

Impact Report

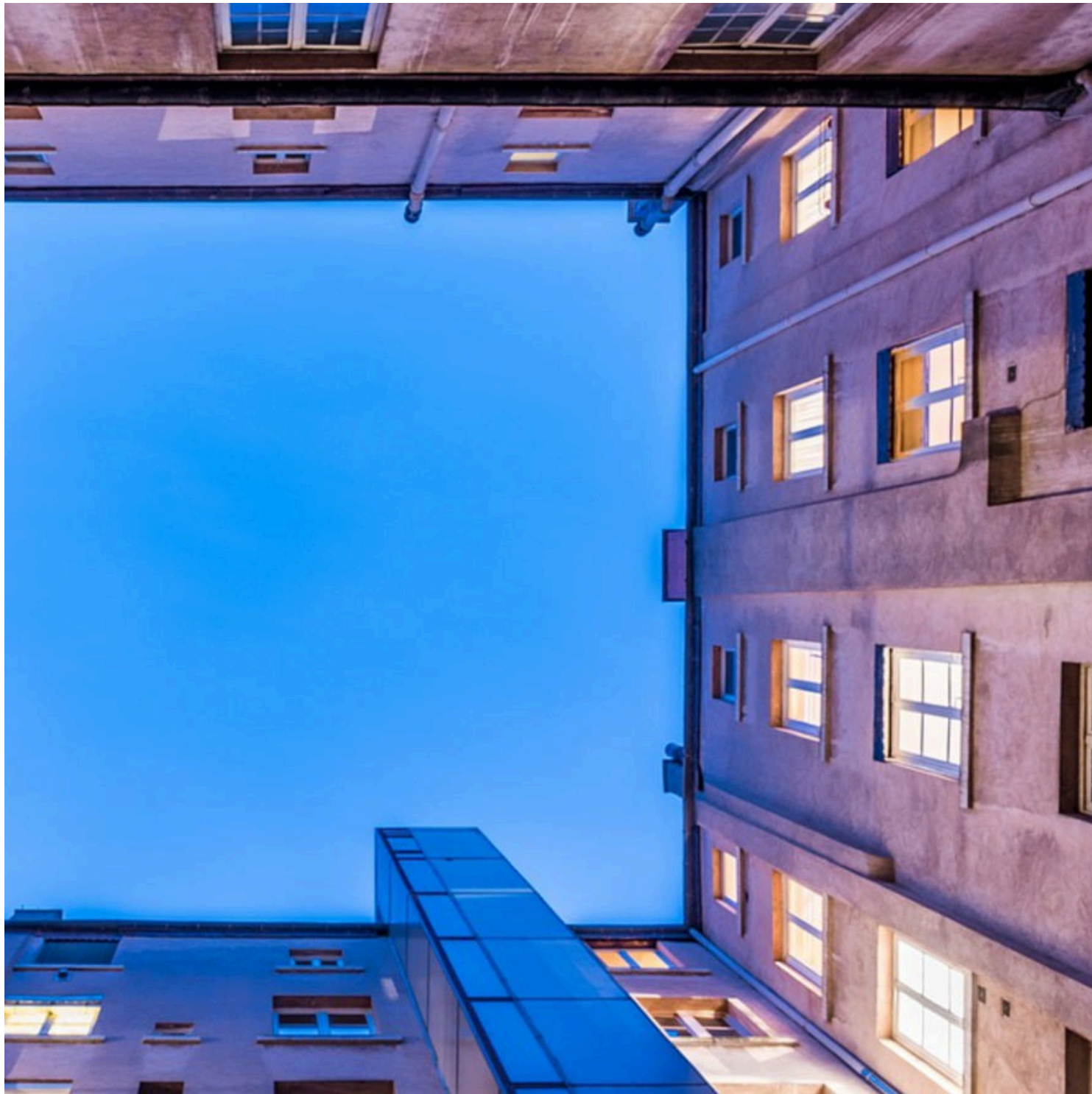
2022

U21

UNIVERSITAS 21



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Welcome

to the U21 annual Impact Report.



Provost's Introduction

Making global connections, bringing together the best of international higher education, and sharing knowledge have been the guiding forces behind the U21 network for 25 years now.



In that time, the world around us has changed completely, from the innovative technology transforming the way we deliver teaching and learning, to the expectations of students passing through our institutions.

Throughout this quarter century, the international connections made by U21 members have remained uniquely valuable.

Recently, we have been through a period of intense social change and transition which inspires us to look ahead and start shaping what might be next for the future of higher education. For some, a gradual return to meeting face-to-face again has been an important step in focusing the debate on what comes next.

Engaging with the very global challenges we face, as universities, as societies, and as nations, has underscored the need for globally developed solutions. The role of knowledge exchange, collaboration, and

upskilling future generations to be able to think critically and creatively is now more vital than ever before.

During 2022, we have aimed to increase the accessibility of our online programmes, while also celebrating the return of much-needed in-person connections. We have been able to reach more staff and students with training, funding, and development opportunities, including groups we have not reached before.

Furthermore, we have continued our focus on sustainability, relating our work closely to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, reflecting members' aspirations to focus on this pressing issue and its implications for our ways of working.

This network only exists because of the exceptional contributions made by you, our members. As guardians of research, innovation and learning, your role in shaping a better future for the world of

higher education cannot be underestimated. Your continued willingness to explore this and keep searching for ways to collaborate and come together is vitally important.

In providing a framework to join forces internationally, both through the main U21 network and our U21 Health Sciences Group, we hope to foster those collaborations – both formal and informal – that comprise such a vital part of what the network enables.

In our Impact Report for 2022, we highlight and celebrate these global connections and give just a small taste of the vast range of activities that have occurred in the past year at U21 and our partner institutions around the world.

I would especially like to take this opportunity to express my warm appreciation to the U21 team who delivered a raft of high quality programmes and activities during the

year – Jade Bressington, Connie Wan, Amber Bartlett, Frankie Carter, Mary Elliston, Sarah Athow-Frost and Tarlok Singh.

Finally, my grateful thanks to our Chair and Presidential Executive, our members and programme partners for their valued contributions in 2022. We look forward to continuing our work together.

