



## Discussion Based Session

# Fostering Sustainability Out of a Pandemic: Pathways for Higher Education to Create a More Resilient Institution and Society

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# Introductions



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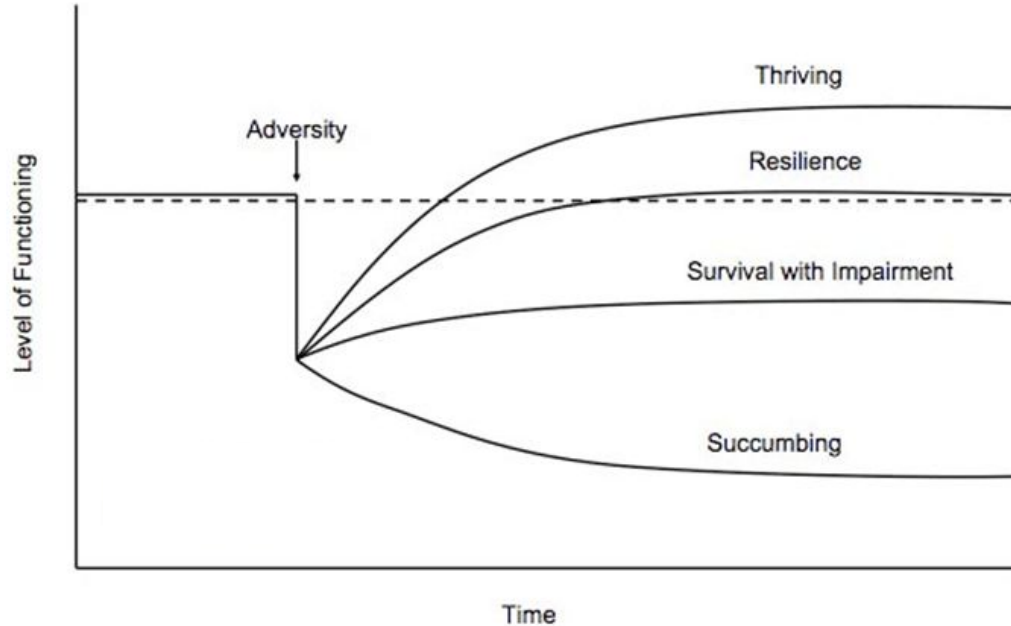
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# Resilience vs. Sustainability




**Resilience efforts** are designed to help you bounce back to your pre-shock trajectory or status quo state.

**Sustainability efforts** aim to transform culture and systems to foster a more just, democratic, and ecocentric society that can persist indefinitely.

