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Sustainability of World-Class University Systems

The danger of going last at a conference as rich as this Second International Conference on Higher Education is that everything has already been said; having been given the "last word," I have assigned to myself the responsibility of bringing the themes we have sounded to a satisfying close. I would like to thank the conference organizers—His Excellency The Minister of Higher Education and Dr. Salim Al-Malik--for including at this conference on "world-class university systems" perspectives from every corner of our vast, variegated, global higher education community. Although the university I lead is a small, private, independent, tuition-driven, American-style Master's university located in the heart of Paris, not part of a national system at all, it considers itself nonetheless, by virtue of the demographic diversity of its students, faculty, and staff, and its mission of focusing curriculum and faculty research on issues of global importance, a world university and aspires to its own place in a transnational network of world-class institutions. Even a small university such as my own has Master's partnerships with the Sorbonne, Oxford and NYU, and is positioned within several imbricated global networks about which I will have more to say. If you'll indulge me for one more minute, the freshman class of AUP has brought into the university 93 different languages and dialects since we began measuring them in 2002, and a faculty holding over 25 nationalities brings that figure to 102. That demographic diversity inflects all teaching and learning at the University, drives our faculty research agendas, and measurably appears to exert influence on the ethical stances and career choices of the students we graduate. We like to say that they are so much *of* the world that they are *for* it. It is both our greatest strength and our greatest challenge, as managing that kind of diversity requires special curricular accommodations. In the world our students are inheriting, the capacity to work across cultural borders, languages and disciplines is the single most important skill we can offer them. // The fact that my university has no national majority in its constituent groups gives me a slightly different perspective on the issues we have been discussing, a kind of outlier's view of what it might take to ensure the sustainability of world-class university systems. In the few moments remaining to us in the conference, I will approach this issue both in terms of structure and organization—the

challenges we must anticipate so as to remain sustainably "world class"—and also in terms of content—the ways in which the twin imperatives of global interdependence and sustainable development might drive the outcomes of a diverse, diffuse, and networked world university system, one that ultimately transcends national boundaries.

Much has been said during the conference about the relationship between world-class university systems and the mobilizing of important national or regional agendas that include mass education, workforce needs, research profiles, scientific ambitions, and, of course, economic development. A rich variety of approaches have been cited, each modeled on best international practices as adapted to local requirements, needs, and visions. Extraordinary policy and budget commitments to education, such as those of South Korea and Saudi Arabia, have inspired us all. Luckily, we have also agreed upon the critical importance of pursuing excellence in all domains, including strong and supported teaching, education for citizenship, faculty and staff development, access and affordability, and quality assurance and assessment. Much has also been said about global competition—for scholars, resources, students, and rankings. Yet, ranking systems inevitably foster competition amongst such systems and even amongst universities within a single national system—often to the detriment of other crucial areas of university functioning and often working against a spirit of collaboration. And they necessarily exclude the small. While I recognize the importance and the interest of theorizing on the national scale, in approaching the topic today from the position of the "last word," I would like to shift registers from the national to the global, and thus to think differently the notion of "world class." I would like to suggest that we picture a future in which superimposed upon excellent nationally or regionally based world-class university systems will be a vast world community of globally networked institutions. These two formulations are not mutually exclusive. But in a sustainable future, we will need more flexible and variegated, less hierarchical notions of "world class" and increasingly globally constructed models of "university systems." World universities will be those, big or small, consolidated or independent, ranked or not, that provide a cutting-edge, deep learning, locally and globally specific learning experience to a heterogeneous student population and that deliver research capacity and collaboration in the service of global problems. Needless to say, here, I am also advocating a shift from a model of rival systems or global competition to one of networked cooperation and connection.

The problems we currently face as a world community will require of higher education collaborations at every level—operational collaborations permitting reductions of costs, new teaching and learning collaborations that permit students to enter profoundly and meaningfully into the world of other cultures, and research collaborations that will marshal different universities' strengths in the service of creating shared value on a global scale. A knowledge-based society knows, ultimately, no borders, as FaceBook and Twitter have taught us. A knowledge-based society will require systems in its own image, that is, systems that are loosely networked rather than silo-ed hierarchies. Such decentralized networks encourage diversity and level the playing field so that all voices in the system can be heard.