With best wishes

Professor Jenny Dixon

Provost
Universitas 21

[VISIT THE UNIVERSITAS 21 WEBSITE](#)





Global Connections | U21 Members

The Americas

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
Tecnológico de Monterrey
University of California, Davis
University of Maryland
University of Connecticut
McMaster University

Europe and the UK

University College Dublin
University of Birmingham
University of Nottingham
University of Glasgow
University of Edinburgh
University of Zurich
University of Amsterdam
KU Leuven
Lund University

Africa

University of Johannesburg

Asia

University of Delhi
Hong Kong University
Shanghai Jiao Tong University
Fudan University
National University of Singapore
Waseda University
Korea University

Australasia

University of Melbourne
University of Auckland
University of Queensland
University of New South Wales
The University of Sydney

New member
for
2022



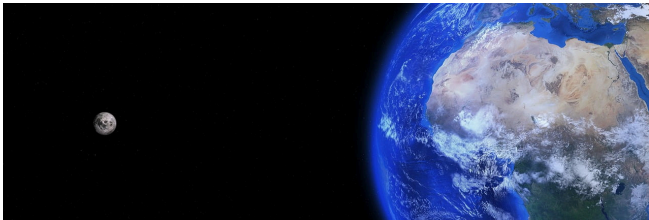


Connecting Students



Student Engagement

Global higher education is in a significant state of transition.



Major disruptions to what we think of as the traditional student experience are gathering pace, and institutions are asking themselves what can be done to meet the very different challenges arising.

The future is more diverse and open-ended than ever before, and universities and their student bodies must become agents of change.

Ripples from the massive disruption of the global pandemic have caused many to raise questions about the nature of teaching and learning.

Students from a greater variety of cultures, backgrounds and socio-economic groups are challenging conventional norms.

And what businesses and communities as wider stakeholder groups need from the institutions in their midst is also evolving.

The nature of the university experience is more vital than ever in introducing students to new people and ideas and teaching the skill of critical thinking. The nature of the university experience is vital in introducing creativity and co-operative problem solving to meet the challenges facing our modern world.

U21 has always sought to be at the forefront of the higher education landscape around us. The two-way channels of development and

engagement we have with students are critical in leading this change. Developing our student-facing programmes and supporting the development of a global outlook is a key part of delivering for our members.

“

“Being part of a U21 programme means getting connected to a global network of other likeminded students who want to make a difference in the world.”

Kong Qi Heng, Student, The National University of Singapore

In 2022, we were able to increase access to our most popular student programmes, enabling underprivileged groups who may have never travelled internationally or thought of studying abroad to embrace the values of a truly international education.

Global Citizens

Developed originally during the pandemic, our Global Citizens online programme is now in its fourth iteration. The programme has proved a great success in engaging with students.

Over the past few years, the programme has accelerated and enabled U21 to reach many more students and enhance their development of global citizenship skills.

We have been able to connect with traditionally under-represented groups during 2022 such as those from low-income families, and those who have not been able to consider a physical study abroad scheme.

We use our digital platforms as a vital route to offer international opportunities to these students who would not otherwise have learning experiences outside their

own country.

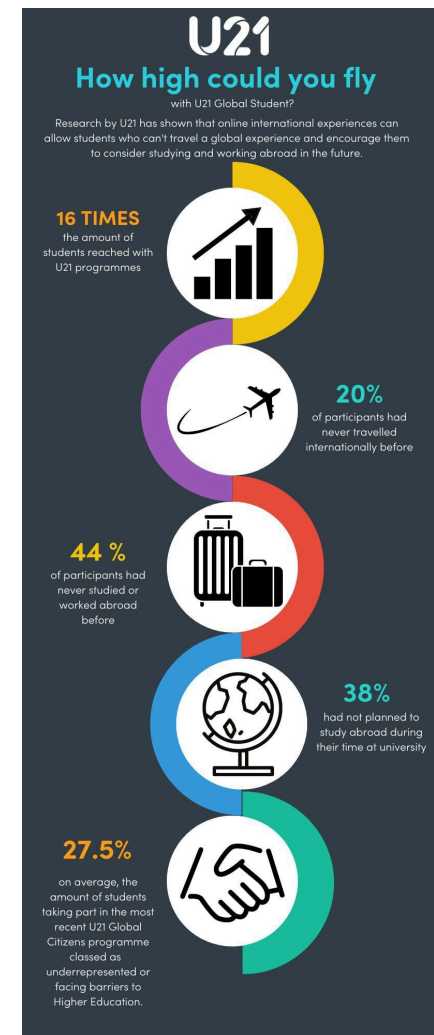
And in addition, we have launched On Demand versions of some of our most popular student-facing programmes, in the hope that this will enable those unable to participate in some synchronous sessions to become involved.

Over 2000

students given the chance to participate in U21 Global Citizens.

Over 300

international connections and learning opportunities for students who have never travelled internationally before.



Glide mouse over to enlarge graphic

HOW HIGH COULD YOUR STUDENTS FLY?

WITH U21 GLOBAL STUDENT

U21



RISE

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

In 2022, we were proud to identify a new group of winners who are implementing change in the world around them.

“*We've gained global perspective of implementing innovative solutions. RISE has given us a valuable network of connections with social leaders and students. Thanks to this experience, we will be able to give access to quality education to more youth and create a chain of positive change.*”

Eréndira Rodríguez, ADUX Leaders for Education

In our award for 'Most Impact', we were pleased to recognise ADUX - Leaders for Education, who came from Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico.

The project seeks to promote quality education and reduce the educational gap produced due to COVID-19. Reducing inequalities and widening access to address skills gaps is a hugely important area of work, and we're pleased to support ADUX in this.

Other initiatives that stood out for 2022 on the RISE programme were The Moon Beam Co, from the National University of Singapore, an impactful start-up

changing the way that we treat food waste. By developing a method to upcycle cooked rice, they have been able to create sustainable beer and granola products.

We were also highly impressed by Delta Waterways from the University of Auckland in New Zealand, who have harnessed the combined power of cutting-edge satellite input and advanced data analysis techniques to offer a revolutionary approach to the way the world monitors waterway health. With a more complete



picture, potentially devastating issues such as algae bloom or sediment build-up can be averted – providing a huge technological advantage to agriculturists.

The ‘Most Collaborative’ accolade was awarded to Public Health Beyond Borders of the University of Maryland, USA. This non-profit organisation aims to empower families and communities, both locally and globally, to achieve their best health through educational workshops and



advocacy.

U21’s Provost Jenny Dixon was so impressed by the quality of projects submitted that she funded an additional Provost’s Award, bringing the total number of awards granted to five. This went to AILEMapp from the University of Hong Kong, a software development, which provides language education and support to help refugees and asylum seekers integrate into a host country.

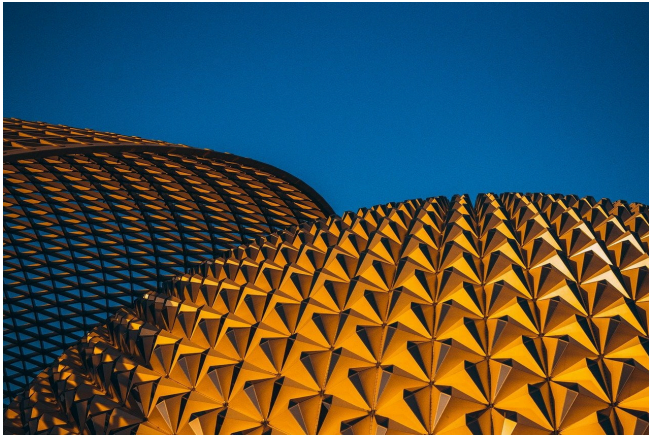
Xinyao Liu from AILEMapp commented *“The impact and support through U21 and the seed funding will be the next step for more refugees and asylum seekers to gain language support, this is our ultimate goal. Our app organization employs many refugee families that help us from providing artwork to doing translations, our goal is to help families through financial support along with the language support we already provide.”*

“

“This was a very exciting, inspirational and educational programme. It really opened my eyes on to how to advance in innovative projects.”

