

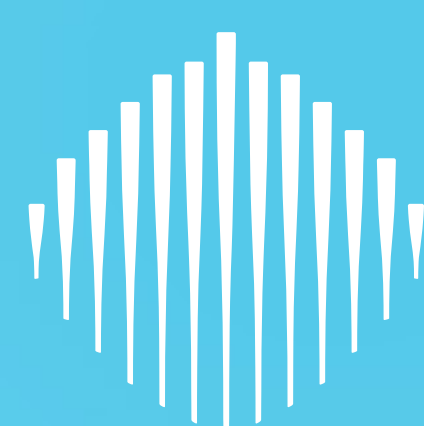
**WORLD  
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**OP-ED**

# **Boldly Redesigning Higher Education Today Will Make a Stronger Tomorrow**

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# The global events of the last two years demonstrated in vivid and startling detail the rapid rate of change and need for new knowledge facing the modern world.

The frontiers of modern health, education, business, government and the environment are evolving at unprecedented rates and with exponential complexity, yet no sector or person was impervious to disruption, and the urgent need to adapt and prepare for future challenges snapped into clear focus. Higher education has a critical and exciting role to play in understanding these lessons and synthesizing creative and effective solutions, if it is willing to reinvent itself to concentrate its energy on vast global needs.





Historically, higher education has not been known for embracing change or quickly pivoting in response to new circumstances. The majority of higher education models have diverged only modestly from traditional templates, and efforts to design and advance new prototypes that ignore the false dichotomy of quality versus quantity are often met with skepticism. Yet, estimates that the

Number of college graduates worldwide will double to

**300 million**  
**by 2030**

cannot believe that this completion rate will be insufficient to meet the considerable economic and social needs of the future.



Among the thirty-seven Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries surveyed in 2019,

the median percentage of 25- to 64-year-old adults who possess a postsecondary degree is

**38%**

Looking to the future, the same survey predicts ongoing disparities in college participation and degree completion, especially among undergraduates, and diminished employment security for graduate students.



Institutional selectivity, cost, limited access, political and socioeconomic conditions, and a lack of educational investment, among other factors, have contributed to current, worldwide insufficiencies in the number of degree holders, and these constraints will continue to jeopardize our ability to move toward our highest intellectual, economic and cultural potential if we fail to innovate.

The time has come for a fundamental shift in how we support social progress, including how we design organizations to be more accessible, flexible, resilient and accountable to the communities they serve.

As the world continues moving toward a new economy anchored largely by science, technology, engineering and mathematics-driven industries, the need for skilled and adaptable lifelong learners is increasing as well. We must dispel the false belief that broad access and comprehensive excellence are mutually exclusive, and work instead to provide new, rigorous and technologically-enabled pathways to learners at a socially meaningful scale regardless of their age, socioeconomic status or geographic location.





At Arizona State University, **our model** – one in an emerging new wave of higher education institutions – is dedicated to **accelerating meaningful social outcomes** through expansive access, perpetual innovation, service, leading edge technology, and unfettered collaboration with fellow institutions and public/private partners.

With this mindset, ASU is producing four times the number of graduates, performing five times the amount of research and serving twenty-five times the number of learners seeking to enhance their knowledge. We are empowered to educate more high-quality engineers, teachers, health professionals and business executives than ever before; establish educational and research alliances with global powerhouses like Starbucks, Uber and ADIDAS; and spearhead groundbreaking VR technology like **Dreamscape Learn**, a game-changing educational offering with the potential to engage students in unparalleled, off-world learning experiences.





To be of service transnationally, ASU has partnered with **Cintana** a public benefit corporation working with universities in Latin America, the Middle East, Europe and Asia to enhance their quality and scale, to share our knowledge and proprietary tools in support of student success around the globe. Through our collaboration, we are assembling the **Cintana Alliance**, an international network of visionary member institutions – including universities in Costa Rica, Mexico, Egypt, Istanbul, India and beyond – that are working together to improve college attainment and completion.

The challenges confronting society are numerous, intricate and multiplying in ways that cannot be solved by a single government or organization, or with a single blueprint, no matter how visionary. However, with a willingness to shed outdated models, foster and exchange new ideas, imagine and test new tools, and build cooperative partnerships, we can support the success of the individual and our communities at large.



**ASU is excited by the prospect of transforming higher education and passionate about being a resource and partner for exploring new models. To that end, our University Design Institute is a resource that exists to help institutions examine their trajectories, develop solutions and guide implementation.**

The world will not slow down or retreat to allow us to catch up or revert to old ways of thinking and doing. We must recalibrate our approaches and our clock speed to fit the tasks at hand and ahead. Only by reevaluating, redesigning and repositioning our organizations to achieve our aspirational priorities can we produce the meaningful and positive outcomes we need and a better quality of life for all.



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