And a knowledge-based, global society requires leadership and new partnerships from the higher education sector—particularly in the areas of global interdependence and sustainable development. It is precisely the synergies created amongst universities in such a system that will guarantee its sustained excellence. Even a university as small as my own, a vibrant node connected to many others in a globally networked system, has its place and a contribution to make. Even the smallest university in France can lead the charge—AUP is the first institution of higher learning in the country to set in place a comprehensive recycling program.

The force making all of these connections possible—indeed shaping our metaphor here—is that of technology itself, that new and decentralized information and communications infrastructure that has already transformed how we live and work, how our students learn, how we accomplish research, and most essentially, how we communicate with one another. The interactivity of such systems has great potential for unleashing energy on our campuses, as well as for disrupting some of the traditional ways our universities have been organized and structured. In the great debates about the future of our universities, some commentators have even suggested that universities are, in fact, losing their monopoly on teaching and learning. Technology and the Web, drawing on scores of different media in new combinations, are making the traditional classroom lecture, indeed even some of the traditional disciplines, less and less relevant. And then there are shifts in demography, in workforce organization, in the actuarial tables that will be delivering into our universities a returning, continuing, and transitioning population of learners who have new needs for learning, notably on line and in time, on their immensely more complicated life schedules. Believe me, it's a whole new world out there when a former president of The University of Phoenix announces that this for-profit company may soon be making available to the nonprofit educational sector a new state-of-the-art on line course-delivery platform.

In fact, the very structure of knowledge itself has changed—creating an urgent need for new pedagogies, as well as new, more fluid structures governing our universities. There is no university leader in this room who has not confronted the primacy (and cost differentials) of research over teaching, of broad undergraduate learning over vocational training, the limitations of course delivery in predictable units of weekly and semestrial time that may or may not have anything to do with the biorhythms and the new socially networked patterns of student learning, the hegemony of traditional departmental structures that can promote overspecialization and curb innovation and collaboration in research—in short the traditional hierarchies that have governed university organization.

What will it take for us to build a sustainable global network of world universities? I think you can tell by now that the notion of "world class" worries me a little, with its inevitable hierarchies, inclusions and exclusions, so just for the sake of argument, I am very respectfully setting it aside it here. We are all in this together, and the stakes are high.

First we need to consider actively the relevance of our traditional organizational structures and educational programs to students born into the information age. Today students and researchers can access information "just in time" at the click of a mouse. They now need help culling it, evaluating its authority, and synthesizing and analyzing it; students need guidance to develop their critical judgment in a world where information flows are overwhelming; they need to learn to collaborate and to communicate information, not to master it. In a knowledge society, mastery is fast becoming irrelevant. Even traditional seat time, the way we have always measured out a semester's learning units, is at odds with the way this generation learns and communicates. Technology can increasingly and inexpensively provide the tools we need to promote learning amongst students in a class, between classes of students at different universities, and even across networked classes in ways that draw even the research of participating teachers into the classroom. These new networked interactions break down traditional hierarchies of lecturer and students, research and teaching, and alter profoundly the ways in which student learning may be assessed. On YouTube today we can see 3D flyover animations of the ancient city of Troy created by undergraduates; 120 student learners at North Carolina State University have "crowdsourced" a textbook with their professors from computer science and electrical engineering, using nothing more than a wiki. Still another North Carolina university has demonstrated that its on-line Microeconomics course repackaged in game format has delivered more and richer learning than the traditional course taught in an amphitheater.

Speaking of lecture halls, even our campus architecture is changing. Anthropologist Nancy Foster from U. of Rochester, who is doing fieldwork on students' activity patterns on campus, has shown that they no longer attend class, eat, go to the library, and then socialize in separate compartments and buildings the way we did. For this generation of student everything occurs simultaneously—they eat, study, learn, collaborate, do homework, sleep *and* network socially, some of it for class, all at the same time. Hence the information commons—a social space for the networked lives of students of the information age, where they engage in learning in mixed formats and media, some on-site, some distance. In the space of the new information commons, where learning occurs across a range of formats, only a small portion of which a teacher controls any longer, we've witnessed a shift from a teaching model to a learning model, in which students work alone and in groups on problem-based learning, on inquiry, and where the professor plays the role of a coach or guide on the side. Interestingly, the more we provide such learning experiences for students, the more likely they are to work collaboratively and to manifest genuine empathy for one another, as well as social engagement more broadly defined. In a team-taught course with a colleague some years ago, we learned that students who study social injustice by reading about examples of it rapidly lapse into guilty apathy, whereas those who are given opportunities to model real-life alternatives with their peers, no matter how difficult and stressful the process of finding common ground may be, leave the course infinitely more engaged.