Asemahle Poro, University of Johannesburg, RISE participant

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have shared how they are tackling different social and environmental issues in their communities. We are even planning a collaboration with the other group from Singapore and we are excited to see how this U21 network will connect us.”

What’s more, via pledges of support, all RISE finalists can receive guidance from the U21 global network of academic, professional and industry experts in order to further progress their projects.

[VIEW OUR FULL RISE 2022 SHOWCASE](#)

On top of the seed funding awarded to the winners of the Awards, the RISE development programme is open to all projects nominated to the showcase. This offers a unique opportunity for student entrepreneurs around the world to connect, share knowledge, and create a global community of those taking action for good.

The founders of Moon Beam Co. said of the programme’s impact: *“U21 RISE has connected us with other like-minded student founders from whom we have learnt so much. These inspiring leaders*



Sustainable Micro-Internships

Following the popularity of the U21 Sustainable Micro-Internships programme in 2021, the network's aim for 2022 was to increase the number of places available for students to work with the world of business on finding solutions to sustainability issues.

“

“By helping me uncover my passion for SDGs and my inclination to collaborate by crossing boundaries, I have discovered a life-time vocational goal of global governance and sustainable development.”

Vincent Shoutao Wu, Postgraduate Student,
Shanghai Jiao Tong University



Member feedback was also that the connections of the U21 network at large should also be used to play a part in determining the content and delivery of the programme. This approach was piloted during 2022, and will be further built upon into 2023, with Professor Paul Harpur from the University of Queensland and Dr Katherine Trebeck, a writer and researcher associated with the University of Edinburgh, lined up to teach modules.

In 2022, we accepted a total of 1,749 student participants in the programme, from 2,630 applications - and awarded 641 certified micro-credentials.

The accredited programme connects students globally to develop key skills that will help them thrive in the workplace, while also addressing sustainability challenges through the lens of corporate partners and providing the chance to pitch ideas to senior stakeholders.



2,630

applications to our Sustainable Micro-Internship

1,749

student participants in the programme

641

Micro credentials awarded

Global Three Minute Thesis Competition | 3MT®

Accurate detection of cancer from a single, non-invasive breath sample. The power of Chilean bees to fight antimicrobial-resistant bacteria. A way to tackle damaging plant diseases that threaten organic crops and force us to choose between the environment or economic growth in low- and middle-income countries.

These were some of the projects within the U21 network of 28 global universities, that were recognised in our annual global U21 Three Minute Thesis® competition.

The challenge asks PhD students across the globe to explain their complex thesis on video in just three minutes or less to a non-specialist audience. The aim is to explore the importance of communication

and showcase some of the fascinating research from talented students internationally. After being named a winner in their own university, candidates can compete for the global U21 prize.

The overall U21 winner for 2022 was UNSW student, Merryn Baker.

From a single breath sample, Merryn is investigating how chemical changes caused by cancer and other diseases can be detected. Molecules heralding cancer

are present in the breath but exist only in extremely low concentrations that are near impossible to detect with current methods.

Merryn's ground-breaking research comprises a simple, non-invasive method of identifying these molecules - and can even make a diagnosis before a tumour grows. The implications for survival rates and lowering treatment cost are transformative.



“

“I was in awe of so many presentations and struck by how impactful many of the research projects showcased can be. The way each of the nominees approached the challenge of explaining their research to non-technical audiences gave me great confidence that our future is in very safe hands.”

Emily Chang, Founder of STOKE, U21 3MT® Judging Panel



On winning the U21 global 3MT® Prize, Merryn said: *“I’m over the moon to have won the 3MT competitions both at UNSW and globally at U21. The whole 3MT concept has really helped to clarify the purpose and impact of my research on the bigger picture. I hope I am able to add a small piece to that puzzle and expand our collective knowledge so that disease*

detection and diagnosis by breath analysis becomes an everyday reality.”

Taking the Highly Commended Prize, Emilio Dal Re of the University of Zurich was inspired by his love of coffee to go on a journey that took him thousands of miles to the heart of Central America.

Meeting coffee farmers in Guatemala, Emilio discovered that large numbers of them had switched to organic production in the hopes of making a better living, only to find their crops destroyed by a microscopic fungus known as ‘coffee rust’.

Using advanced monitoring techniques via satellite and machine learning, he was able to create a real-time map of coffee rust fungus to prevent its spread, which can already be used by local farmers.

The 2022 People’s Choice Award, selected via a public vote, was won by Paula Núñez Pizarro of UC Chile. Paula’s research investigated the superpowers of native

Quillay honey. The natural product has the possibility to become a new, natural antibiotic.

One of the most complex and complete foods in the world, natural honey has antioxidant, antibacterial and hepatoprotective properties that adapt through the plant life and pollen consumption of bees to specific geographies.

All our 2022 winners are involved in ground-breaking work which has real potential to change lives in the near future.

ALL TWENTY ENTRIES FOR THE 2022 U21 3MT® GLOBAL COMPETITION CAN BE VIEWED HERE.

3MT® THREE
MINUTE
THESIS
FOUNDED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

U21
UNIVERSITAS 21

**3MT® GLOBAL
COMPETITION
2022**



PwC Innovation Challenge

The U21 and PwC Innovation Challenge brings together graduate students from across U21's membership network to tackle real-world challenges. Our 2022 competition asked students to examine sustainability in business practices while developing their own peer network and skills. It was specifically formatted to enable global connections and collaborations.

The challenge asked: *"To what extent should governments support the private sector in managing and prioritizing their Environmental, Societal and Governance agenda?"*

Research conducted by our delivery partner PwC found that strategy among CEOs is still driven primarily by business metrics that are often at odds with

sustainability. Innovation Challenge students were asked to evaluate the extent to which they thought governments should support the private sector in addressing environmental and societal concerns.

Sally Jeffery, Global Education & Skills Network Leader for PwC Middle East and a founder of the Innovation Challenge, commented: *"We were really pleased with the innovative responses to the important*



challenge set to the students this year. With COP27 taking place in Egypt, followed by the next COP conference in Dubai, it felt timely for us here at PwC Middle East to address these questions with students through the Innovation Challenge. I would say to the students that we live in a very complex world where it is important to have an opinion and to be courageous about that opinion. And above all, stay curious."

