



Learners seeking higher education today face some pretty significant problems. Finding the financial wherewithal and the opportunity to attend are just two of them. However, it's my belief that in the near future we'll see different types of learning organizations evolve to address these problems and others. Hi. My name is Gary Lewis. Thank you so much for joining me in this slidecast. In the next few minutes I hope to stretch your imaginations a bit and to consider what these new learning organizations may look like.

What comes to mind
when you think about
universities



Thank goodness my daughter is well past this age, but suppose you have a son or daughter who would like to attend a university. What thoughts and emotions flood your mind?

Likely those thoughts are mixed

Wonderful new horizons



But not for all

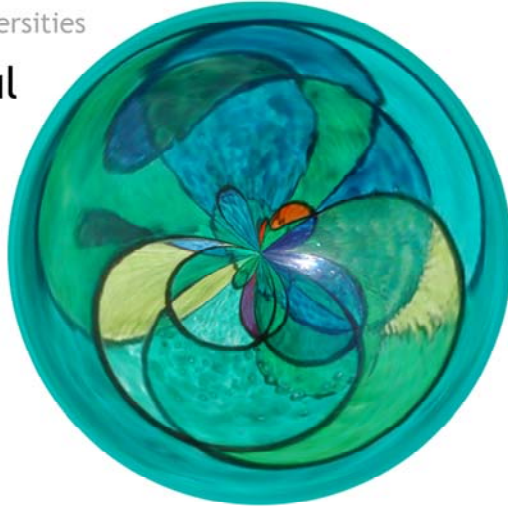


If you're at all like me those thoughts are a jumble. Some are strong and positive. Things like new beginnings and opportunity and hope. On the otherhand there are questions galore ... Can we afford it? Will she have the time to do it justice? Does she have the background to be admitted? If she does not attend, will she be left behind? Even if she is one of the fortunate few and attends and then graduates, will she still be paying off student loans twenty years later?



It's because of concerns like these that far too many people today are left outside of higher education looking in.

Let's imagine universities
beautiful



Can we imagine learning organizations where this would not be true? I think the answer is yes. Simply by cobbling pieces that already exist, putting them together in new ways, I believe we can approach a point where affordability and accessibility will not be major problems.

“Imagination is everything.
It is the preview of life's coming attractions.”

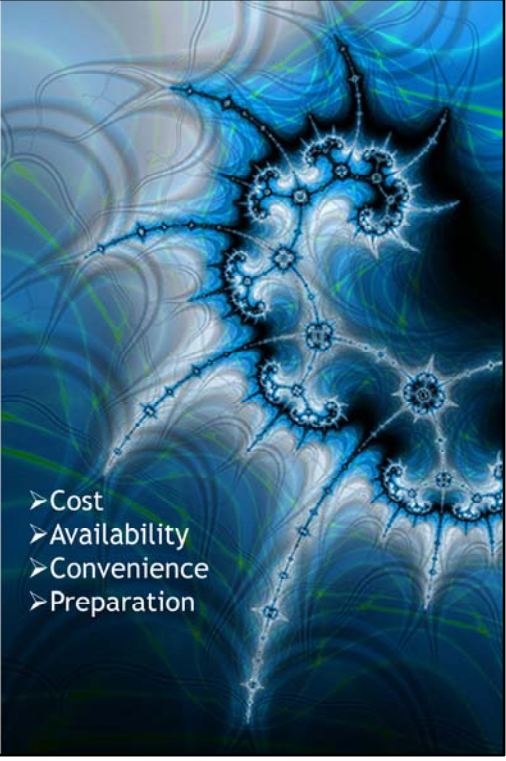
Albert Einstein

“Things are only impossible until they're not.”