One of the things I firmly believe is that tolerance is way overrated. In a community as diverse as AUP's, we've learned that cultural difference is real, it's edgy and it's difficult. It takes excellent negotiating skills to deal with difference, especially what we call the differences within cultures or religious faiths. Only by giving students opportunities to learn in cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary teams, such that they work through their social differences in pursuit of commonly articulated educational goals, are we equipping them for a world held in common. This isn't always easy to manage, and it makes for a less disciplined and easily controlled classroom, for sure, but it also opens possibilities for learning and engagement that traditional methods cannot match. These kinds of issues—new pedagogies for new experiences of belonging and engagement—might form the basis for a new global liberal arts, an idea whose time has come around again. And yes of course, I realize that liberal arts does not translate, even in the US environment any longer. It is not associated with an ideology—liberal—nor is it concerned only with the humanities. We need a new international formulation for this kind of deep inquiry, respect for diverse opinions, writing- and thinking- intensive learning that is articulated in both local and global context. An excellent example is the mission of Effat University, a private, non-profit Saudi university for women that connects the first word of the Quran, iqra, read, to the Islamic values of inquiry, research, principle, leadership. A world class example indeed.

As we educate students for citizenship in a rapidly globalizing world, we also need to think carefully about our approaches to student mobility/study abroad/cross border provision. Developmental studies have shown that moving cohorts of students from the same country or culture into a host culture usually produces the opposite effect of that which we are seeking, reinforcing cultural stereotypes at first and increasing an enclave resistance to a new culture. It is also available only to those with the means to travel. We also need to find richer ways to use the naturally occurring ethnic and cultural and religious diversity on our own campuses as a laboratory for self-discovery and development, taking our co-curricula into learning partnerships with our internationalized academic curricula. At a moment when unprecedented numbers of students, graduate and undergraduate, are crossing national borders to study, we also need to design curricular experiences that accompany and maximize intercultural learning, new pedagogies for border crossings. Moving students wholesale is not enough. We also need to use technology to facilitate the kind of conversations that promote real learning amongst students and spill outside the bounds of twice-weekly class periods. Four alumni of AUP, of whom I am excessively proud, founded Global Nomads ten years ago to put schoolchildren, via the school curriculum, into dialog with their peers across the globe. Using highly sophisticated technology, partnering with teachers within national curricula, this NGO has provided over the past decade « study abroad » to over 1.5 million school children, exposing them to cultural differences and exchanges in novel and cost-effective ways. Similarly, smaller colleges and universities have been using technology to extend their resources and network efficiently amongst themselves. At AUP, we have paired up with another liberal arts university in the US, Eugene Lang College of The New School in New York City,

consciously developing our departmental curricula and faculties in different, but complementary directions. Students and faculty travel back and forth between our campuses in New York and Paris to engage in jointly articulated transatlantic majors that focus precisely on the meaning of transnational and transdisciplinary border crossings—global cities, global communications, global literary studies, with more such jointly constructed transatlantic majors to come. Sophisticated videoconferencing technologies, available even at small campuses these days, will put learners on both sides in daily touch. The traffic between campuses has already spurred joint curricular development, faculty research projects and conferences, and a transatlantic student journal.