The winning team included: Sarah Arsalan of McMaster University in Canada, Yuqing Liu from the National University of Singapore, Olaoluwa Ogunseun of the University of Connecticut in the United States and Likitha Silapurem of the University of Melbourne in Australia.

Their insightful response looked at factors that could be used to support positive change such as creating an internationally-agreed standard of data collection to inform decisions on climate change, governments holding

corporations accountable by strengthening regulation on labels such as 'carbon-neutral' and cracking down on misuse, linking COP goals with incentives such as favourable business rates for low-emissions companies and a greater focus on supporting climate-positive infrastructure.

The creativity and collaboration shown in the course of the challenge was truly inspiring for our judging panel.

The changes made to the format in 2022, encouraging global collaboration and teamwork across all U21 member

universities, will be carried into the 2023 competition. The winning team will receive bespoke careers coaching with PwC.

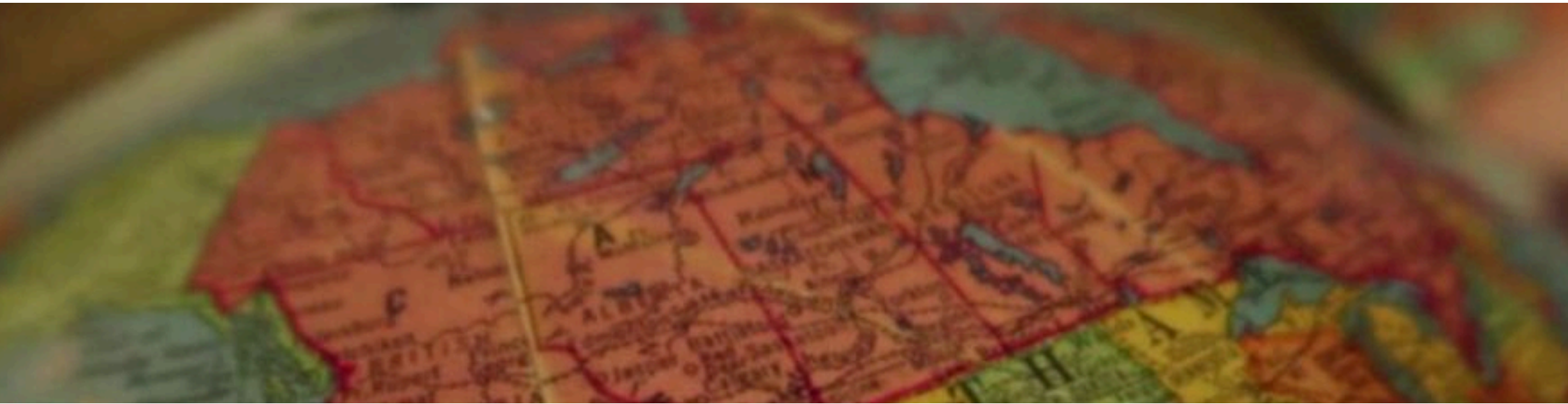
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The diversity and balance of the team was a big advantage. We all had different opinions and so that research and experience from daily life was brought into the project and let us include many different perspectives.

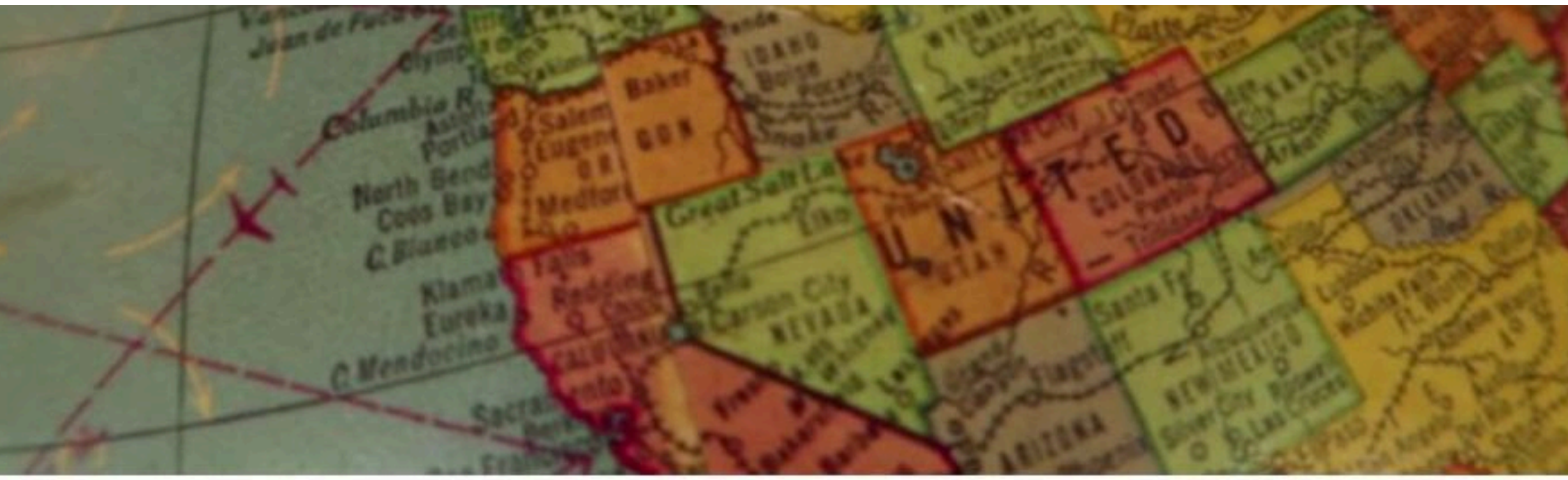
Olaoluwa Ogunseun, University of Connecticut, U21 PwC Innovation Challenge winner.

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Connecting Staff



Staff Development

At the centre of everything U21 does as a network is our commitment to helping our members make and maintain international connections and work across borders.

As the post-Covid higher education landscape continues to unfold, an ongoing theme of transformation is highlighting emerging difficulties in sustaining traditional career development pathways.

Changing travel practices and policies are disrupting the way we interact, network and conduct our work, and new sets of expectations and demands are also leaving their mark on how we do things.

U21 has continued our response to this during 2022, aiming to expand our offering to both professional and academic staff at member universities. Our aim is to recognise and support those at all stages of their careers, including a focus on traditionally under-supported demographics.

Our global network opportunities for staff include symposia, staff development programmes and many projects, formal and informal, that are developed, directly and indirectly, as a result of collective involvement in U21 activities.

We continue to create opportunities for our various stakeholder groups to exchange knowledge and share best practices across borders.

This creates an environment of collaboration without competition that is unique. Activity like this is happening all over the network. Here we showcase the Careers Mapping service from the University of Melbourne, and we will continue to highlight examples of collaborations via our website and newsletters.



