

U21  
**Impact  
Report**  
2021

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# Our Partner Universities

## Australia:

The University of Melbourne  
UNSW Sydney  
The University of Queensland, Australia

## Belgium:

KU Leuven

## Canada:

McMaster University

## Chile:

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

## China with Hong Kong (SAR):

Shanghai Jiao Tong University  
Fudan University  
The University of Hong Kong

## India:

University of Delhi

## Ireland:

University College Dublin

## Japan:

Waseda University

## Mexico:

Tecnológico de Monterrey

## New Zealand:

The University of Auckland

## Singapore:

National University of Singapore

## South Africa:

University of Johannesburg

## South Korea:

Korea University

## Sweden:

Lund University

## Switzerland:

University of Zurich

## Netherlands:

University of Amsterdam

## United Kingdom:

University of Birmingham  
The University of Edinburgh  
University of Glasgow  
University of Nottingham

## United States of America:

University of Connecticut  
University of Maryland  
UC Davis

# 27

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Different Countries

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Years of Experience

# Provost's Introduction



**U21 is committed to sustaining global connections as a crucial part of the network's mission. The past year has been one of significant transition for the network as we considered how best to serve our members in these uncertain times. We determined that we would continue operating virtually for the 2021 year.**

As we now settle into a new world, we are re-evaluating our long-held procedures and practices. It is a very exciting time for the network, as despite all odds the pandemic has brought new opportunities. We are now considering how we will build on internationalisation, collaboration, and engagement into the future with new forms of delivery. Yet we understand the value of meeting in-person and how this can strengthen our long-established connections and relationships.

#### The year

Our distinctive portfolio, comprising student experience, researcher engagement and educational innovation, ensures staff and students in our member universities remain at the forefront of the latest international developments within higher education. The focus on these clusters is the core of the network's activities.

Operating virtually, we became much more accessible for students and staff. We enabled more equitable access to global exchanges by students than could be achieved by face-to-face meetings. We enhanced research collaboration through extended funding opportunities. We continued to offer training programmes to equip leaders of the future.

In our programmes and activities, we have been increasing our focus on the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs). So much so, we were delighted to be announced as the winner of the Sustainability International Impact category at the PIEoneer Awards in September. This was the result of the development of a suite of sustainability-themed online initiatives. The award acknowledges the impact and scale of these initiatives for students across the network.

During the year we sought to bring the network together and share positivity across the globe through the "Images of Hope" competition. Over 200 exceptional entries to the competition were received showing images of the affirmation, kindness and optimism experienced by entrants during the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### The journey ahead

This Impact Report showcases just some of our achievements in 2021, and I hope it elucidates the breadth of activities we design, develop and deliver for our members.

We are immensely grateful for the extent of activity and engagement from our past and present Chairs and Presidential Executive, our members and programme partners, that have brought us to this point in our strategic development.

In my first year at the helm as Provost I wish to express my gratitude for the tireless efforts of the U21 team, guiding the purpose and vision of the network. Their focus, commitment and energies have ensured that we delivered a high quality programme for our members. I would like to personally acknowledge Jade Bressington, Connie Wan, Amber Bartlett, Frankie Carter, Tarlok Singh and Lisa Harding.



**Professor Jenny Dixon**

Provost, Universitas 21

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# At a Glance

# 1.

## Educational Innovation



### Global Educational Enhancement Fund (GEEF) Projects:

8

Projects funded in 2020-21

110k<sub>US\$</sub>

Awarded to successful projects

45

Individuals from 13 member institutions collaborating across the globe

The projects covered a range of topics, from subject-specific teaching resources (such as chemistry lab demonstrations) to toolkits for developing international collaborative teaching.



### Senior Academic Developers Group

Topics covered include:

Assessment and Feedback

Teaching Methods

Plans for new academic year

The role of academic development units

Many resources were shared in these sessions, including guidance and policies on running online assessment, definitions for blended, hybrid and online learning.



# At a Glance

1.

## Educational Innovation



Four global working groups focused on areas of particular interest to our members.

- 1. Learning Spaces and Environments:**

Sharing best practice through a database of case studies, which members can utilise to determine the innovative practices that would be best applied in their institution.
- 2. Learning Analytics:**

Sharing useful and tested knowledge between institutions resulting in toolkits on how to move forward in these areas.
- 3. Teaching for Sustainability:**

Centering around the Teaching for Sustainability Symposium and its outputs which will take place online in February 2022.
- 4. Learning Across the Curriculum Through Campus Museums and Galleries:**

Exploring multiple avenues of collaboration including shared learning opportunities, student-staff partnerships and staff development opportunities.