We also need to move to new ground in the opposition between a liberal arts or pre-professional or vocational approach to education, refusing the hierarchies of professional training over arts and sciences, whatever the market is calling for. This isn't a new issue—a Yale College faculty committee debated it in 1828—and I'm sure there is international evidence of prior academic conversations on this issue. In fact this is a dangerous and false dichotomy. Without both—without the deep learning that is characteristic of a broad, disciplinarily rich education *and* hands-on, problem-based learning, or applied knowledge, our graduates simply will not be prepared for a changing job market which will require them to retool or transfer skills over five times in their lifetimes. And they will not develop the capacity for critical judgment and evaluation, the openness to the complexity of claims and counterclaims, the sense of curiosity about and concern for others that is essential to the mature development of citizenship. We know that our students will need higher order generalizing skills as much as they will need specialized skills, or mastery of bodies of knowledge. It's not enough to leave the liberal arts to general education and the specialization to the majors; they must be profitably intermixed. We have all, I hope, exhorted our faculty in the traditional liberal arts disciplines to learn from their colleagues on the pre-professional side of the house how to give students opportunities to model and to make; and we have also exhorted faculty in business, medicine, communications and other professional departments to teach those disciplines as liberal arts, replete with reflection on ethics, social responsibility, and global commitments. The new liberal arts partnership between Yale University and the National University of Singapore—featuring new pedagogies, residential and extracurricular life, and leadership development alongside traditional technical and scientific education—is an exciting new experiment in this vein. So are the cutting-edge, integrated, interdisciplinary business curricula at University of Virginia Business School and Babson College, written up in Saturday's *International Herald Tribune*.

We also need to consider the relevance of traditional curricula to urgent social and environmental problems. Here academic leaders fashioning new university systems have the advantage over those of us renovating old academic houses. Instead of adding infinitely to our stable of traditional departments, we need to have the courage to abandon some traditional disciplinary approaches that no longer serve, or find new ways to share such disciplines and their faculties across a number of universities, in order to create new,

networked forms of imbricated teaching, learning, and research that address the world's most pressing problems. It is no longer enough to educate students to simply become "citizens of the world." The challenge facing us today is how to equip students—whatever their majors--with the mix of disciplines and skills required to think and implement sustainability in a diverse and globalizing world. It is not possible to think sustainability in distinct disciplinary chambers. Our graduates will need philosophy and the humanities, the various social sciences as they approach, differently, the issue of planetary interdependence, the study of science as it intersects with society, health, and human wellbeing, the management sciences and technology. The MacArthur Foundation has charged a commission of experts to design a two-year generalist curriculum for a Master's in Sustainable Development Practice that spans all of the disciplines I have just mentioned, opening a grant program seeding such programs on networked campuses. Such initiatives—at student demand—are flourishing on campuses around the globe, including many of your own. Another brilliant example of such curricular reorganization around global problems is the fine, although sometimes controversial, work of President Michael Crow at Southern Arizona State University. Redefining the research university as academically excellent in both teaching and research, inclusive and socially diverse, locally embedded, yet globally engaged, he has created above and beyond traditional departments more than 12 new interdisciplinary research initiatives and schools focused on biodesign, sustainable development, technology and science applications, human development and social change, etc. At whatever scale, we, as campus leaders, must create more spaces of innovation within our universities or between them, outside of the traditional fiefdoms we call departments and protect them from institutionalization. At AUP we use our first-year seminars as "sandboxes" in which professors from different disciplines experiment with new interdisciplinary approaches in a classroom that is not segmented by language ability or educational background or placement tests. In this flattened hierarchy, students are sometimes as much makers of the syllabus as the teachers, and each steps forward to contribute his or her expertise to class projects—across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Most professors who teach in these seminars report a trickle-up effect on their teaching in their other courses. What a fast, cost-effective and efficient way to encourage pedagogical transformation. Additionally, virtually all of our interdisciplinary master's programs originated in the petri dish of our first-year seminars. Exciting new avenues for collaborative faculty research, jointly authored texts, research on experimental pedagogies have grown out of this free zone in the curriculum. And then there are the benefits of running classrooms where students can create, workshop, innovate, model and fail. I should say in passing that if we hope to lead innovation, we should also develop a healthy tolerance for failure. How have we lost touch, in schools, in universities, even in research, with the value of stumbling and re-imagining. Learning rests on that.