Global Leadership

Our third iteration of this flagship staff development programme was delivered to 92 leaders from academia and professional services across 22 institutions. Designed to leverage insights globally, both from within the network and from wider industry, the GLP programme aims to support in the development of leadership skills to help participants thrive in their universities, as well as provide an opportunity for global learning, knowledge

exchange and peer-to-peer collaboration. Learning objectives for the 2022 course included:

- Assessing the global horizon - identifying challenges and opportunities within higher education
- Evaluating leadership tools and collaborative thinking
- Increasing personal agility to adapt to changing conditions
- Learning to prioritise and plan for change

92

university leaders

22

nationalities

22

member institutions

“

“The U21 Global Leadership experience provided me with new background and knowledge on my own leadership philosophy. I have already put some elements of this learning into practice and have seen positive results.”

GLP Programme 2022 participant, University of Maryland

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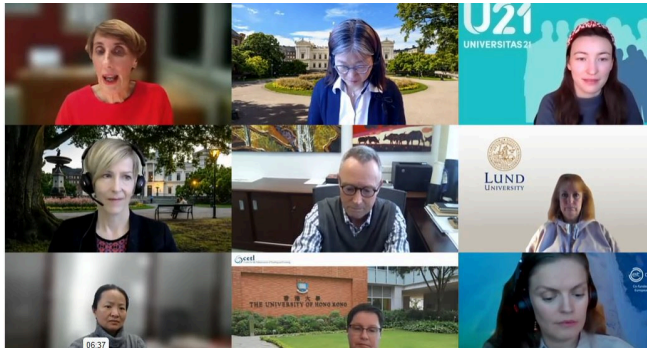
92%

of participants felt the programme was good value for their time

5.18

average out of 6 committed to creating actions for change

Educational Innovation Symposium 2022



Our focus on sharing new innovations in education continued in 2022, with Lund University hosting our popular two-day Education Innovation Symposium, on the topic of Teaching for Sustainability. It was the best attended educational innovation event to date, with almost 600 registrations across the sessions and almost 200 individuals taking part.

Discussion from the sessions touched on faculty development, looking at how staff can be better supported to deliver sustainable education through their curricula, with interdisciplinary approaches deemed key to this process. In one session, Lund University, the University of Johannesburg and the University of Hong Kong were able to share ideas around virtual exchanges and teaching in a global classroom.

The event also included contributions from external organisations including PwC, Save the Children and Climate-KIC discussing what types of skills they look for when recruiting our students as potential change agents.

Deemed particularly desirable were advanced digital skills, collaborative proficiency and the ability to think creatively and critically.

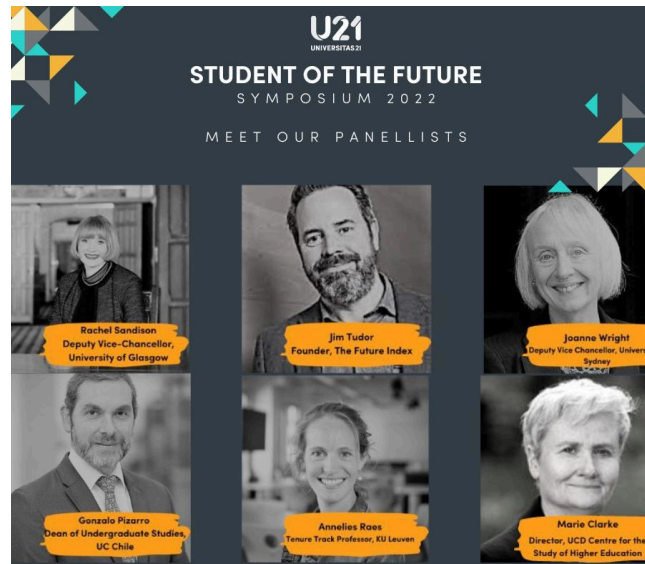
[>> ACCESS THE SESSION RECORDINGS](#)



Assessment and Feedback Forum

Our member-led approach means that our events can often become the catalyst for new ways of working. During the Senior Academic Developers' Open Houses, Assessment and Feedback was identified as a topic of interest, leading to this deep-dive forum led by the group. Other groups were invited to participate so that more colleagues around the network could benefit from hearing international insights on the subject.

Student of the Future Symposium



The U21 Student of the Future Symposium brought specialists and network members together to discuss what the student of the future will look like. Our panel consisted of leaders across U21 universities, an expert in trend forecasting within higher

education and a current student. The discussion centred on topics such as:

How is the student of the future being shaped by events today? What will they need from educators and institutions to prepare them for roles that may not exist yet?

What skills are critical for universities to instil in their student bodies to meet tomorrow's challenges?

How can universities use new technology and their campuses differently in order to better serve students, businesses and local communities?

The event will be used to stimulate further projects and activities on these issues across the network.

[>> VIEW THE SESSION RECORDINGS](#)

58

International attendees

10

presenters from

6

member universities

Sharing Best Practice in Careers Mapping

The power of big data to highlight employability outcomes has been showcased by a collaborative project driven by The University of Melbourne.

Through connections and trust established via U21's Employability Group, contacts within the UK and Australia were able to share best practice and develop collaborative outcomes that will have a big impact on careers provision for students.

The University of Melbourne has developed a careers methodology to better understand the levels of career readiness among their students – and they are now using the U21 network to share and deepen these findings.

Data from the Career Mapping initiative will help the university to tailor its programmes and services to better meet student needs – and ensure they are in the best position to connect with recruiters and build their employability.

The method involves collecting information from students at enrolment on various topics including their employability experiences and how career-ready they feel. The University of Melbourne's innovative model then uses a framework to analyse this information and make a student's current career readiness visible to them in new ways.

“

“It's an opportunity for us to provide an exceptional student experience. We are now able to provide personalised, highly targeted interventions through the careers service, instead of a one-size-fits-all approach.”

Kathy Ryan, Careers & Employability, University of Melbourne

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Students are added to one of four categories: Discover, Focus, Apply, and Sorted. This enables the university careers team to provide important personalized support and signpost resources to develop each student on their journey to employment.

Now, the university is using its connections through the U21 Careers and Employability group to reach out to other institutions and collectively broaden their learnings. The peer sharing framework has created a trusting relationship between members, enabling them to share in detail new methods that are transforming the way they support students into their careers.

The University of Melbourne was able to connect with the University of Birmingham, University College Dublin, and the University of Edinburgh to share knowledge and plan visits. Melbourne will be focusing on how these other universities are currently using careers registration frameworks, and share their insights from implementing Career Mapping.