**250+**

Participants joined the Symposium 'Motivating Online Student Engagement In and Out of the Classroom'.

# At a Glance

## Student Experience

2.

**5,215**

Students engaged in 2021.

**10k<sub>US\$</sub>**

Supporting student sustainability projects in 2021.

**200+**

Student entrepreneurs supported to advance their sustainability projects.

**55**

Student sustainability projects supported in 2021.

**250+**

New student groups formed via our programmes in 2021.

**27**

Universities participating in U21 Global Student programmes.

**1,200**

Students participated in micro-internships offering solutions to real-life SDG related challenges.

**250+**

Student-Facing staff engaging in online events and peer to peer best practice sharing.

**3,100**

Micro-credentials awarded to students in 2021.



# At a Glance

# 3.

## Researcher Engagement



Opportunities for researchers at all stages of their career from Masters students to Vice Presidents of Research.



The collaborative case study between U21 and University of Nottingham 'Engaging Early Career Researcher Cohorts in a Digital Environment' looked at best practice in working with researcher groups in a virtual environment.



21 Projects funded under the Researcher Resilience Fund (RRF) delivered



Researcher Resilience Sustainability Fund offered to enhance previous RRF projects delivered in 2021.

### 100k<sub>US\$</sub>

Funding awarded to support over 20 Researcher Resilience Fund projects in 2020, delivered in 2021.

### 40k<sub>US\$</sub>

Additional funding awarded in 2021 to support collaborative research projects between doctoral students and early career researchers.

### 70+

Researchers engaged on collaborative projects.

### 10k

The network's flagship competition, the U21 Three Minute Thesis, attracted nearly 10,000 votes via the website for the People's Choice Award in 2021

# Supporting Institutions Through Educational Innovation

## Cross-Cluster Activities

### Introduction

The focus on the three clusters/areas of focus allows U21 to provide targeted and relevant benefits to our members. Alongside this individual focus we also recognise the intersectionality of the clusters and we strive to offer members the opportunity to access the benefits of all our areas of work.

Our shift to virtual provision has further enabled us to provide access to a broader range of staff and therefore enable cross fertilisation of ideas and best practice. Below are some examples of cross-cluster initiatives that have taken place this year.



### Symposium: **Motivating Online Student Engagement In and Out of the Classroom**

In February 2021 due to popular demand, U21 ran an interactive digital symposia on the topic 'Motivating Online Student Engagement in and out of the classroom'. The event was run twice to allow U21 members from around the globe to join the conversation.

This Symposium challenged participants to explore this new context, drawing on experiences of blended learning to enhance engagement and learning online. Participants actively considered

some of the challenges of online student engagement, and the implications for student learning, employability, internationalisation and virtual exchanges.

The video resources developed were later utilised by institution partner, University of Birmingham, who offered it locally to their staff.

[Find out more](#)

# Supporting Institutions Through Educational Innovation

## Cross-Cluster Activities



### Symposium: Mental Health Matters

Building on from the U21 Mental Health Declaration in 2020, the first U21 cross-cluster ‘Mental Health Symposium’ was held in July with over 60 participants from across the network in attendance.

A key point to emerge in the wide-ranging discussions was the role that culture plays in mental health, with participants commenting that there were huge differences in the perception of

mental health at national, local, institutional or subject level. This particularly highlighted a need to create a culture of support and community within institutions, and showed the importance of interconnecting departments to support both staff and students.

[Find out more](#)



### Toolkit – Self-Reflection

Introducing the U21 Self-Reflection Toolkit, designed to support staff, students and alumni to integrate self-reflection into their academic journey.

[Find out more](#)



### Global Educational Enhancement Fund

The eight Global Educational Enhancement Fund projects which were funded in 2020 delivered their outputs in 2021. The groups collaboratively addressed challenges brought about by travel restrictions and lockdowns which will continue to be beneficial as the global situation develops. Many of the projects offered alternative solutions to being unable to teach and learn in person. Including laboratory demonstration videos and online clinical skills training.