We will also increasingly need to pay more attention to educational outcomes than inputs. Universities are being forced, salutarily I believe, to demonstrate that they deliver what they promised, that students are leaving with the skills, the discerning capacities, the

critical judgment, and the knowledge base that they are promised in college viewbooks. It's no longer the richness of the facilities, the size and outfitting of the labs, the wellness centers, the olympic pools and athletic facilities that will count, but a university's demonstrated capacity to train and place intelligent, thoughtful, and reflective citizens in a global workforce and society that has need of them. Here most colleges and universities have begun some of the most interesting and important assessment research in their histories, measuring student development longitudinally and showing evidence of progress toward mission. It is too easy to produce the results of standardized testing; it is imperative to design subtle instruments, both qualitative and quantitative, to capture the gradual attainment—across a curricular trajectory--of a student's capacity for critical thinking, civic conscience, and social engagement. This, recorded and analyzed by new forms of faculty research in the humanities and the social sciences, may turn out to be the one of the most compelling stories our colleges and universities have to tell—and it will build the faith of the public in the good our institutions provide.

We are all being drawn, like it or not, into ever more partnerships and consortial arrangements for reasons ranging from cost management to mobility of students to faculty and curricular development to innovation in research. Universities worldwide will be forced beyond competition with one another not only to survive, but to flourish. A good scenario might be something like that envisioned by the Bologna Accords in Europe—increased student and faculty mobility, transferability of credits, international legibility of diplomas and degrees, quality assurance. An excellent scenario might be a kind of "global virtual university" facilitated and convened by technologies such as videoconferencing that brings together resources worldwide and creates superdepartments of the highest possible quality, whose work, whose teaching, is made available and affordable to all. The work of Johns Hopkins and MIT in creating open, on-line curricula is to be lauded in this domain. So is the work of 14 campuses in the Associated Colleges of the South consortium who collaborated to create a topnotch virtual classics department, sharing a few dedicated scholar teachers across many financially stressed universities to the benefit of all students. Such developments will inevitably have an impact on disciplinary boundaries, notions of original research and authorship, and even new standards for tenure and promotion, all of which will require re-scripting. Remember that the 2007 Nobel Prize went to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Virtually all universities are currently involved in or exploring new consortial arrangements, which may ultimately supplant direct one-to-one partnerships. Eight years ago, AUP founded—with support from the A.W. Mellon Foundation—a consortium of 22 American-style universities across Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa. We are all nonprofit, Anglophone, liberal arts-style universities with pre-professional departments, but apart from that we could not be more different. Some are tuition driven, others highly endowed; some are private, others partially state-financed; some highly international, others deliberately focused on educating local student populations; some are

small, some very large; some were founded 160 years ago, while others are only a few years old. But we are all world universities, strengthened by our association with one another. The purpose of the alliance was to pool and thus expand our Anglophone academic and library resources electronically, to provide joint opportunities for staff and faculty development, to share best academic, library, and IT practices, to represent our common interests to outside constituencies, and to undertake, via technology, innovative curricular collaborations. What began as a cost-saving measure—pooled resources, consortial pricing—has become a lever for the engagement and mobility of faculty and students across our distributed institutions. We have been meeting annually at one or another of our locations since 2004, so that the presidents, deans, faculty members, librarians and technologists of our various institutions can work together cross-institutionally on common projects. Given that this consortium spans 22 institutions in 18 countries working in 15 different languages and as many legal systems, it has been impossible to find a structure to govern it. We have succeeded in building a consortium on human relationships alone—on good faith, good will, and intercultural dialogue—without a single Memorandum of Understanding. A second consortium in which we participate is the Global Liberal Arts Alliance linking three major groups of liberal arts colleges: the American-style universities abroad, Effat University here in Saudi Arabia, a group of European liberal arts colleges, and a group of Great Lakes colleges in the US. The presidents of these colleges have begun to envision an open, global, multi-point campus with easy faculty and student mobility, facilitated transfer credit, faculty research collaborations, and a network-wide international studies major resting upon specialties at all the colleges in the network.