Kathy Ryan of The University of Melbourne says: *I hope to expand this to visit other universities that have done particularly innovative work in this space as well. When we work together and share insights, it gives us a wonderful opportunity to create the best possible start for our students as they begin their careers.*"

Researcher Resilience Sustainability Fund



many individuals at member universities – one of which was Sarah Rockowitz, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, and a researcher at the University of Birmingham. Originally a recipient of our Graduate Collaborative Research Award, Sarah went on to receive our Researcher Resilience Fund, then progressed to our Researcher Resilience Sustainability Fund.

Driven by a need to help establish supportive networks for graduate students and early career researchers, who can often find it hard to access the traditional networks that support more established academics, Sarah and her colleagues worked with U21 to create an international Community of Practice.

From this, the group undertook an environmental scan of wellbeing resources offered at the universities of U21 members. They created the website www.researcherresilience.com with the funding received to catalogue resources and create a connection point. The group

also engaged professional speakers to support their members.

“*The funding has given me the opportunity to work on my communication and teamwork skills...it solidified our standing as a strong community able to offer services to ECRs and PGRs working with sensitive data.***”**

Sarah Rockowitz, Researcher Resilience Sustainability Fund recipient

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The group has expanded to 185 registered members, who have been able to benefit from the expertise of coaches such as Hugh Kearns from Thinkwell Australia on topics like positive psychology and self-management.

The group is continuing to add resources, digital toolkits and new members. As their

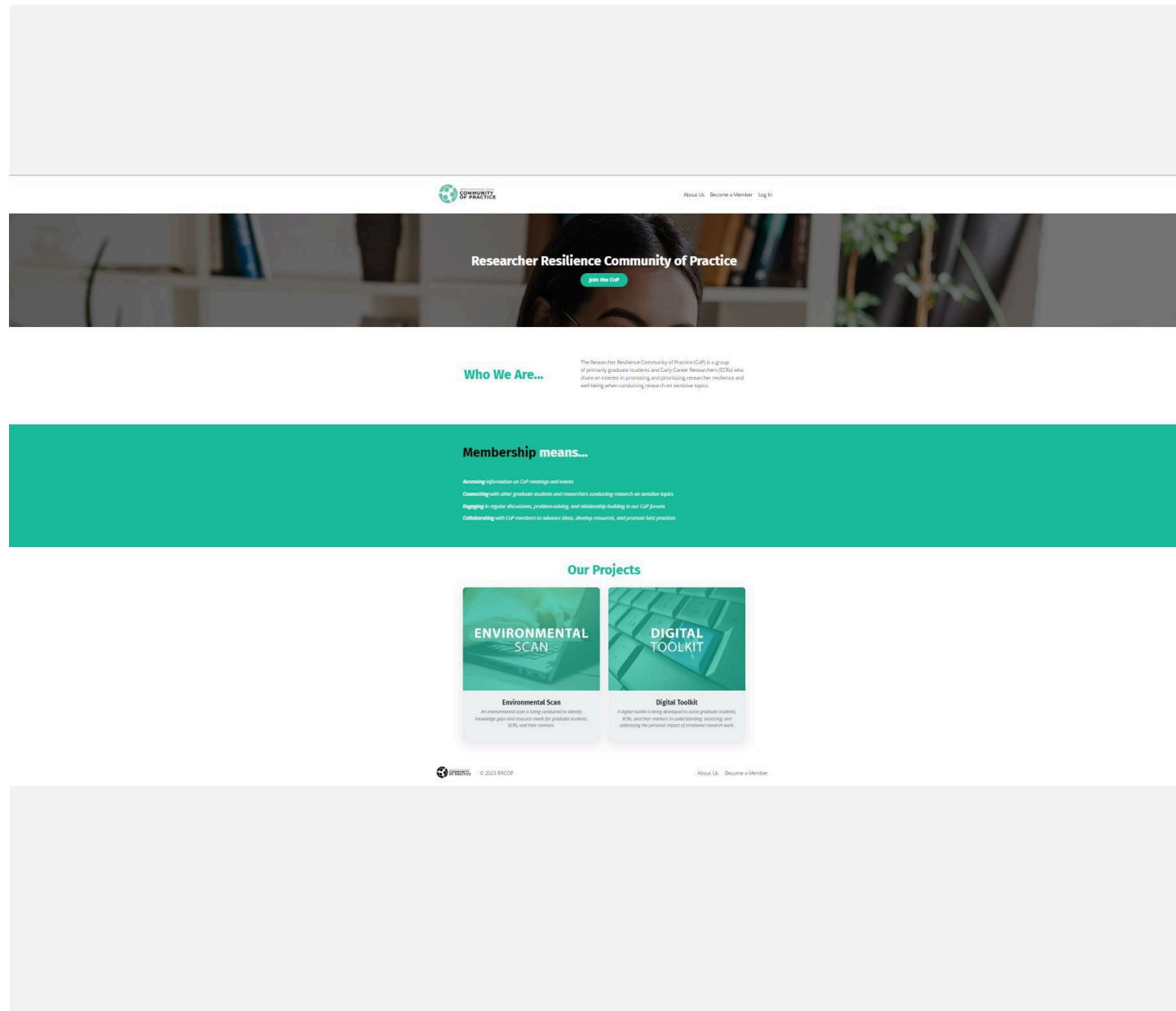
The network has developed an increasing focus on creating pathways to connect students and staff with U21 and with each other, and where a participant can progress and develop through several programmes run by the network.

The work of our Researcher Resilience Fund in 2022 was able to connect with

work develops, the wellbeing of early-stage academics is still at the centre of everything they aim to do.

With mental health and wellbeing continuing to be a highly important topic – both within academia and in the wider employment landscape – the group's support for those who have traditionally struggled to access resources within the research world is bridging a gap and offering a sense of community to many.

> VISIT THE RESEARCHER RESILIENCE WEBSITE



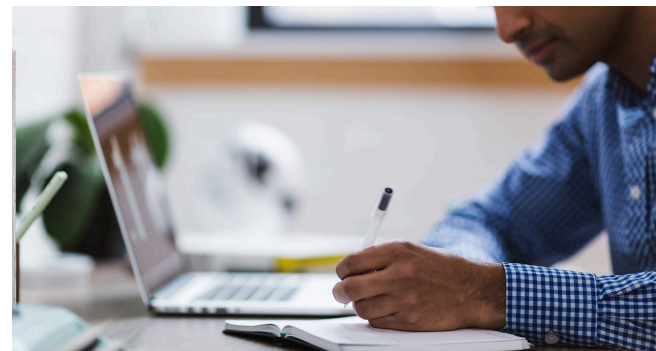
The image is a composite of two photographs. The top half shows an aerial view of the ocean with vibrant turquoise water and white foam from breaking waves. The bottom half shows a ground-level view of a sandy beach with waves washing onto the shore, creating white foam. A few people are visible in the water and on the beach.

Connecting Researchers

Research & Strategic Initiatives

Traditional research ecosystems are undergoing profound changes as the post-pandemic future unfolds.