The UC Davis, Tecnológico de Monterrey and Shanghai Jiao Tong University project titled ‘Global Classroom and the UN Sustainable Development Goals: a U21 Pilot Project’ used

the Global Classrooms model to run four course collaborations, involving eight faculties and over 250 students. The team have developed a toolkit to help others implement collaborative learning opportunities themselves. The toolkit is relevant for developing and teaching any joint course and covers strategic guidance such as gaining support from senior management to practical advice such as which platforms to use and how to resolve time zone challenges.

The project outputs are now available to all U21 members.

[Find out more](#)

# Supporting Students & Staff Through Global Engagement

## U21 Global Student Pathway & PIEoneer Sustainability International Impact Award

At the 2021 PIEoneer Awards, organised by The PIE (Professionals in International Education) to recognise success, achievement and innovation across global education, Universitas 21 clinched the Sustainability International Impact award for their U21 Global Student pathway. U21 Global Student is a suite of sustainably themed, online initiatives, designed for students from the 27 U21 member universities across the world.

Developed to mitigate some of the challenges that the pandemic presented to international student mobility, since their launch these programmes have facilitated over 8,000 students to meet online, undertake cultural exchange, build their own international networks and develop responses to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The individual programmes and their results are detailed below.

[Find out more](#)



**Priyasha Sharma**



The U21 Program gave me direction by teaching me several aspects of leadership. I am certain that I would not have been able to participate in these programmes if they were offline endeavours. Geographical and personal constraints like the inflexibility of work schedules would have posed a great hurdle between me and these extremely enriching virtual global learning experiences.

Priyasha Sharma, Student at the University of Delhi, India. U21 Global Citizens and U21 Sustainable Micro-Internship participant.



**Peter (Siyuan) Chai**



Although we come from different countries and majors, I felt that we share similar enthusiasm to make the world a better and more inclusive place. I came to understand that many social issues such as environmental protection and gender equality should be addressed with collective efforts across borders, and that certain things are universally shared by mankind, such as compassion.

Peter (Siyuan) Chai, Student at Waseda University, Japan. U21 Global Citizens participant



The PIEoneer Awards 2021

Global Student

**Universitas 21**

**Sustainability international impact winner**

Sponsored by:

Learn more: <https://inv.t.io/1ixb3x98tmr>

#PIEoneers21

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

# Supporting Students & Staff Through Global Engagement



## Global Citizens



U21 Global Citizens is an online leadership development course, delivered by Common Purpose, a global not-for-profit organisation that specialises in Cross-Boundary Leadership.

During the programme students are encouraged to learn more about the SDG they are passionate about and share their cultural perspective on sustainability issues of all kinds. They also have the opportunity to learn about how academics and groups across the U21 network are tackling global sustainability issues.

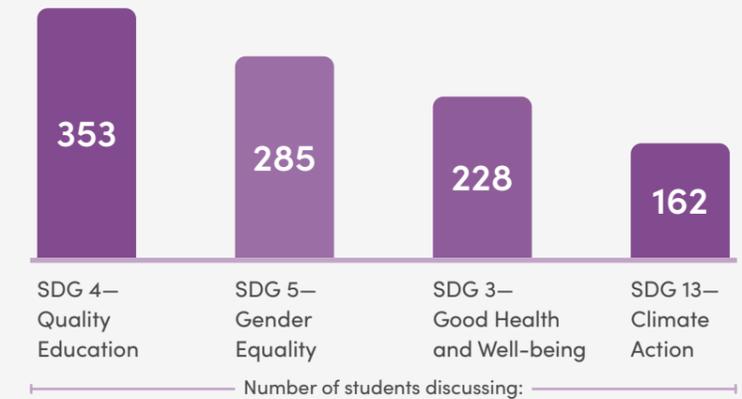
On completion of the course students receive a U21/ Common Purpose micro-credential and badge, demonstrating that they have developed the skills to tackle complex global issues and stand up as a leader.

[Find out more](#)

## 2021 Statistics:



Over 2,000 students responded to our question: Which SDG are you most passionate about? These were the most popular goals in 2021:



Stage of completion:	2021	2020
Completed the pre-course skills check	3,696	1,546
Completed the post-course skills check	2,940	1,193
Earned the Global Citizenship micro-credential	2,679	1,156

# Supporting Students & Staff Through Global Engagement

## Sustainable Micro-Internships



The U21 Sustainable Micro-internships programme allows students to work with other students from across the globe, sharing knowledge and expertise whilst immersing them in a commercial organisation. Within their groups they are tasked with providing a solution to a real-life SDG related challenge, which is then pitched to senior stakeholders within the organisation at the end of the programme.

