West; in-country and international) in the partnerships AKU pursues.

Quality

Recommendation 3: Define and develop AKU's own parameters of quality, viewing global rankings with interest but remaining wary of measures that do not also reflect its own values of impact, relevance, and access. AKU could frame its quality indicators around the Sustainable Development Goals in a way that speaks authentically to impact on quality of life, especially in the Global South.

Recommendation 4: Ensure AKU can maintain the high quality of existing programmes before expanding into new fields and offerings, even if that means slower and more deliberate growth than might be urged by the needs or wishes of AKU's constituencies.

Relevance

Recommendation 5: Identify areas in which AKU can position itself to deliver lifelong learning programmes, including re-skilling and upskilling, that are essential for future workers and leaders.

Recommendation 6: Align AKU's current and planned programmes with the health and social needs of communities in the Global South, with priority placed on addressing the urgent challenge of climate change in AKU and AKDN geographies. This includes allocating the majority of research-related resources to projects that can have positive, near-term impacts on the health and broader well-being of those living in the Global South.

Recommendation 7: Reaffirm AKU's faith-inspired values and identity as a university of and for the Muslim world, and of and for the Global South, through programmes that embrace the humanities, promote pluralism, foster sustainable development, and address the urgent challenges of climate change.

Access

Recommendation 8: Develop deliberate strategies to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion are valued and promoted in all AKU's operations, structures, processes, governance, and institutional culture, in particular maintaining its historical commitments to gender equity, the empowerment of women and girls, and the provision of opportunities for women to achieve upward mobility and work to their full capacity.

Recommendation 9: Develop a strong suite of digital/virtual learning options for students at all stages to expand access to higher education and lifelong learning, without weakening support for a rich panoply of on-campus experiences and experiential learning opportunities.

Recommendation 10: Consider the adoption of needs-sensitive admissions strategies with a view to optimising access broadly while continuing to help students with the most limited resources. Similarly, explore novel financing mechanisms to sustain access to AKU's healthcare services.

Strategic Planning Principles and Processes

In this time of accelerating change, sustainability remains a core concern, and the greatest strategic issue, and tension, will be how to balance a continued focus on excellence in areas where AKU already has considerable strength with further expansion. While AKU is a markedly different institution than it was 40 years ago, the advice of the Harvard Committee—reiterated by the first Chancellor’s Commission—remains apt:

As a small institution it has to be, as our predecessors said, ‘distinctive in substance or quality or both’ if it is to be important in the [Global South and the Muslim world]; and this has meant that in the midst of the present abundance of higher education it ought not try to be a “big conventional university” with the familiar array of schools and faculties.⁴²

This Commission builds on that guidance to inform a proposed set of strategic planning principles and processes centred on ‘focused agility’, ‘continuous evaluation’, and ‘strategic and efficient growth’, relevant to both near- and longer-term decisions AKU must make. As well, we recommend principles and processes to embed diversity, equity, inclusion, and pluralism across the institution.

AKU’s future models for growth—a new growth ethos—should be less top-down and more incremental, building from and budding off existing capacities in response to clear needs, and prioritising the successful establishment of major new, resource-intensive initiatives already underway at the writing of this report. In general, the University should not overstretch its administrative and fiscal capacity in pursuit of ‘ideal types’ for universities seen elsewhere. But it should diversify governance and leadership personnel as well as partners and networks; reconsider the nature and timing of its planning cycles; and align its planning and benchmarking more closely to the UN Sustainable Development Goals [SDG] framework.

Focused Agility informed by Continuous Evaluation

Recommendation 11: Be prudent and discerning in the launch of other education and research programmes while the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is being established. Other new launches already in train—including the undergraduate medical and nursing education programmes in Kenya—should also be carefully and selectively nurtured.

Recommendation 12: Avoid the creation of completely new fixed structures with new administrative overheads, such as departments, colleges, schools, faculties. Instead, consider using ‘centres’ as experimental units, building from and budding off of existing capacities and areas of proven strength.

Recommendation 13: Continue to diversify personnel for the University’s governance and leadership, away from the past preponderance of the Global North and West. Maintain a strategic balance—geopolitically, and between within-country and international candidates—in both recruitment of future trustees and senior leaders and in the selection of partnerships and networks.