But inter-institutional collaborations will not be enough. Other kinds of partnerships—with nonprofits such as museums or humanitarian organizations, with industry and business, with civil society and governments, even with for-profit partners are essential to the sustainability of world universities if we want to continue to have the impact on our societies, on global society, that our mission statements announce. As we all know, the problems our graduates will face are eminently solvable. We currently have the knowledge, the science, technology, the skills, and financial resources to achieve a sustainable world. But we need to bring them all together to bring forth the requisite change. Whatever role scientists, politicians, sociologists, urban planners, public health specialists, environmentalists, NGOs, governments, universities, and even ordinary people organizing recycling programs in their neighborhoods will play in sustainable development—and each of those contributions will be important—it looks increasingly as if global business will likely lead it. Of the world's 100 largest economic entities, some 60 are corporations. Society is increasingly looking to global businesses as the only institutions strong enough to meet the long-term challenge of changing our way of life. It is likely that the leadership of business in the creation of new strategies underwriting sustainable development will have great impact on the world's economies. More jobs will open in this sector than anywhere else in the years to come. The work done by the World Business Council on Sustainable Development—a CEO-led association of 200 companies in 30 countries across the globe

sharing a mission of leadership in the field of sustainable development—is exemplary in this regard.

University partnerships with business, such as many of you have already put in place in regional and national university systems, will be crucial to this global effort. A recent article in the Harvard Business Review on "Creating Shared Value" written by Michael Porter and Mark Kramer theorizes that it will take partners of many sizes—businesses, governments, NGOs, small local suppliers, even foundations—engaged in shared value creation to unleash the next wave of global growth. Although the authors describe partnerships that cross the boundaries between business, government and civil society, they do not mention universities explicitly. Yet our expertise and our history is precisely in this area. "Creating shared value" is an interesting alternative to notions of world class, global competition, and hierarchy. "Creating shared value"—across institutions, nations, local communities, civil society, industry, laboratories, faculties, technology-linked classrooms—is exactly how we should position ourselves as a world community of networked institutions. One powerful example is the clean cookstove project undertaken by the Surya network (meaning solar in Sanskrit), a collaboration amongst Scripps Oceanographic Institute at UC San Diego, Sri Ramachandra University in India, several international research centers, Qualcomm, and the UN Environmental Program. Setting out simultaneously to reduce greenhouse gases *and* promote the development of the world's poor in the Himalayas, rural India, China, and South America, Surya has deployed in villages inexpensive solar cookers, along with cell phones loaded with GPS and other data-collection software that upload to NASA satellites, all of this accomplished in partnership with graduate students and NGOs embedded locally. Surya has in two years alone demonstrated dramatic reduction of carbon dioxide and soot *as well as* positive impact on public health. Biofuel cooking and biomass burning contribute as much as 70% to global warming, and have, in addition, detrimental effects on human health and agricultural productivity; hence Surya's rapid outcomes are a win for people *and* the planet. Such global consortia—most successful when they focus on specific problems—address global societal problems whose solutions require expertise resident at different geographical places using the tools of global communications systems. Such consortia, I would argue, must be led by networks of universities, each contributing different kinds of expertise. This work must be led by universities, precisely because we put ethical frames around research, can align teaching with such ambitious projects, and have mechanisms for effective dissemination of results.

The one contemporary issue that brings everything together—the social and ethical, the economic and the scientific, the theoretical and the practical, student learning and advanced research agendas—in a vision of global change and sustainability, is that of the environment, an issue that has no country. Today every type of post-secondary institution—research universities, undergraduate teaching institutions, liberal arts colleges, master's universities, junior colleges and even vocational institutions—has a responsibility to consider as mission-critical the values, practices, partnerships, innovative thinking, and research that

will help us to address together such pressing issues as climate change, energy renewal, water, infectious disease, poverty, nutrition, and the growing chasm between the rich and the poor. Education for sustainable development, and not just development, must be seen as an essential part of the social responsibility of any world university in the 21st century. Indeed this issue transcends the false dichotomies between liberal arts and vocationally oriented study, between theory and practice, between elite and mass education, between private and public universities. A global community of collaborating higher education institutions—linked effectively by advanced technologies—can lay a strong foundation for a sustainable future by sharing best practices, exchanging and grouping faculty in new and undreamt of ways, creating new curricular designs, forging research partnerships and collaborations well beyond the academy, and exhibiting leadership at both national and international levels. Implementing change on this scale will challenge the resources of even the best-funded universities in the network; implementing change on this scale will require a full range of contributions from a heterogenous mix of universities across the planet; implementing change on this scale will also require reform of the traditional structures and hierarchies that have organized our universities. But it will also permit us—as a world community of networked colleges and universities—to respond powerfully to the challenges of global sustainability. Only then will we become sustainable ourselves.

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