

DP remarks at the Inaugural Workshop of the CHUSS Centre of Excellence in Research, Teaching and Learning (CERTL)

The Chair Council

The Vice Chancellor

The Deputy Vice Chancellor

The Principal, CHUSS

The Director, CERTEL

The Deputy Director, CERTEL

Colleague here physically present and those joining us online

And all protocol observed

I welcome you all to this **Inaugural Workshop of the CHUSS Centre of Excellence in Research, Teaching and Learning**

The CHUSS Centre of Excellence in Research, Teaching and Learning has come at a time when all the world education leaders are considering their options in the age of the COVID-19 crisis. Increasingly the rallying call is, they must rethink the conventional wisdom.

However, make no mistake. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, the higher-education sector faced significant challenges: student completion; troubling disparities persist in student enrollment; the rising level of student debt, etc.

The pandemic is intensifying these challenges and creating new ones. Students and their families are struggling with the impact of campus closures and questioning whether it is worth it to pay for an on-campus experience when much of the instruction is being done remotely.

Emerging evidence suggests that students from lower-income backgrounds are more likely to delay graduation due to the COVID-19 crisis than their higher-income peers.

A quick take away from this is that the coronavirus has confirmed the case for fast and fundamental change. But even more importantly, it has also demonstrated that change is possible. Today many HE Institutions are moving quickly to remote learning and other delivery models. Here at Makerere colleagues are launching a range of initiatives and are finding creative ways to support their students.

With that in mind, allow me to pose some questions that we need to address as we look to the future.

1. What makes our university distinctive?
2. How can we build a diverse and inclusive institution?
3. What services are necessary to create a high-quality student experience? And what aren't?
4. What is our business model?
5. **What delivery channels and models should we use to fulfill our core educational mission?**
6. **How do we challenge conventional wisdom?**

With regards to **the delivery channels and models we should use to fulfill our core educational mission**, the conventional wisdom has been that the best university experiences and educational outcomes are delivered in person, on a residential campus.

The lecture hall, the dorm, the parties: these are some of the well-known totems of the quintessential college experience. These images are ingrained; they are also part of the reason why many (and maybe most) of our traditional higher-education institutions have been slow to adopt new methods and technologies, such as remote instruction and competency-based learning that have the potential to advance student success while also lowering costs. the COVID-19 crisis hustled even reluctant students and institutions into action

Institutional acceptance of the online delivery model also may be increasing.

Ever since the pandemic began staff have a better opinion of remote learning.

Remote and online learning are here to stay. The need is to determine what combination of remote and in-person learning delivers the highest educational quality and equity. As we refine this hybrid model, we have a once-in-a-generation chance to reconfigure our use of physical and virtual space. We may be able to reduce the number of large lecture halls, or we could reimagine the academic calendar.

How do we challenge conventional wisdom?

Responding to a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic requires leaders to take decisive short-term actions. But they also need to dedicate time to develop longer-term strategic thinking.

This is not the first time, nor will it be the last, that universities will need to adapt. I will share with you the words of a former Harvard President Charles W. Eliot in his inaugural address in 1869 when he said “The inertia of a massive university is formidable. A good past is positively dangerous, if it makes us content with the present, and so unprepared for the future.”

I thank you all