Recommendation 14: Reconsider the nature and timing of set planning cycles, favouring mechanisms that are constantly acquiring and integrating information. Develop new navigational systems, with

42 The Future of the Aga Khan University: Evolution of a Vision. Report of the Chancellor’s Commission, 1994, 112.

continuous scanning of its contexts, forecasting and scenario planning, risk management with table-topping of responses to different crises, and integrated analyses of the comparative performance and relevant benchmarks for improvement of all the operations of the institution. A review of the University's performance during the past three years of pandemic disruption may be one way to launch this process.

Embedding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Pluralism Across AKU

Recommendation 15: Ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, and pluralism are valued in its structures, processes, governance, and institutional culture.

Recommendation 16: Match a commitment to enrol students from traditionally underrepresented social groups with efforts to ensure they have a strong sense of belonging at AKU. This is particularly relevant for first-generation university students, often from rural or remote areas. Along with the focus on academic excellence sought by the University, close attention must be paid to how well AKU does in terms of outreach, admission, retention, and support for the transition of all its graduates to the labour market.

Recommendation 17: While broadening its definition and approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion, continue to focus on gender equity and women's empowerment across the institution, from health science to student wellness and career services, with advocacy for women institutionalised throughout the University's fabric.

Recommendation 18: Enhance transparency and monitor progress around structures, processes, and outcomes with gender- or other equity-based disaggregated data on students, graduates, staff, and faculty. Once AKU has strengthened transparency and set in place some supportive DEI resources, consider more transformative measures such as capacity building and role modelling.

Strategic and Efficient Growth

Recommendation 19: Eschew rapid expansion into additional countries at this time. Even where plans have advanced (e.g., Portugal), consider partnered programming on a trial basis with institutions of higher learning before substantial investments in freestanding institutional operations.

Recommendation 20: In expanding enrolments or offerings, avoid mimicry of comprehensive universities in the Global North or geographic replication based on the assumption that it is more efficient and equitable for sites to mirror each other's academic activities.

Recommendation 21: While moving away from top-down planning and development practices, incorporate a mandate to revisit and, where relevant, integrate the lessons and proposals of past thinking groups and external expertise into new programme design.

Recommendation 22: Consider a more comprehensive, deliberate adoption of the SDG framework as a type of "integrative geolocation system" to plan and evaluate the impact of AKU's education, research, and health care services across its operating contexts. Draw on that framework to develop a broader conception of population and planetary health that links the environment, population health determinants, and more traditional public health theory and praxis.

Operational Principles and Applications

With insights from our assessments of AKU's operating contexts and global higher education trends, and within the framework of the strategic planning principles proposed earlier, we offer a series of recommendations organised around five operational principles and their applications to elements of the current and future AKU. All five principles focus on integration, cooperation, and connectivity across the University and with the wider AKDN as a means of expanding AKU's reach and strengthening its influence and impact in its varied operating environments.

Interdisciplinarity and knowledge integration

Recommendation 23: Promote interdisciplinarity and knowledge integration in teaching and learning, research and innovation, and service to address global challenges and foster ethical and pluralistic citizenship more effectively. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences should be well-positioned to lead in this area.

A Robust Virtual Presence

Recommendation 24: Identify ways in which a future AKU may be more effectively structured and governed as a digitally networked organisation, with consideration given to AKU's integration within the AKDN, its multiple campuses on different continents, the diverse and distanced communities it serves, its global reach, its many partners, and the growing capacity of available technologies.

Recommendation 25: Review all current and planned educational offerings to determine which segments of the curricula should take place in person, and which could be accessed through online synchronous and asynchronous teaching.

Recommendation 26: Evaluate how AKU's physical spaces have developed, how they are being used today, and how they will need to evolve to reflect the needs of an increasingly important virtual university community. In particular, redress the systematic under-investment in the maintenance of AKU's estate to ensure that the distinctive features of its campuses and its high-quality buildings are not degraded.

A Networked, Learning Health System

Recommendation 27: Leverage digital connectivity to support strategic partnerships and network building for AKU Health Services, especially within the AKDN.

Recommendation 28: Pursue closer integration with Aga Khan Health Services [AKHS] to strengthen education, research, and health services—and support more sustainable, equitable operations.

Recommendation 29: Consider the following expansion and improvement opportunities within AKU's existing healthcare operations: increase the number and variety of laboratory services; continue to expand outreach clinics; and, subject to licensing restrictions, enable doctors to provide telemedicine services in radiology and pathology globally.

