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The circumstances that define the role and activities of a university may have changed more in the last several decades than in the previous several centuries. With limited access to sources of knowledge, it was appropriate for students to fill large halls and write down the knowledge that professors had acquired as a result of their own scholarship. The model of lecture, note-taking, and rote-based examinations met the needs of many societies when a relatively small percentage of the cohort continued on to university.
after completing secondary school and when the university prepared professionals and scholars for a relatively narrow range of disciplines.

The world has changed tremendously. And yet, universities in most countries have not kept pace with the rapid transformations taking place around them. Universities are still educating students as though they were the same students, raised in the same circumstances, as a century earlier.

Ministries of education are still requiring that degree programs adhere to traditional models as though graduates were going to enter a national labor force unaffected by global currents. Professors continue to teach as though they were the primary source of knowledge for the students sitting in their lecture halls.

While educators are discussing and debating the implications of swift technical advances, the easy access to information online, the rapidly changing needs of the labor market, the challenges of “digital natives” in the classroom, change has come very slowly (if at all) to most university campuses.

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In many countries it has become more difficult to attract the “best and brightest” to the academic profession. Professors enjoyed more autonomy in the past when they were relatively free to manage their time and the content of their classes as they chose.

Today, expectations of the academic profession are not only more complicated but nearly impossible to meet—professors are supposed to teach, publish research, assume responsibility for the academic progress of each of their students, and provide myriad services to their university.

In addition, they are supposed to stay abreast of advances in all the subjects that they teach, effectively integrate new technologies, and navigate the internal politics of their institution in order to protect their job.

Furthermore, the discussion of the professoriate often takes place as though there were a single model for all academic contracts, with hardly any consideration given to the enormous institutional, social, or economic variations that shape a professor’s opportunities.
There is also now significant mobility across the world, requiring those professors to adjust to the culture and practices of their host institution. Who is the 21st century academic? Are there generalizations to be made about those who pursue an academic career today? What kind of preparation, mentoring, and support is needed to insure a successful and satisfying academic career? What are the biggest challenges to universities that need to attract and retain talent?

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Enrollment in higher education has soared across the globe. Broader participation inevitably implies more diversity, and this diversity is reflected in the socio-economic circumstances of university students, in their degree of motivation, as well as the enormous range in the quality and adequacy of their prior learning.

Today’s students are increasingly “digital natives”. Most have grown up with at least some exposure to the Internet and, subsequently, access to an unlimited and unfiltered cacophony of information—they have come across a lot of information and yet they know little. These students come to the classroom with more exposure to different cultures and values and more information than ever before; they are in need of skills to manage this surfeit of information critically.

Students who have grown up doing homework and simultaneously listening to music, watching television and posting to Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr, process information differently than students of previous generations.
and posting to Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr, process information differently than students of previous generations. Preliminary research suggests that this current generation has a shorter attention span. Engaging these students in class presents new challenges and has inspired experimentation with new teaching methods along with new ways of delivering higher education.

Additionally, students feel more pressure to define their future careers earlier in their university programs than in the past. With limited career orientation and limited skill to predict the future job market, this pressure often becomes counter-productive with students making poor choices based on imperfect knowledge.

To complicate this further, graduates are unlikely to remain in one career; graduates now need to be prepared for changing employment several times during their career with a growing likelihood that they may work across borders. They therefore need the skills to adapt to different work environments.

The diversity, broad cultural exposure, access to unlimited information, and employment pressure add considerable complexity to the objectives of higher education. How do universities best integrate and educate this generation of students?
Universities have a critical social role to play at many levels. As always, the university must continue to be a source of new knowledge and innovation. But as more countries progress towards knowledge-based economies, universities play a key role in insuring that graduates have not only specific knowledge of a professional or academic discipline but the intellectual and personal skills required by an ever-changing job market.