The first cohort of 150 students began their internship under this programme in December 2021, with an SDG focus of Quality Education. This programme will continue into 2022.

[Find out more](#)



We have been bowled over by the engagement, resourcefulness and reasoning shown by all the students in their presentations. They have presented some fantastically novel and attainable solutions, some of which we have implemented immediately to great effect, to help us address these most pressing issues that we are facing.

Raphe van Zevenbergen,  
co-founder Lang Tengah Turtle Watch



Working hands on and critically thinking about possible solutions to real world issues was absolutely amazing!

Participant from  
The University of Edinburgh



## Real Impact on Society and Environment (RISE)



RISE is U21's international showcase of student achievement in sustainability and social innovation designed to accelerate the scale and impact of student-led projects by connecting them with a network of experts in academia and industry.

[Find out more](#)

### Winning Projects:

**Most Impact:**  
Proyecto 99 from Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico.

**Most Potential:**  
SunFeeds from Lund University, Sweden.

**Most Innovative:**  
Project CheckR from KU Leuven, Belgium.

**Provost's Award:**  
Cuple from University of Melbourne, Australia.

**Most Collaborative:**  
FundEd from University of Maryland, USA.

**Key Statistics:**

**207**

U21 students involved.

**55**

Projects undertaken.

**143**

Pledges of support received.



# Supporting Students & Staff Through Global Engagement

## U21 Global Mobility Week: Looking Ahead

In November 2021, when normally the group would have met face to face, the U21 Global Mobility Group hosted an online Mobility week. The week presented 7 sessions co-hosted by 16 member institutions across the network and were open to any member of staff across the U21 network. Presenters used the time to 'Look Ahead' to what the future might be for student mobility in a world where many universities look to be "digital first" to support climate conscious internationalisation and create sustainable global partnerships.

Although undoubtedly there are challenges presented by online global engagement, the U21 Student Experience cluster will seek to continue to capitalise on the increased accessibility, regular connectivity and scope afforded by online engagement whilst continuing to support and nurture trusted global partnerships.

[Find out more](#)

### 2021 Statistics:

7

Presentations

10

Presenting Institutions

385

Registrations

232

Session attendees



## Interprofessional Education Global Student Challenge



50 pre-registration health professions students from five U21 HSG universities took part in an international online student team challenge, organised by the U21 Health Sciences Interprofessional Education Special Interest Group. This inaugural event gave students from the universities of Auckland, Birmingham, Hong Kong, Melbourne and Queensland the opportunity to increase their understanding of health issues in different countries.

The students, made up of seven teams, were given a task to formulate evidence based

recommendations to assist the WHO in preparing for the next viral pandemic. To achieve this, students worked in small groups to conduct research related to the challenge given to them, formulated up to five evidence-based actions to be recommended to the WHO advisory group and created a five minute video to present the findings.

Each group had two weeks to prepare their findings and comprised of students from different countries and different disciplines.

[View the student presentations](#)

# Supporting Researchers Through Opportunity

## Introduction

Researcher Engagement strives to foster collaborative problem-solving in research by enabling the exchange of international perspectives and knowledge through a suite of connected opportunities including funding and competitions.

The Researcher Resilience Fund from 2020 has created a range of outputs including researcher networks, toolkits and blueprints, and podcasts. 2021 saw the evolution of these outputs into a series of new projects supported by the Researcher Resilience Sustainability Fund as well as the Graduate Collaborative Research Awards demonstrating the network's continued commitment to supporting the research endeavour.



## Graduate Collaborative Research Awards

U21's Graduate Collaborative Research Awards enable doctoral candidates to think innovatively about their projects and the importance of global and interdisciplinary perspectives when it comes to research partnerships and capacity building. In 2021 three projects have been chosen to receive funding featuring a total of 10 doctoral students across six member universities.