Recommendation 30: Reflecting earlier observations of demographic shifts that will make care for aging populations a priority, position and support AKU-trained scholars, scientists, and health professionals to lead the development of new models, systems, and policies for the Global South that

will be culturally appropriate, context sensitive, and congruent with healthy aging as well as provision of excellent health and social care to older individuals.

A Networked Institution for Lifelong Learning

Recommendation 31: Develop a robust institutional response to the pressing need for continuing professional development/lifelong learning, to include new programmes, new diplomas, and degrees; and new pathways combining periods of study at the university and periods of study in a work setting.

Recommendation 32: Expand the nature and scope of the study journey by providing continuous study for adult learners and continuing professional development [CPD] via micro-credentials. The latter element has particular relevance from the standpoint of equity and diversity.

Recommendation 33: Strengthen AKU's own human capital through professional learning and exchange opportunities across campuses. This will not only further develop the intellectual community of students, staff, and faculty alike but may contribute to staunching the flow of academics and health professionals.

Knowledge Integration Through Research, Experiential Learning, and Innovation

Recommendation 34: Seize opportunities to extend AKU's curricular offerings to ensure that all students get 'hands-on' experience in their field of study, leveraging both its diverse geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts and the mutually beneficial possibilities that the AKDN offers for experiential learning.

Recommendation 35: Build capacity and educate leaders in the sciences, in a framework which is grounded in and directly relevant to South and Central Asia and East Africa, to enable them not only to lead research and develop strategies in these fields, but also to test and disseminate their findings in applied, real-time conditions. At the minimum, begin training on the principles of measuring and reducing carbon emissions, estimating sustainable solutions for resource use as well as means to protect the environment as relevant to each sector.

Recommendation 36: Employ strategic selectivity around research priorities with a clear focus on applied research grounded in challenges facing the communities that AKU serves, and advance consideration of the available partners and funders.

Recommendation 37: Over the longer term, develop and regularly update a strategic roadmap for research activity on AKU campuses and in its healthcare facilities, paying particular attention to partnering and funding opportunities as well as community needs assessments, and regularly seek expert advice and reviews to guide research efforts and investments.

Recommendation 38: Explore the establishment, again over the longer term, of a convergence-oriented innovation centre to nurture and harness the creative abilities of the next generation of students and faculty—and perhaps even small-scale entrepreneurs among alumni or community members.

New Priorities: Healthier Populations on a Healthier Planet

The Commission reiterates its concern that, in the immediate to medium term, AKU could risk compromising its reputation and the quality of its existing programmes and services (and its ability to successfully establish those faculties, programmes, and facilities currently underway) if it pursues a course of rapid expansion, either geographically or in a quest to be academically comprehensive. The Commissioners do, however, strongly endorse two new, interrelated fields for expansion—climate change and sustainable development, and population and public health—along with the robust development of pluralism as university-wide initiative, with some specific thoughts on how AKU might prepare a solid foundation for their success.

Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Recommendation 39: Focus on developing AKU expertise and capacities in climate change and sustainable development organically, rather than through the immediate establishment of a Faculty of Environmental Sciences, through efforts that build on existing strengths, perhaps organized in time-bound research centres and curricular initiatives that would cross-fertilise over time.

Recommendation 40: Employ the new Faculty of Arts and Sciences in Pakistan and the extant Faculties of Health Sciences in Pakistan and East Africa to help build an integrated focus on climate resilience and local mitigation, as well as work with AKDN partners to access expertise and design programming in sustainable development. Staff FAS with an eye to contributing the broad competencies of a liberal arts education to galvanising changes at all levels required to slow the pace of global warming or at least mitigate its local impacts.

Recommendation 41: Leverage a prioritised AKU public health school within an extant Faculty of Health Sciences, to establish teaching and research capacities in climate change necessary for a future Faculty of Environmental Sciences (see recommendations 34,38).

Recommendation 42: Consider East Africa as the initial siting for several centres addressing diverse aspects of climate change in relation to sustainable development as the geography of AKU's nodes in the region lend themselves to wide-ranging field work, and the Arusha campus has enormous potential as a field station and site for experimentation with regenerative agriculture and related sustainable practices.

Population and Public Health

Recommendation 43: Prioritise the development of a public health school that develops the science to anticipate, prevent, and mitigate the consequences of climate change for the health of populations interlinked with attention to the broad social determinants of health and illness—under the title of Population and Environmental Health.