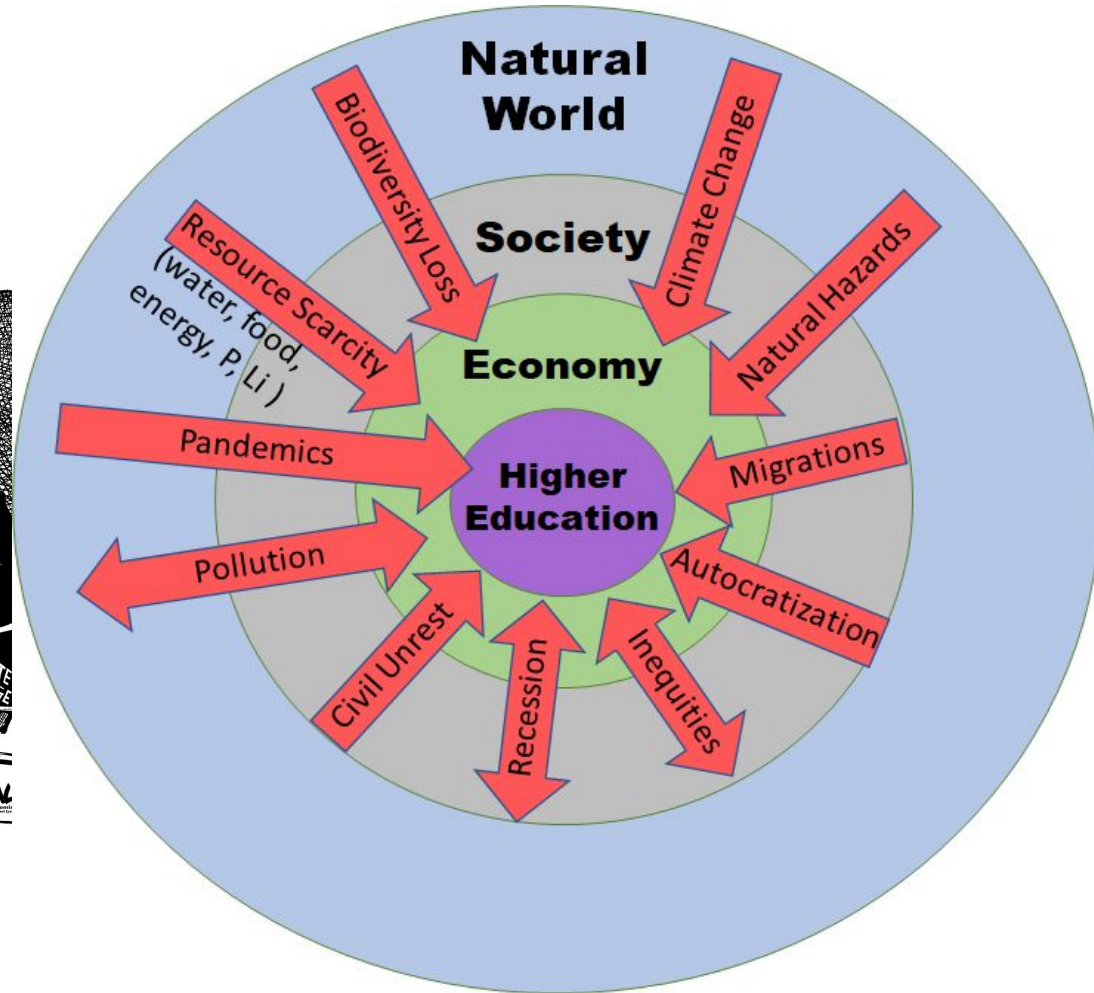



“In the critical years ahead,  
*if* destabilizing social, political and environmental stresses  
are addressed, the dream of a culturally rich, inclusive and  
sustainable world civilization becomes plausible.

*If* they are not, the nightmare of an impoverished, mean and  
destructive future looms.”




# Our Context - Part 1: Systems Threats

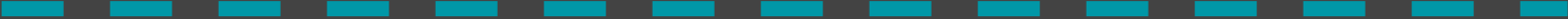





“Let's be clear: human activities are at the root of our descent toward chaos. But that means human action can help solve it. Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century. It must be the top, top priority for everyone, everywhere.”