[Find out more](#)



### Connor Keating

University of Birmingham



Connor Keating from the University of Birmingham was awarded US\$5,000 and will be leading on the project 'A Cross-Cultural Study on Knowledge and Stigma Towards Autism Among University Students in Hong Kong, the United Kingdom and the United States'. His project partners are located at the University of Hong Kong and University of California, Davis. He explained:

"Our project will compare knowledge about and stigma towards autism among university students in the UK, US and Hong Kong. This study will allow us to identify priority regions for autism awareness campaigns and anti-stigma interventions, thus paving the way for future work that will improve the lives of autistic people across the globe."

Connor's project derives from the Researcher Resilience Fund project 'Towards better informed, more inclusive autism research: Building the U21 Autism Research Network' led by Dr Sophie Sowden, also from the University of Birmingham.

Dr Sowden's project had established the [U21 Autism Research Network](#) (ARN), a network of autism researchers from U21 universities across 6 countries interested in making autism research more diverse and inclusive of the autism community. One of their project outputs included the setup of a global autism research database, to hold a record of autistic individuals from all collaborating countries interested in future research through our network.

# Supporting Researchers Through Opportunity



## Supporting Researcher Resilience

2021 saw the delivery of over 20 projects funded under the Researcher Resilience fund (RRF)

The fund enabled a cohort of nearly 70 researchers to take advantage of global partnerships in the U21 network and strengthen their research and international connections.

In 2021 we entered a new phase of the pandemic with digital and 'hybrid' engagement as standard. U21 launched a follow-up fund, the Researcher Resilience Sustainability Fund, that offered awards to recipients of the initial 2020 RRF. This aimed to encourage recipients to scale up the impact of their projects and extend existing networks.

 [Find out more about these projects](#)

## Growing and Sustaining Global Collaborations Through the U21 Health Research Exchange

In response to challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, the University of Maryland (UMD) in partnership with University of Birmingham (UoB) were awarded US\$5,000 from the Researcher Resilience Fund (RRF) to support their project 'Thriving in a Post COVID age: An International Collaboration And Career Development Tool to Increase Diversity and Inclusion in Healthcare Management, Health Services, and Health Policy Research'. This project developed and launched a virtual Health Research Exchange (HREx) network for doctoral students and early career researchers (ECR) to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion and address the needs of different health systems.

Following on from their original RRF project, the group were awarded a further US\$10,000 from the Researcher Resilience Sustainability Fund to scale up and include new partners including the University College Dublin (UCD) and University of New South Wales (UNSW) to increase the reach and impact of HREx across U21 institutions. Through the new project 'Growing and Sustaining Global Collaborations Through the U21 Health Research Exchange', HREx will continue expansion of engagement and training activities by utilising expertise of UMD, UoB, and newly partnered UCD and UNSW institutions' faculty, researchers, national, and local experts to further build collaborations, mentorship and career development opportunities, and sharing of best practices in healthcare. The addition of highly active interdisciplinary research and ECR networks

of UCD and UNSW will greatly contribute to cross-national and cross-disciplinary exchanges at a time when international travel continues to be highly restricted.

The project is led by Dr. Negin Fouladi from the Department of Health Policy and Management at the UMD School of Public Health. The network is hosted in U21 Community, is accessible to all member institutions and consists of shared resources, training and seminars, as well as tools for mentorship.

Dr. Faloudi says:

**"HREx was created to start a global healthcare collaboration "Stage". In the upcoming year and working with our new partners, we have the opportunity to embed this "Stage" in the U21 network long-term to support creative collaborations for students and ECRs and enhance the reach of international research globally!"**



**Dr Negin Fouladi**

University of Maryland

Partner universities:  
University of Maryland, University of Birmingham,  
University of New South Wales, University College Dublin.