Recommendation 44: Draw on the substantial supportive matrix of faculty with relevant expertise in AKU's two Faculties of Health Sciences, and potential for rapid enlistment of professional master's students with strong employment prospects.

Recommendation 45: Consider establishment of a new School of Population and Environmental

Health inside the Faculty of Health Sciences in Pakistan, both for maximum synergy with the new FAS and the extant Department of Community Health Sciences, which could be brought into the new School along with its environmental health programme.

New Priorities: Pluralism Internalised

Recommendation 46: Introduce a common, university-wide Pluralism Curriculum, engaging students from all faculties and programmes, and across all geographies. Link that curriculum to related initiatives within and beyond AKU, including the AKU Network of Quality, Teaching, and Learning; the Outcome Based Education framework; and other AKDN agencies and institutions (to partner or collaborate on the design and delivery of the curriculum).

Our Vision of the Future AKU

The Commissioners have seen universities lose their way when they allow external actors—even well-intentioned donors and partners—to derail their academic priorities or undermine their institutional values. And we have seen universities overspend on capital and underspend on maintenance. Above all, we have all seen universities that planned badly or evaluated their programmes and strategic positioning only intermittently, with resultant failure to align academic priorities, community needs, and financial capacity. Accordingly, we have highlighted core values, planning principles, operating precepts, and major academic priorities, as well as emphasising the need for a clear focus on AKU's navigational capacity itself. Given clarity of mission, strong values, long-term guidance as to priorities, and constant access to integrated and accurate information, we believe the University community will find the resources—human, financial, institutional—to make the best of any circumstance. This report reflects our great confidence and optimistic outlook.

We cannot foretell with any certainty what specific challenges AKU will face 25 years from now, though current conditions suggest that the future could be even more volatile, complex, and unsettled than what it has encountered in the previous quarter century. The University will need to be more agile, aware of both opportunities and threats in its local and global spheres, selective and strategic in its operations, and open to innovation, experimentation, and change. Our guidance has sought to identify how AKU might leverage its existing assets and strengths to navigate its way forward. The Chancellor's Commission is convinced, however, that this remarkable, resilient institution will continue to thrive and contribute to a more peaceful, prosperous, and pluralist world in the decades ahead.

Appendix A: Members of the Chancellor's Commission

Dr Lisa Anderson (Commission Co-chair)

**Special Lecturer and Dean Emerita, School of International and Public Affairs,
Columbia University**

Trustee of the Aga Khan University

Lisa Anderson most recently served as President of the American University in Cairo for five years. Prior to her appointment as President, she was the University's Provost. Dr Anderson is Dean Emerita of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, where she led from 1997-2007. She held the James T. Shotwell Chair in International Relations in the Political Science Department. Before Columbia, she taught at Harvard University in the Government and Social Studies departments.

A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and Columbia University, where she earned her PhD in Political Science, Dr Anderson received honorary doctorates from Monmouth University in 2002 and the American University of Paris in 2015. Dr Anderson was appointed to the AKU Board in 2016.

Dr David Naylor (Commission Co-chair)

Professor of Medicine and President Emeritus, University of Toronto

David Naylor is a Canadian physician, medical researcher, academic leader, and former AKU Trustee. He joined the Department of Medicine at the University of Toronto in 1988, after completing his MD (Toronto), DPhil (Oxford), and specialty training in internal medicine (Western). Dr Naylor was the founder and first CEO (1992-98) of the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences. He was appointed Dean of Medicine of the University of Toronto in 1999, and in 2003 chaired the National Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health following the outbreak of SARS-CoV-1 in Canada. He served as President, University of Toronto from 2005-2013.

He chaired the Government of Canada's Advisory Panel on Healthcare Innovation (2014-15), and its Expert Panel to Review Federal Support of Fundamental Science (2016-17). Most recently, he co-chaired Canada's COVID-19 Immunity Task Force and served on multiple federal panels advising on Canada's response to COVID-19.

Dr Naylor was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2006 and inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame in 2016. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and an international member of the US National Academy of Medicine.

Princess Zahra Aga Khan

Member, Board of Directors, Aga Khan Development Network

Trustee of the Aga Khan University

Princess Zahra Aga Khan was educated at Le Rosey School in Switzerland and at Harvard University, where she received her undergraduate degree in Development Studies. She also completed an internship at Massachusetts General Hospital and a course in finance and management at the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) in Lausanne.