*--UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, 12/2/20*

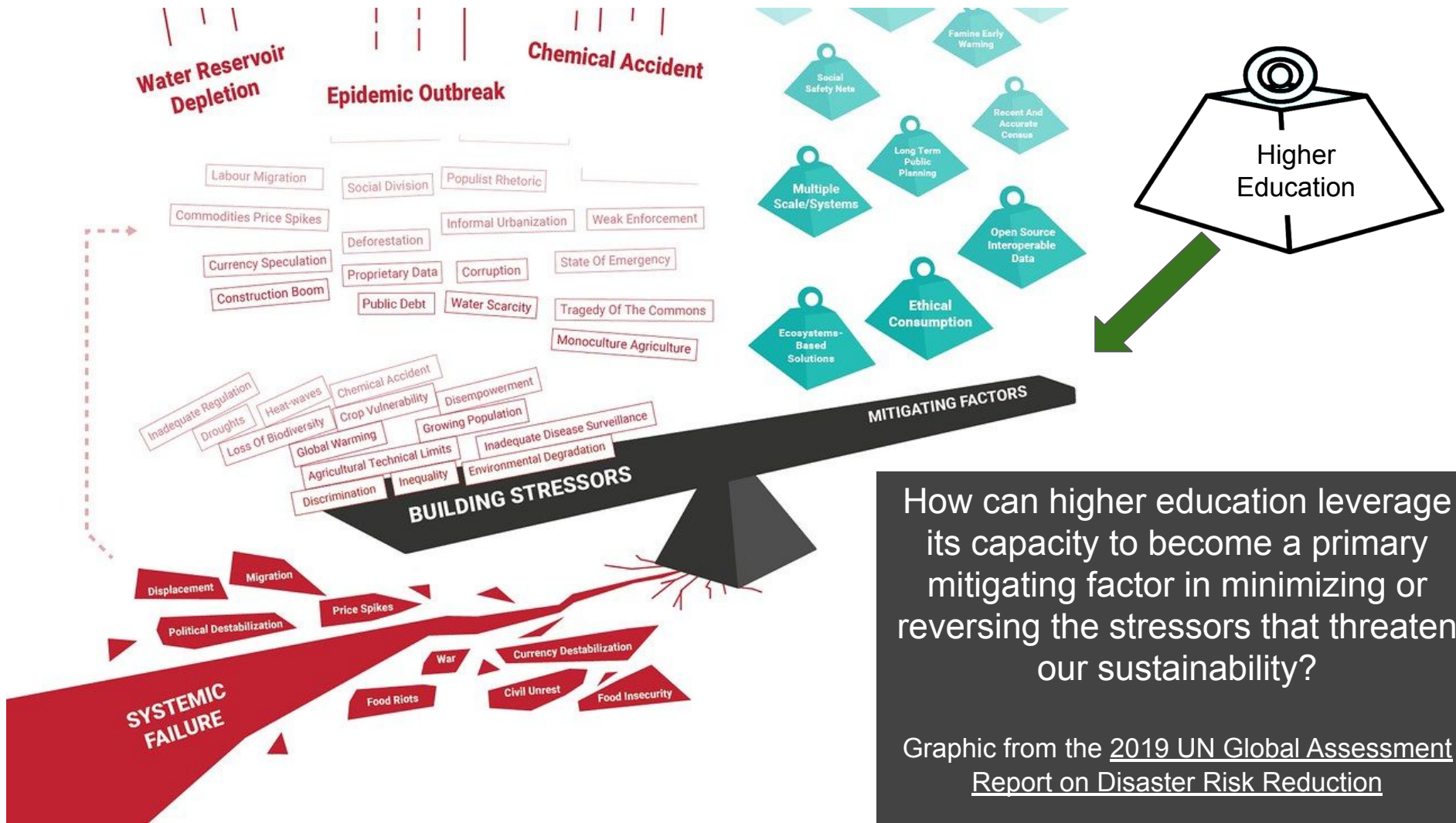


“The crisis of global ecology is first and foremost a crisis  
of values, ideas, perspectives, and knowledge, which  
makes it a **crisis of education.**”



*-- Dr. David Orr*



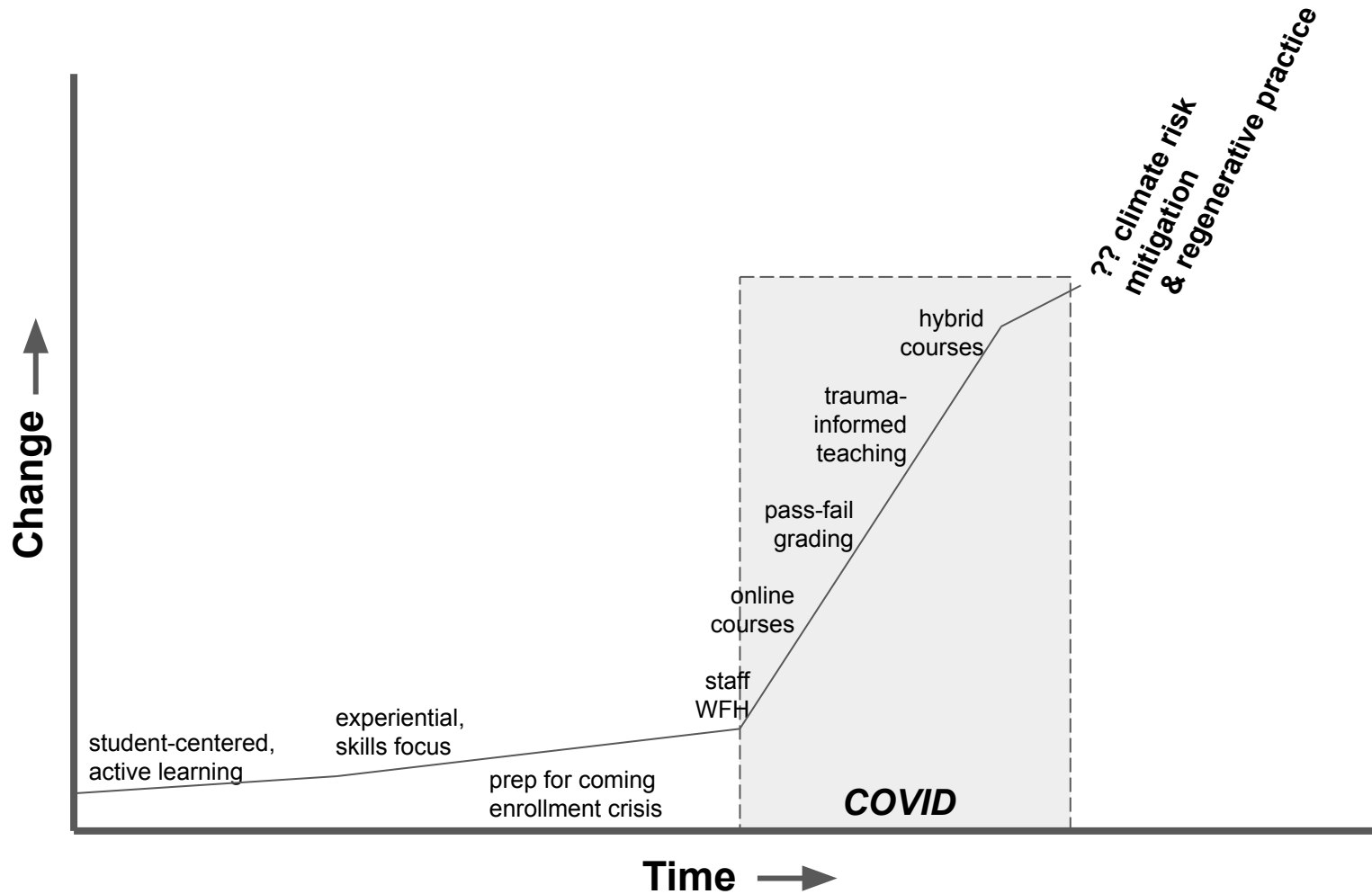


How can higher education leverage its capacity to become a primary mitigating factor in minimizing or reversing the stressors that threaten our sustainability?