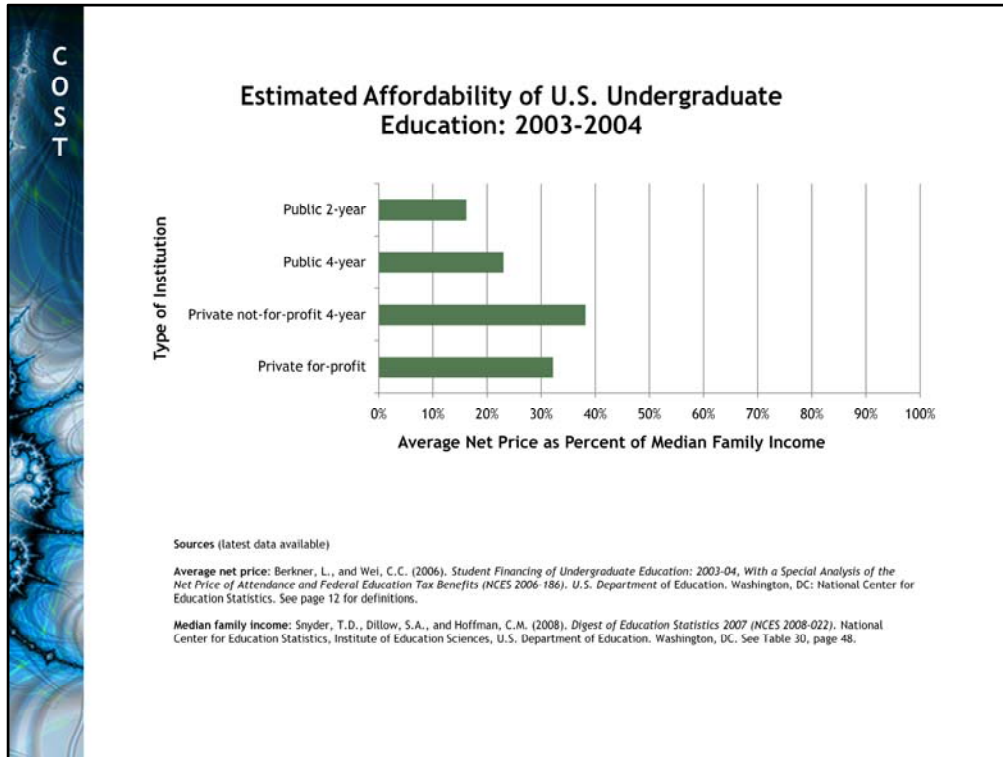
Jean-Luc Picard
Star Trek: The Next Generation

Creativity begins with the ability to dream new dreams and that's really what I'm asking you to do here, to try to imagine new types of learning organizations.

What keeps people
outside universities?


- 
- Cost
 - Availability
 - Convenience
 - Preparation

Before we actually set off to think about tomorrow's universities, it's helpful to have a basic understanding of what some of the issues are. I'll talk briefly about four of them. One is cost or affordability. The second is availability or access. The third is convenience or the lack thereof. The fourth deals with the preparation needed to attend. Because of the complexity of educational systems and social systems and economic systems, these four issues are not separate but are interrelated.



This chart estimates the affordability of various types of higher education in the United States after discounting for financial assistance that comes in the form of grant aid. It shows that a family earning the median family income would spend between 15% and 40% of that annual income to send a son or a daughter to one year at an institution of higher education. If you look closely at the chart, you'll see that the pricing opportunities for new types of learning organizations actually exist at the low end of the pricing scale. Beneath even the two-year publics there's considerable price space for innovation.

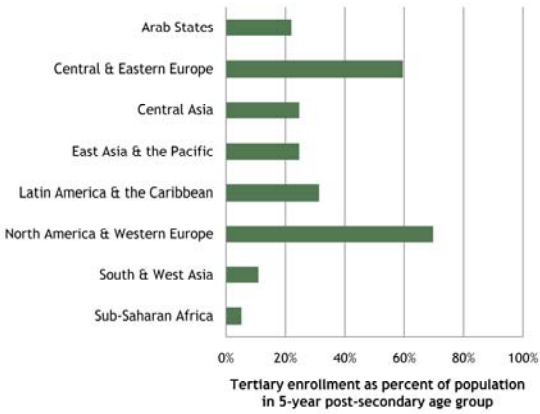
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“Tens of millions of new students have entered tertiary education in the last decade, reflecting an increasing global demand for higher education. Yet despite this seemingly spectacular growth, only a small share of the population has access to tertiary education.”

UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
Global Education Digest 2006, p20.

Gross Enrollment Rates in Tertiary Education: 2006



Region	Tertiary enrollment as percent of population in 5-year post-secondary age group
Arab States	~20%
Central & Eastern Europe	~60%
Central Asia	~25%
East Asia & the Pacific	~25%
Latin America & the Caribbean	~35%
North America & Western Europe	~70%
South & West Asia	~10%
Sub-Saharan Africa	~5%

Source
Chart constructed with data from the UNESCO UIS on-line database available at http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev_en.php?ID=6511_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