Princess Zahra has been actively involved in the governance of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) for over two decades, with close oversight of the Network's health and education portfolios. She serves as a Trustee of the Aga Khan University and the University of Central Asia, and sits on the boards of many AKDN agencies, including the Aga Khan Foundation, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, and the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat. She is also a Member of the Board of the Global Centre for Pluralism which was set up in a partnership between His Highness the Aga Khan and the Government of Canada.

Dr Ali S. Asani

Murray A. Albertson Professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures, Harvard University

Ali Asani is the Murray A. Albertson Professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures at Harvard University. Dr Asani has served as the Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and Director of the Prince Alwaleed Islamic Studies Program.

A specialist on Ismaili and Sufi traditions in South Asia, he teaches a variety of courses on Islam; has written numerous articles and several books; and has been engaged in promoting literacy about Islam and Muslim cultures in various forums. Dr Asani serves on the advisory board of Harvard's Religious Literacy and Pluralism Projects. He was a member of the Harvard Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging and chaired the Harvard College working group on Symbols and Spaces of Engagement. Appointed to the Board of Governors of the Institute for Ismaili Studies (IIS) in 2020, Dr Asani has taught for many years on various IIS programmes including the Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities and has served on its Academic Steering Committee. He received his undergraduate and doctoral education at Harvard University.

Dr Phillip L. Clay

Former Chancellor and Professor Emeritus, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Trustee of the Aga Khan University

A faculty member in Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology since 1975, Phillip L. Clay has held academic leadership positions for nearly two decades, including assistant director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies of MIT and Harvard University (1980-1984), and Chancellor (2001-2011). As Chancellor, he had oversight responsibility for undergraduate and graduate education, student life and services, research policy, strategic planning, campus development, international initiatives, and the management of MIT's large-scale institutional partnerships.

Dr Clay is an authority on urban housing policy and community-based organizational development in the United States, and his research has contributed to a range of public and private initiatives influencing US housing and urban policy. He is a founding member of the National Housing Trust, focused on housing preservation in urban areas, and has served as the Founding Director and Vice Chair of the MasterCard Foundation Board, vice-president of the Board of The Community Builders, and Trustee of his alma mater, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr Clay was appointed to the AKU Board in 2012.

Mr Naguib Kheraj

Chairman, Rothesay Limited | Chairman, Petershill Partners Plc

Trustee of the Aga Khan University

Naguib Kheraj is a banker by background. He began his career at Salomon Brothers in 1986 and went on to hold a number of senior positions at leading international financial institutions. Over the course of 12 years at Barclays, Mr Kheraj served as Group Finance Director and Vice-Chairman and in various business leadership positions. He was Chief Executive Officer of JP Morgan Cazenove, a London-based investment banking business and also served as Deputy Chairman of Standard Chartered. Mr Kheraj is currently the Chairman of Rothesay Limited, a specialist pensions insurer and Chairman of Petershill Partners Plc, an asset management company. He is also a member of the Finance Committee of the University of Cambridge and an independent board member of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Mr Kheraj spends a substantial proportion of his time as a Senior Advisor to the Aga Khan Development Network and serves on the Boards of various entities within the AKDN including Chairing its Endowment Committee. Mr Kheraj is a former Non-Executive Director of National Health Service England and has served as a Senior Advisor to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs Service and to the Financial Services Authority in the UK. He has also served as a member of the Board of the UK-US Fulbright Commission, the Princes Trust Development Board, the Investment Committee of the Wellcome Trust, and the Finance Committee of Oxford University Press.

Mr Kheraj was educated at Dulwich College, London, and Cambridge University where he graduated with a degree in Economics. Mr Kheraj was appointed to the AKU Board in 2008.

Professor Mahmood Mamdani

Herbert Lehman Professor of Government, Anthropology / MESAAS, Columbia University

Mahmood Mamdani is the Herbert Lehman Professor of Government and Professor of Anthropology, Political Science and of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) at Columbia University. He received his PhD from Harvard University in 1974 and specializes in the study of colonial and post-colonial violence, and the politics of knowledge production. His works explore the intersection between politics and culture, a comparative study of colonialism since 1452, the history of civil war and genocide in Africa, the Cold War and the War on Terror, the history and theory of human rights, and the politics of knowledge production. Professor Mamdani was the Director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research in Kampala (2010-2022) where he inaugurated a multi-disciplinary doctorate in Social Studies. Prior to joining the Columbia faculty, Prof. Mamdani was a professor at the University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania (1973–1979), Makerere University in Uganda (1980–1993), and the University of Cape Town (1996–1999) and Chancellor of Kampala International University (2018-2023).