Shifts in national and international government policy, funding sources and even university travel policies post-pandemic are all influencing the ways in which research can be undertaken,



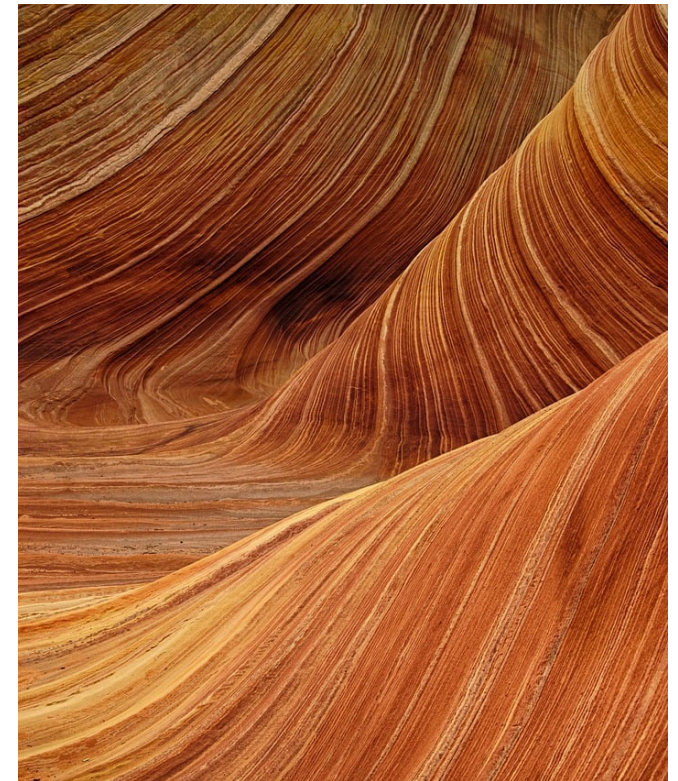
challenging researchers to adapt and find new ways to connect.

This can be testing for those in the early to middle stages of their academic careers and risks marginalising researchers who find it harder to access and engage with international opportunities. We have sought to counter this in some measure by increasing U21's offer to members in this area.

A long-standing strength of the network is the offering of professional development programmes for researchers, especially those in the early stages of their careers. In 2022 we took the opportunity to respond to the impacts of the pandemic on mid-career researchers with the launch of a successful pilot programme.

We also provide a platform for research collaborations across the network, enabling researchers to enhance their global connectedness.

The strong bonds that exist between Universitas 21 members create opportunities to lever connections that can lead to collaborative partnerships and produce world-leading research that makes a difference to the world around us.



Early Career Researchers | Planetary Health

The rapid degradation of our planet threatens the health – and survival – of communities around the world. U21 and the University of Edinburgh brought together 80 participants from 17

universities, across 12 countries, to address the challenges faced in Planetary Health.

The workshop strengthened participants' understanding of and ability to act upon these challenges through plenary conversations with world-leading experts, as well as a variety of skills development sessions and networking events – all

empowering early career researchers to become agents of change.

Speakers from around the network, as well as the Wellbeing Economy Alliance and Public Health Scotland, came together to cover approaches to interdisciplinary research, mentoring and mental health for early-career researchers.

The event included a session on Indigenous Leaders led by Steven Newcomb, a Shawnee-Lenape scholar and author who has been studying and writing about U.S. federal Indian law and policy since the early 1980s.

Since the event, our cohort have continued connecting, via an ongoing set of activities, forming a committee to build on the ideas the ECR workshop inspired.



Reset, Reimagine, Reframe | Mid-Career Researcher Programme

Improving and expanding the offering of our most successful programmes is key to U21's vision of reaching and supporting more colleagues at our member universities.

In 2022, we introduced a programme specifically for Mid-Career Researchers, defined as Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor (or equivalent), from any discipline, who wished to enhance the quality and reach of their research through global networks.

Unlike more senior academic colleagues, this group can sometimes struggle to make valuable international connections that could further their work. The new U21 programme convened this group across

our global membership to share knowledge and ideas. After the flux of recent years, the MCR Programme was an opportunity for participants to refocus, reorient their thinking and identify the skills and attributes required to adapt and thrive in a new research environment.

“

“After completing all self-guided modules and attending all virtual sessions of the U21 mid-career program, I feel better equipped to face future challenges at work and in life.”

MCR Programme Participant, Pontificia
Universidad Católica de Chile

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As a result of the programme, participants gained:

- An improved understanding of the skills and mind-set required for working within a more creative and collaborative culture, with insights from higher education and industry.
- A global community of deepened multi-disciplinary relationships within the U21 network, which provide both peer support and challenge along with opportunities for international collaboration.
- A broadened perspective with new ideas, trans-disciplinary approaches and ways of thinking to support MCR's with personal growth and development areas.

Global Doctoral Mobility Forum

Research through international co-operation is imperative for tackling the numerous global challenges of the 21st Century. An important task for universities is the training of doctoral students to provide future researchers to engage with and address these challenges. This plays a key role in global research

collaborations.

Established inequalities results in knowledge migration from the global south to the north, including the mobility of doctoral students. This issue was the focus of a U21 forum led by UC Chile and the University of Johannesburg on “Non-Traditional Destinations for Doctoral Training: Moving from International to Global Mobility”.

The forum examined how some of the

existing barriers could be overcome to reverse the patterns of asymmetrical mobility. Participants considered destinations that are consistently overlooked by doctoral students, missing opportunities that could be influential for their future career development.

The panel of speakers and participants were able to identify and discuss:

- Different strategies that could promote the international mobility of doctoral students - outbound and inbound
- The varied challenges universities face in this field within their regional contexts
- The impact and legacy of the pandemic on student mobility
- The increasingly essential need for global co-operation in tackling the complex and interwoven crises of the 21st Century



ACCESS – collaborative research in action



Building on historical links and looking forward to a new era of research are the key priorities for ACCESS, a bilateral research programme focusing on a connection between UC Chile and Lund University – sparked by a meeting of minds at U21.

First commenced in 2015, ACCESS has grown from a connection made by two U21 network members into a comprehensive bilateral programme embraced by leading universities and government bodies across the two nations.

Academic Collaboration Chile Sweden (ACCESS) deepens academic relations, provides a platform for research projects, grants seed funding and keeps staff and students' international links strong.

Back in 2015, Professor Ignacio Sánchez, Rector of UC Chile, happened to be visiting his son who was studying in Sweden. After initially connecting via the U21 network, he wanted to meet with his counterpart to discuss formalising links between the two universities. Both nations had a political focus on internationalisation efforts at the time, which quickly won the project important support.

Miguel Cornejo Herrera, Regional Manager for Lund University comments: *"Quite early*

we understood the importance of having a balance between academic relevance and also maintaining a focus on the political dimension. How can we engage ministries, embassies, and funding agencies as key players to support what ACCESS is doing? One thing that participants always mention is that they feel it's very easy to work together and there is not a big cultural difference despite the geographic factors."