Graphic from the 2019 UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction



# Our Context - Change in Higher Ed.



# Why address sustainability now?

We can forge our own [Great Reset](#).

As academia is currently in a state of flux and deep reflection on our limitations, systemic problems, and opportunities, now is the best time to reconsider our priorities and push innovation to foster long-term resilience and better alignment with our missions and values.

We can foster a [Just Transition](#).<sup>3, 4</sup>

The higher education community has the unique capacity, and *thus responsibility*, to guide civilization to a sustainable and just trajectory.

A photograph of a single yellow flower with five petals and a dark center, growing from a crack in a grey asphalt surface. The flower's green stem and leaves are visible. Overlaid on the image is the text '#SHIFT HAPPENS' in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is centered horizontally and partially obscures the flower and the crack in the pavement.

**#SHIFT  
HAPPENS**

# Instructions for Breakout Groups

## Directions:

- 1) Each group will be linked a slide deck with 3 prompts.
- 2) **Consider specific strategies** for each prompt, drawing on your institutional practices and unique experiences.
- 3) To add ideas to your slide, you can click on a sticky and drag it to the slide, then start typing. You can also copy and paste a sticky (or insert a text box) if you need more stickies!

## **Prompt 1: Institutional Response to the Pandemic**

- A. What has your institution done in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that enhanced institutional resilience and operational sustainability?
- B. What additional benefits/possibilities do those shifts offer staff, students or the institution?

## Prompt 2: Fostering Institutional Resilience

- A. What would a more resilient higher education system look like?
- B. What practices and values should be emphasized to help us manifest such a system?

*"We must redouble efforts to promote new and participatory approaches to environmental education and public engagement through formal and informal venues." Stafford et al. 2010*



### Prompt 3: Enhancing Sustainability

- A. What institutional and cultural barriers must we overcome in order to make fostering sustainability a top priority throughout higher education?
- B. How might we leverage the capital of our institutions to promote sustainability values and practices in students, our communities, and our society as a whole?

*How do we ensure our graduates are not our most harmful emissions? - Paul Morgan, 2020*

## Reflect & Write (5 min)

On your own, consider one of the following:

- What **connections or synergies** do you notice among your answers to the three question sets that point you toward **specific action areas** or steps?
- Where on campus might you find **allies** and collaborators in this work? How might you collectively build **momentum** toward change?
- What might you do **in the next week** to elevate sustainability and resilience at your institution? In the next **month**? What positive impacts or outcomes might result from those actions?
- We invite you to share your reflections on the padlet we are linking in the chat

## Next Steps

1. Put your email in the linked google form in the chat to stay in touch with us.
  - We will make available all slides to anyone who wants them.
  
2. What steps might we take together? Or, what do you think would be most likely to move your institution, and higher ed as a whole, forward?
  - Calls-to-action? Petitions?
  - Articles?
  - Stories and blueprints for sustainable institutional transformation?
  - Future conference sessions?

# Web Page of Resources

## Many Links to Resources on the Topics Listed Below:

[http://faculty.washington.edu/rturner1/Sustainability/Bibliography/AAC&U\\_Session\\_Resources.htm](http://faculty.washington.edu/rturner1/Sustainability/Bibliography/AAC&U_Session_Resources.htm)

- **Synthesis of Global Risks and Opportunities**
  - Our Great Challenges and the Likelihood of An Increasingly Turbulent Future
  - Why the Time is Now for a Great Reset
- **The Role of Higher Education in Steering Culture and Fostering Environmental Sustainability, Democracy, and Justice**
  - Mission and Values of Liberal Arts Education (and How They Align with the Principles of Sustainability)
  - The Ability of Institutions of Higher Education to Transform Thinking and Culture
  - The Imperatives for Higher Education To Take the Lead in Fostering a More Sustainable and Just World
  - Coming Into Alignment with What Students Want and Need
  - The What, Why, and How of Sustainability Teaching and Learning
  - Sustainability Transformations of University Operations
  - The Business Case for Prioritizing Sustainability at Institutions of Higher Education

# THANK YOU!

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“What we can do and want to do is projected in our imagination, quite outside ourselves, and into the future. We are attracted to what is already ours in secret.

“Thus passionate anticipation transforms what is indeed possible into dreamt-for reality.”

*-- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*