Some of Prof. Mamdani's books include his most recent *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities* (2020), which was among the four finalists for the British Academy award which "recognises work that searches for truth and reason in difficult places and shines a light on connections and divisions that shape cultural identity worldwide." He has received numerous awards and recognitions, most recent of which being listed in 2021 by *Prospect Magazine* (UK) as 4th among "top 50 thinkers globally".

Dr Nergis Mavalvala

Curtis and Kathleen Marble Professor of Astrophysics and Dean, School of Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Pakistani-American astrophysicist Nergis Mavalvala is a longtime member of the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) scientific team whose leaders received the 2017 Nobel Prize in Physics. To continually improve the sensitivity in the LIGO detectors, Dr Mavalvala conducts pioneering experiments on generation and application of squeezed states of light, and on laser cooling and trapping of macroscopic objects to enable observation of quantum phenomena in human-scale systems. Dr Mavalvala has received numerous awards, including a Sloan Foundation Fellowship, a MacArthur Fellowship "genius" grant, the Gruber Prize in Cosmology, and the Carnegie Corporation's Great Immigrant Award. Mavalvala is an outspoken voice for equality and women's access to education. In 2014, she was honored as the LGBTQ Scientist of the Year by the National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals.

Dr Mavalvala earned her bachelor's degrees in physics and astronomy from Wellesley College and her doctorate in physics from MIT. She is a fellow of the American Physical Society and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. Prior to joining the physics faculty at MIT in 2002, Dr Mavalvala was a postdoctoral scholar and research scientist at the California Institute of Technology. In 2020, Dr Mavalvala was named the Dean of the MIT School of Science.

Dr Afaf Meleis

**Dean Emerita, the School of Nursing and Professor of Nursing and Sociology,
University of Pennsylvania | Professor Emerita, University of California, San Francisco**

Trustee of the Aga Khan University

For more than five decades, Afaf Meleis, PhD, DrPS (hon), FAAN, has demonstrated a passion for pushing the boundaries of nursing science, cultivating diverse healthcare leaders, and improving women's health. As Dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, she fostered a community dedicated to making an impact on global healthcare; launched multidisciplinary and global partnerships to advance nursing science, education, and practice; promoted research and innovation to address emerging healthcare challenges; As an elected member of National Academics (NAM and AAN) she co-authored policy reports to advance interprofessional education, equity, diversity, inclusivity, and global health. Previously, she was a professor at the University of California Los Angeles and the University of California San Francisco. Her scholarship has focused on global health, women's health, and on the theoretical development of the nursing discipline through more than 175 articles; seven books; and numerous monographs and proceedings.

Dr Meleis' honors and awards include honorary doctorates and professorships around the world. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Alexandria, earned an MS in nursing, an MA in sociology and a PhD in medical and social psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles. Dr Meleis was appointed to the AKU Board in 2015.

Mr Carlos Moedas

Presidente da Câmara Municipal, Lisboa, Portugal

Carlos Moedas is currently the Mayor of Lisbon, Portugal (elected 2021). He is a member of the Advisory Board of the UNESCO Futures of Education Initiative; a Board Member of the Jacques Delors Institute; and a Trustee of the Friends of Europe. His career spans the private, public, and civil society sectors, including the establishment of his own management investment company in 2008; election to the Portuguese Parliament, 2011; appointment to Cabinet as Under-secretary of State; and service as European Commissioner for Research, Science, and Innovation (2014-2019).

He has co-authored a series of publications in the field of science and innovation. Mayor Moedas is the youngest member elected to the Portuguese Academy of Engineering and was named an honorary fellow of the African Academy of Sciences. His awards include an Honorary Doctorate in Laws by the University of Cork; an Honorary Doctorate in Management from École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris; and the Gold Medal of the Portuguese Order of Engineering.

Mayor Moedas completed his undergraduate studies in engineering at the Instituto Superior Técnico (Lisbon); and attained an MBA from the Harvard Business School.