The focus of ACCESS on interdisciplinarity has led to exciting developments but has also called for long-term focus from both sides and a commitment to embracing outcomes that may be different from those predicted. This has proved to be hugely rewarding for all involved.

The initiative has rapidly grown from 4 to 15 universities, presenting an exciting challenge for the programme founders.

Some of the groups formed have been setting up research schools, designing

joint PhD courses, securing funding, and publishing joint research. These successes have broadened over time into a sustainable collaboration that shows its potential in becoming a platform for sharing knowledge in a replicable way.

Soon, the institutions involved will have been working together for seven years. Advocates for ACCESS have emerged, who have seen the direct and indirect benefits – such as easier student exchange, new opportunities for projects and easier entry to Erasmus Plus.

Of course, there are complex factors to overcome, and considerable commitment is required to reach this point of collective

trust. Miguel adds: *“Initiating something is easy, but you need to keep up the momentum to reach a point of open discussion needed to advance these collaborative projects. It’s super important to highlight all activities that look beyond our domestic narratives and work together on international solutions.”*

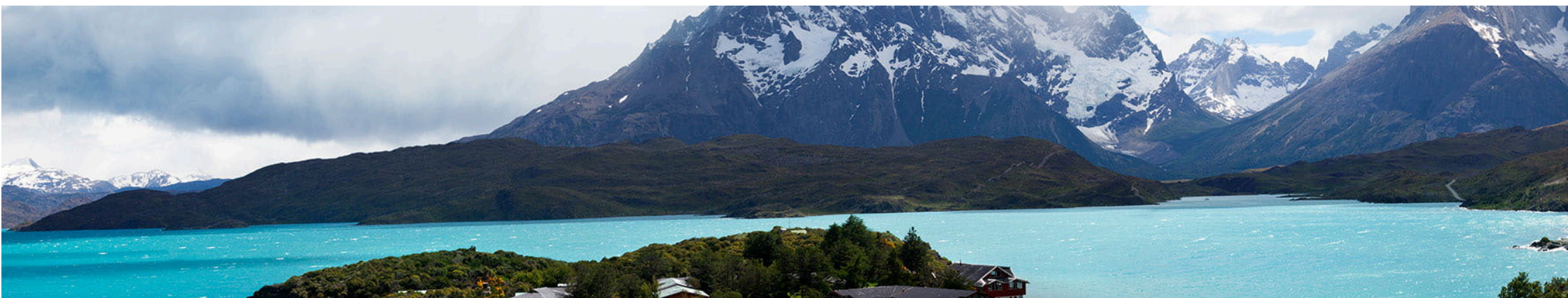
After the seismic shock of the global pandemic, ACCESS re-evaluated the role of the programme.

Far from disrupting demand, their first call for projects as things settled down was oversubscribed.

In 2019, the programme members chose to realign activity around the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, which connected well with the research activities already underway.

Since then, ACCESS has gone from strength to strength, attracting demand from other universities who want to join the programme.

Now, they have new goals in sight, such as finding ways to provide follow-on support for projects awarded seed funding. This will help participants to continue developing ideas after their initial success.



The strength of the programme lies in an ongoing vision from both sides and a firm commitment to broadening the horizons of research.

There are many more future plans to lever the power of this research collaboration and find topics that join Chile and Sweden in friendship and academic aims.

[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ACCESS](#)



ARUA Network-to-Network Partnership

In 2022, U21 signed its first ever partnership agreement with another network.

The [African Research Universities Alliance \(ARUA\)](#) and U21 signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding to establish a network-to-network partnership, with the aims of supporting higher education through research collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Work is underway on an annual programme for members of both ARUA and U21 networks, encompassing research collaborations and joint events such as symposia, virtual learning opportunities for both staff and students at member institutions and the possibility of student competitions.

The partnership will also include a focus

on the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) through joint activities and will provide an opportunity for early career researchers in the two networks to seek funding for specific projects. We look forward to providing updates on the direction of our first joint activity in 2023.



SDG-17 Network Project

U21 is committed to embedding sustainability throughout our network strategy. The launch of our SDG-17 project helped us to understand the perspectives of our members as we return to higher levels of travel and face-to-face meetings.

Running through from November 2021 to March 2022, the comprehensive study was undertaken in three parts.

Firstly, a desktop environmental scan of the corporate and higher education environment of pandemic responses to international connectedness was completed, set against the wider context of climate change and sustainability.

That was followed by a quantitative survey of our members which sought their views on sustainability, climate and travel

policies and how the network should interact, physically and virtually, in the future. A round of focus groups and in-depth interviews strengthened the project findings.

Members and their university communities were generous with their time and commitment to this inquiry. Findings of this work were used to shape the 2022-2024 Strategy adopted at the 2022 Annual Network Meeting which included a commitment to becoming a climate-conscious network.

The outcomes of the SDG-17 project are an ongoing journey for the network as we adjust to both changing global conditions and relevant policy environments in our countries and institutions.

The findings continue to influence our actions as a network on into 2023.



Thank you

for your contributions to our network – read on for our Chair's message.



Closing Message from the U21 Chair



2022 has been a true year of transition, as the world continues to emerge slowly from the shadows cast by the global pandemic and higher education works out how to forge a new path forward to meet the changes in research demands and teaching brought about by the events from the past few years.

The challenges we face as nations and as societies are only increasing. With the pressures of conflict and climate crisis looming, education offers a beacon of light in what can seem sometimes dark times. As a truly global connector, the programmes and activities delivered by our network and the collaborative efforts it

inspires are more deeply necessary than ever. We face issues in the natural world that transcend borders – and can only be solved by co-operation on an international level.

The values embodied by Universitas 21 are the same values that are needed to work on solutions. In this report, we have seen the very life-changing results that can be gained from the programmes and initiatives led by the network. Our members have been engaged in collaborative efforts, shared best practice and knowledge exchange across a spectrum of areas. It is this spirit of engagement, communication and mutual benefit – present when the network was formed in 1997 and still just as relevant today – that will enhance our experiences as individuals and as higher education institutions.

The dynamic approach embodied by U21 has helped the network grow into an entity of over 1.2 million students and 250,000

staff members learning, sharing and growing together.

I would like to sincerely thank all our member universities and the leaders and staff within them whose dedication fosters this growth.

It is also important to acknowledge the work of our Provost, Professor Jenny Dixon, and the U21 Secretariat team in championing new initiatives and using the feedback from our valued members to further enhance the value to all our members. Knowing the worth of these activities enables us to look forward confidently to 2023 and strive for continued excellence in everything that we do as a network.

With very best wishes for a strong 2023.

Professor Eng Chye Tan

Chair



Universitas 21

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