# Supporting Researchers Through Opportunity

## International Research Funding Database

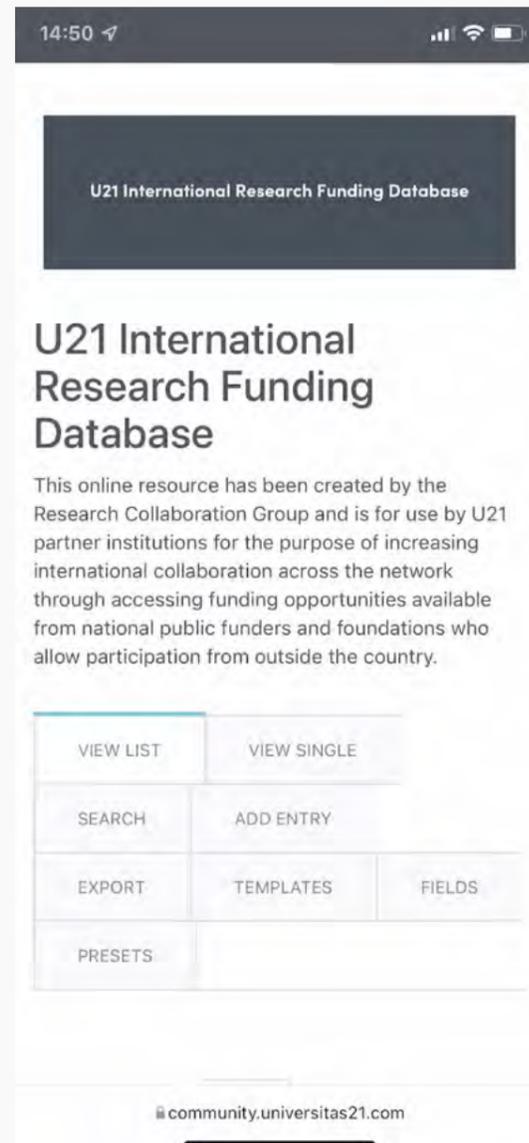
2021 saw the Research Collaboration Group (RCG) launch the U21 International Research Funding database.

This was a member-led activity from the RCG Chair's seed funding competition, and its aim is to make visible to researchers and research support staff the funding opportunities available from national public funders and foundations who allow participation from outside the awarding country.

U21 have supported the initiative from its inception in 2019, with an initial investment of US\$3,000. The project was led by University of Birmingham, with the University of Zurich and the University of Melbourne as partners. U21 allocated an additional US\$2,500 to the project this year to update the resource. It also sits in U21 Community.

The database can be accessed via U21 Community.

[Self-register to access the platform](#)



## Health Sciences Group Early Career Researchers



The U21 HSG Early Career Researcher Fund was offered this year to support academic staff from U21 HSG member institutions at a relatively early stage of their careers, affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In total, nine £5,000 awards were offered to aid the recovery of early career researcher's development and to help re-establish their careers following this challenging period.

**Ideas for submissions included:**  
Collaborative research projects, publication support, connection with other network members. Successful applications were received from McMaster University, UNSW Sydney, The University of Hong Kong, The University of Queensland, Australia, The University of Melbourne, University of Birmingham, University College Dublin, Fudan University, Korea University and University of Nottingham.

[Find out more about the awarded projects](#)

### International Research Funding Database: Key Statistics

**14**

14 out of 18 U21 member countries feature in the database.

**22**

Contributions and updates from 22 members so far.

**150+**

Calls for funding were featured by end of 2021.



# Strategic Development Through Global Perspectives

## Climate Change, U21 & COP26

During a discussion in June, the Presidents expressed a desire for the U21 network to engage with COP26 and enhance its approach to the SDGs more generally. The secretariat canvassed several possibilities which resulted in a meeting of University Presidents and the development of a dedicated project focused on SDG17 exploring how the network can reposition itself coming out of the pandemic and in response to the climate change crisis.

### Outcomes from this meeting included:

- The Provost has just launched an SDG17 Global Partnership initiative. It is exploring how the network will reposition itself to engage, travel and interact in a future that will be shaped by a much more climate-conscious approach to internationalisation.
- Findings from this project will inform the development of a strategy for 2022-2024 to be presented at the AGM 2022 to be held at the University of Birmingham. This will include actions the network can embrace in its clusters as well as general practices to become a leading "climate conscious" network.
- The secretariat has already begun to consider how the network can take account of COP27 in its activities during 2022, including the exploration of a relationship with the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA).

## Adopting Digital First

In 2021 U21 has adapted to a "digital first" way of working that has allowed much greater flexibility, accessibility and connection between its groups and wider staff groups at partner universities. U21 has facilitated regular online peer-to-peer events to engage in open houses, peer sharing, symposium events and workshops, allowing the sharing of best practice globally and in real time.

For our Student cohorts, the Global Student Pathway outlined earlier in this report offers strong evidence of the positive impact these online activities are producing.

The following case studies from our Education Innovation and Research Clusters are further examples of how our digital collaboration has accelerated local and international goals.