Dr Jamil Salmi

Global Tertiary Education Advisor | Research Fellow, Center for Higher Education, Boston College | Emeritus Professor of Higher Education Policy, Diego Portales University (Chile)

Jamil Salmi provides policy advice and consulting services on tertiary education development and transformation to governments, universities, professional associations, multilateral development banks and bilateral cooperation agencies. Until 2012, Dr Salmi was the World Bank's tertiary education coordinator, leading that institution's research and strategy in that field. He wrote the first World Bank policy paper on higher education reform in 1994 and was principal author of the Bank's 2002 Tertiary Education Strategy. Recent published works include: *The Challenge of Establishing World-Class Universities* (2009); *The Road to Academic Excellence: The Making of World-Class Research Universities* (2011 with P. Altbach); and *Tertiary Education and the Sustainable Development Goals* (2017).

Dr Salmi is a member of the International Quality Assurance Advisory Group, Emeritus Advisor on the President's Council at Olin College of Engineering, and chair of the Board of the Chilean EdTech start-up u-planner. He served on the Steering Committee for the landmark study on AKU's economic impact in Pakistan (2018). Prior to joining the World Bank in 1986, Dr Salmi was a professor of education economics at the National Institute of Education Planning in Rabat, Morocco. Dr Salmi is a graduate of the French Grande École ESSEC. He holds a master's degree in public and international affairs from the University of Pittsburgh and a PhD in Development Studies from the University of Sussex; and completed an Executive Development program at Harvard Business School.

Dr Julia Sperling-Magro

Medical Doctor, Neuroscientist, and Partner, McKinsey & Co. (Germany)

Dr Sperling-Magro holds a Doctorate in Cognitive Neuroscience from the Max-Planck-Institute for Brain Research, and an MD from Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University in Frankfurt. She has completed research fellowships and electives at Harvard Medical School, Queen Square (London), and the World Health Organization. For her studies and research, she was awarded by the German Merit Foundation.

Appointed to the AKU Commission in her private capacity, Julia Sperling-Magro is a tenured partner at McKinsey & Company serving as a global expert in McKinsey's Organization and Healthcare Practice. Previously, she was a founding member and led McKinsey's Healthcare Systems & Services Practice in the Middle East and oversaw its work on women in leadership in Saudi Arabia for over a decade, for which she received a Saudi Aramco Partnership Award. In 2017, Dr Sperling-Magro took over the Chefsache initiative, which aims to help women reach and thrive in leadership positions in Germany. She has also been the global partner lead for McKinsey's global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts, the global knowledge leader on McKinsey's The Science of Change work, and as the Global People Leader for McKinsey's organisational practice, set up the first global Partner University for McKinsey.

Professor Mary Stiasny, OBE

Pro Vice Chancellor (International, Teaching and Learning) and Chief Executive, University of London Worldwide, University of London

Mary Stiasny provides strategic direction and leadership for the delivery of the University of London's 100+ online, blended, and flexible programmes globally, as well the development of new programmes. Professor Stiasny has responsibility for over 50,000 students studying in 190 countries worldwide, as well as the 1.4 million learners enrolled on the University of London's Massive Open Online Courses. From her early teaching career in London, Professor Stiasny went on to become a teacher trainer, firstly at Goldsmiths College where she became Deputy Head of the Department of Education Studies, and then at Oxford Brookes as Deputy Head of the School of Education, and later Head of the School of Education and Training at the University of Greenwich. In 2003 she joined the British Council as Director of Education, Science and Society, where she led teams working on the Internationalisation of education and the Prime Minister's Initiative, and with schools, FE Colleges, and HEIs globally.

Professor Stiasny joined the UCL Institute of Education in 2007 as Pro- Director with responsibility for Learning and Teaching and International and then moved to the University of London in 2013. Professor Stiasny has been involved in the Going Global Conference, including as co-editor, with Dr Tim Gore, of the annual Going Global book series (2012-2017). Formerly a Trustee of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, Professor Stiasny served as a Commonwealth Scholarships Commissioner for six years. In 2018, she was appointed a Visiting Fellow of Goldsmiths, University of London. She is also a Fellow of the College of Teachers. In 2013, she was awarded an OBE for her services to higher education.

Dr Anita Zaidi

President, Gender Equality, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation | Adjunct Professor, Aga Khan University | AKU alumna (MBBS 1988)

As president of the Gender Equality division, Anita Zaidi oversees the Gates Foundation's efforts to achieve gender equality by integrating gender across the foundation's global work. Anita joined the foundation in 2014 as director of the foundation's Enteric and Diarrheal Diseases team and Vaccine Development and Surveillance team until November 2022. In those roles, Anita championed innovative work on behalf of low-income women and children and worked closely with the foundation's Maternal, Newborn & Child Health Discovery & Tools team.