The distance between employers and universities is narrowing with growing interdependence—the labor market requires more sophisticated skills beyond the content taught in degree programs and universities need to be able to place their graduates in careers that will continue to open future possibilities. University-industry linkages can be significantly enhanced when industry provides pre-professional internships to students. Besides exposing the students to the world of work, these experiences provide an opportunity to preview potential employees. Experience has shown that short industrial attachments are significantly beneficial to universities, employers and students.
Universities are often directly involved with industry in developing new products. This has proven to be a “mixed blessing” as private funding rarely supports pure research, but rather focuses on research directed towards specific, concrete, and short-term results.

As part of their service mission, universities should be civically engaged and socially responsible and encourage their students to serve the community in myriad of ways. Moreover, universities have a role to play in addressing the challenging social and economic difficulties that all countries face today, including climate change, poverty, inequality and international conflicts. Universities are well positioned to assist in the pursuit of solutions to these complex problems but few have ventured to share responsibility for these challenges.
Globalization, has eased the mobility of students, faculty, programs and campuses across borders, but has in some ways tarnished the positive aspects of internationalization.
Internationalization has emerged as a key element of institutional strategy during the past three decades. Once thought of as simply short-term or degree study abroad, internationalization now represents a vast array of activities and opportunities. Institutions may exchange faculty as well as students, collaborate on research on a small (two professors co-authoring a paper) or large scale (as evidenced by the international assembly of researchers working on the Super Collider at CERN), offer joint degrees, join international networks towards shared objectives, etc.

Globalization, has eased the mobility of students, faculty, programs and campuses across borders, but has in some ways tarnished the positive aspects of internationalization. It has resulted in
much commercialization of higher education with market forces and profit gaining greater influence over policy and practice. It has increased competitiveness as universities around the world compete for talent, with unfair advantages maintained by the wealthy, elite institutions. This is clearly evidenced in global rankings. Rankings have forced institutions to compare themselves to one another, often on the basis of irrelevant criteria, and have also influenced government policy as countries seek to join the competition.

Yet, internationalization also has implications for the classroom. Today’s students will need to acquire the skills and maturity to interact in the future with colleagues from other countries and cultures.

In the current globalized world, few universities can risk operating in isolation. How should they take advantage of the many opportunities that internationalization offers while at the same time avoid the less beneficial aspects of it?
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ACCREDITATION & ACCOUNTABILITY IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

With more enrollment diversity, the creation of many new public and private universities, and new mechanisms for providing a university degree, concern for quality has increased greatly worldwide. When so much credibility is assigned to a university qualification, it has become imperative that the degree should represent some generally understood standard in both a national and international context. Assuring quality of higher education has become all the more important to protect against new institutions – including ‘diploma mills’ - that award dubious qualifications.
During the past three decades nearly every nation has created an agency responsible for university quality, yet none have adequately defined exactly what that means. Quality of institutions and degrees is often defined by context but this implies flexible standards that are not necessarily respected or easily applied.

Multiple initiatives have been launched to create regional standards for academic qualifications that would facilitate mutual recognition of degrees, and thereby academic and professional mobility, but this has been accomplished to a very limited degree.

Furthermore, the public and private investment in education is substantial and a concerned public expects universities to be accountable for the investment of time and resources and to demonstrate that significant value has been provided.

The need for quality assurance is clear, but experience has demonstrated just how elusive the goal can be. The discussion of international quality assurance is littered with terminologies such as review, assessment, accreditation, audit and the meaning varies across countries leading to confusion. At the same time, global rankings have imposed a template for measuring quality that is irrelevant to most of the world’s institutions. While the need to ensure quality is not questioned, university faculty often resent the huge amount of administrative procedures that the process of quality assurance entails and which deter them from their primary activities of teaching and research.
CONCLUSION

Society's expectations of today's universities are more extensive and more complicated than they have ever been. Universities struggle to balance financial and human resources against the many demands of the societies that host them.

Rapid changes in societies, geo-politics, technology, and knowledge require universities to respond and adapt, yet universities tend to be conservative entities that do not evolve easily.

The 2015 IECHE will provide an important forum to discuss the imperatives of a changing world and how the 21st century University might or should respond.
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