### Case Study: Steering Groups – Education Innovation Steering Group (EISG)

In addition to the Educational Innovation Steering Group, there are two groups which form part of Educational Innovation at U21: Educational Leaders (for Pro-Vice Chancellors of Education) and Senior Academic Developers.

Following on from their Open House sessions in 2021, the Educational Leaders group has decided to focus on four key areas of work, sharing best practice and developing resources, initiatives and policies together. These areas launched in 2021 and will be continuing into the coming years.

Teaching for Sustainability

Learning Spaces and Environments

Learning Analytics

Learning Across the Curriculum Through Campus Museums and Galleries

# Strategic Development Through Global Perspectives



## Case Study: Research Culture Session

Alongside the individual Open Houses, the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies, Research Leaders and Research Collaboration Group came together for a joint session to kick-start a conversation around the successes and challenges they have experienced in building sustainable research cultures. Speakers from University of Melbourne, University of Glasgow, University

of California, Davis and Universidad Pontificia Catolica de Chile shared initiatives and strategies that their universities adopted to help develop a positive and effective research environment. This session aimed to encourage members to engage in a broader discussion to share approaches and ideas to help support the researcher community moving forwards.



## Case Study: Social work community of practice



The Social Work Community of Practice (CoP) arose from an informal discussion between the social work leads within the University of Nottingham, The University of Edinburgh and University of Birmingham.

Representatives of these institutions could see major opportunities if we were better able to collaborate with national and international colleagues. Further to our approach to suggest the Social Work CoP, 13 institutions within the U21 network responded positively.

A limited number of themes were agreed as a starting point for discussion and activities. For example, we held well-attended symposia on strength-based social work practice with contributions from educators and researchers

across this newly established CoP. This led to a further symposium being organised by the University of Johannesburg on community development and a proposal being submitted to co-ordinate a special edition of an international journal.

This U21 Community and online platform will provide us with a place to share resources, connect with ideas, and promote up and coming events.



### Professor Robin Miller

Professor Robin Miller,  
University of Birmingham



# Closing Message from the U21 Chair



**Professor Eng Chye Tan**  
Chair - Universitas 21



**As the report positively demonstrates, U21 has continued to deliver innovative and high impact initiatives in these challenging times.**

U21's ability to bring leaders from leading global universities to explore, engage, and promote solutions to issues facing higher education, both locally and globally, remains one of its greatest strengths.

As the world we live in becomes ever more complex and dynamic, networks like U21 become ever more vital in promoting collaboration and consultation.

I would like to warmly acknowledge the many individuals across the network who have given generously of their time in governance and leadership roles, and who have participated in our various steering groups.

I am especially appreciative of the contributions by the U21 Presidents, who act in an advisory capacity on the Presidential Executive. Their support has been critical in ensuring that U21 continues to provide value for its members.

As we look ahead to 2022, we remain mindful of the complex global environment we operate in. The climate crisis, in particular, has been dominating world attention over the last few months.

During this period, U21 Presidents engaged in a special session during the COP26 summit, on the topic: 'Universities: being fit for purpose in a climate change emergency'.

As an outcome, the network is embracing a stronger emphasis on climate action, and we are taking this on board for our longer-term strategies, along with a deepened commitment to sustainability and the SDGs.

My sincere thanks to the U21 Secretariat who have excelled in delivering our programmes. I would also like to acknowledge the seamless transition in leadership as we bade an appreciative farewell to Professor Bairbre Redmond as Provost, and welcomed her replacement, Professor Jenny Dixon.

Finally, I would like to commend the outstanding contribution of Professor Sir David Eastwood, who stepped down in May as Chair of the network. His leadership and guidance has been instrumental in shaping the strategic ambitions and directions of U21 during his tenure.

I look forward with optimism to what 2022 will bring for our network and members, as we continue to advance U21's mission of fostering global knowledge exchange and collaboration across countries and continents.



**As the world we live in becomes ever more complex and dynamic, networks like U21 become ever more vital in promoting collaboration and consultation.**



**Empowering  
universities to share  
excellence, collaborate  
across borders  
and nurture global  
knowledge exchange.**



**Universitas 21**  
c/o Strathcona 109  
University of Birmingham  
Edgbaston, Birmingham  
B15 2TT  
UK

T: +44(0)121 415 8870  
E: [u21@universitas21.com](mailto:u21@universitas21.com)  
[www.universitas21.com](http://www.universitas21.com)