Previously, Dr Zaidi served as the chair of the Department of Pediatrics and Child Health at AKU in Karachi, Pakistan, where she maintains a professional affiliation. Dr Zaidi earned a medical degree, specializing in pediatric infectious diseases, at AKU and completed further training at Duke University, Boston Children's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, and the Harvard School of Public Health. She has published more than 200 research papers on vaccine-preventable diseases and newborn infections in resource-limited settings.

In 2013, she became the first recipient of the Caplow Children's Prize for her pioneering work in bringing health services and care to mothers and children in poverty-stricken communities in Karachi. In 2021,

she was elected to the U.S. National Academy of Medicine for global leadership in pediatric infectious disease research and capacity development for improving newborn and child survival in LMICs.

Dr Carrie LaPorte (Commission Secretary)

Secretary to the Chancellor's Commission, Aga Khan University | Advisor, Aga Khan Foundation Canada

For over two decades, Carrie LaPorte has served the Aga Khan Development Network in diverse professional capacities, across research, program management, institutional development, and communications functions. This includes as Editor-in-Chief, Aga Khan Foundation Canada; a senior program manager on consultations and planning for the Global Centre for Pluralism, the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat in Ottawa, Canada, and AKU graduate professional schools in East Africa; and as manager of Canadian project funding for the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme in Pakistan. Immediately prior to her appointment as AKU Commission Secretary, she was the Senior Advisor for Policy and Strategic Communications with the World University Service of Canada (2019-2020).

Born and educated in the United States, Dr LaPorte holds a Ph.D. in the History of Art from the University of Pennsylvania, where her research focused on architecture, historic preservation, and museology in nineteenth-century South Asia.

Appendix B: Resources Used or Consulted by the Commission

Publications, presentations, interviews, and other resources the Commission has used or consulted are listed here. Materials prepared especially for the Commission are indicated by an asterisk. Unpublished materials—including written submissions prepared by several commissioners—will be, with the authors' consent, deposited in the University archives for consultation by the administration.

Introductory and Background Materials

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- *AKU Chancellor's Commission Second Meeting Summary (October 8, 2021), October 2021.
- *AKU Chancellor's Commission Summary of Working Group Discussions, December 7, 2021.
- *AKU Chancellor's Commission Third Meeting Summary (May 30-31, 2023), June 2023.
- *Overview: The Aga Khan Development Network, presentation by President Firoz Rasul, July 2021.
- *AKU Financial Overview, presentation by Mr Al-Karim Haji, Vice President, Finance and Chief Financial Officer, July 2021.
- *AKU Health Services Overview, presentation by Dr Shawn Bolouki, Vice President, Health Services, July 2021.
- *AKU Report on the Academy, presentation by Dr Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice President, Academic, July 2021.
- *AKU Human Resources Overview, presentation by Ms Wasan Miglioranza, Vice President, Human Resources, July 2021.
- *Perspective on Research at the Institute for Human Development, presentation by Professor Amina Abubakar, Director, Institute for Human Development, July 2021.
- *Perspective on Research at the Medical College (Pakistan), presentation by Dr Asad Ali, Associate Dean Research AKU Medical College (Pakistan), July 2021.
- *The First Chancellor's Commission 1994 Report and its Recommendations, presentation by President Firoz Rasul, July 2021.
- *Office of the Provost, Report on the Academy for the Chancellor's Commission, July 2021.
- Faculty of Arts and Sciences Programme Overview, 2021.
- *Chancellor's Commission Briefing Note: Changes in the World and in Higher Education Since 1994, and Their Implications for the Future AKU, Draft for Consultation, May 2023.
- *Chancellor's Commission Briefing Note: Envisaging a Future Aga Khan University, Draft for Consultation, May 2023.

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- *A Comprehensive University: Overview and Map (Working Group 2), presentation, November 3, 2021.
- *Finance, Resources, Governance: Overview and Map (Working Group 3), presentation, November 4, 2021.

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Speech at the ceremony to inaugurate the restored Humayun's Tomb Gardens, New Delhi, India, April 15, 2003.

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Interviews and Consultations

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