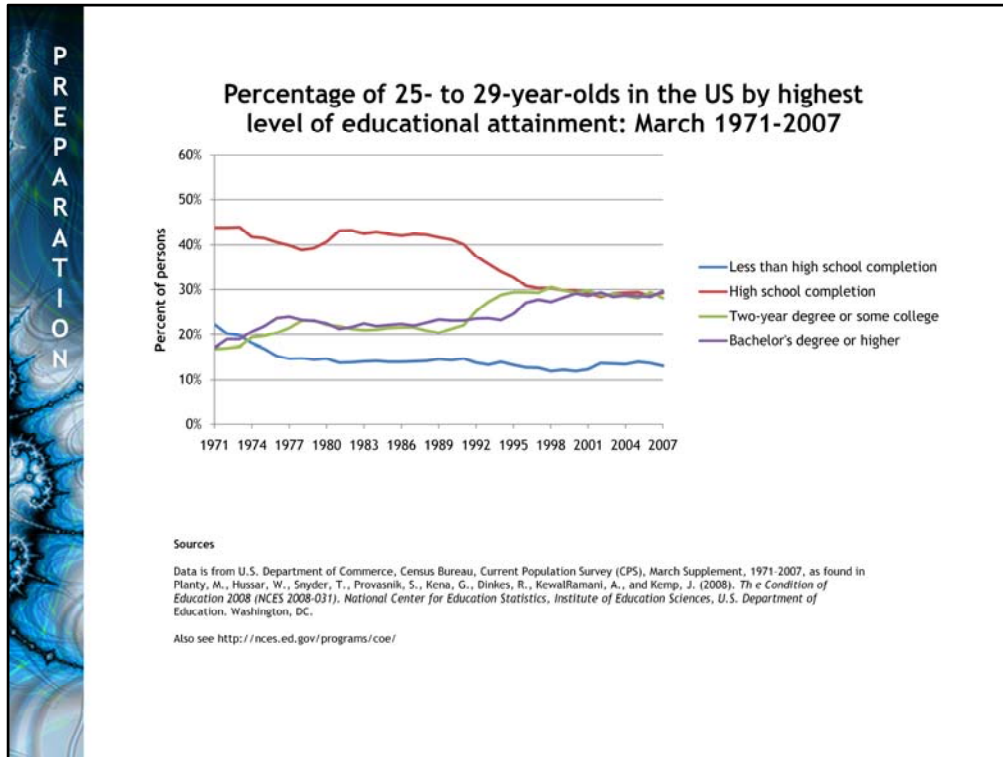
This chart uses UNESCO data to show participation rates in higher education across the major regions of the world. The variation in those participation rates is considerable. The quote suggests that there is also substantial excess demand for higher education, which implies that new learning organizations that can offer an attractive price would be rewarded by a potentially large number of new learners.

Barriers to Participation in Adult Education

“[C]ertain barriers show up fairly consistently as being considered highly important, such as (1) the (lack of) time people have available to pursue AE, (2) family responsibilities, (3) the time and place the courses are scheduled, and (4) the cost of courses.”

Source: From a review of 17 studies in U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Adult Education Participation Decisions and Barriers: Review of Conceptual Frameworks and Empirical Studies*, Working Paper No. 98-10, by Tim Silva, Margaret Cahalan, and Natalie Lacierno-Paquet. Peter Stowe, Project Officer. Washington, D.C.: 1998.

Adults have their own rather unique set of obstacles that limit their participation in higher education. Like young people, of course, they're concerned about cost. But they're also very concerned about time or the lack of it. They may have jobs, they may have families or other responsibilities that simply limit the amount of time that they can devote to learning in a concentrated way. Improving the convenience to learners would be another way in which new learning organizations could make a major impact.



Another concern, at least among some learners, is that they feel unprepared. They may lack the paper credentials that are required for admissions. Or they may feel that their skills are outdated. Or maybe they feel that they were never any good in an academic setting and so they choose not to even consider higher education. By reducing the barriers to participation, new learning organizations can open opportunities to an underserved population like this.

In a nice fashion, I think, this graph summarizes the decisions concerning higher education that individuals and families have made over a 40 year period in the United States. The decisions bundle concerns about cost, availability, convenience, preparation and others into a single yes or no choice for a specific age group 25 to 29 years old. The curiosity is that there is still ample room for more participation in higher education in the United States. But it hasn't happened recently and seems instead to have stabilized. New learning organizations may have something to offer here.

What principles can
guide our
imaginations?

- 
- Better
 - Free
 - Inclusive

At this point then we have some idea of the major problems and where new learning organizations can make a difference. It's helpful now to identify the principles needed to guide our imaginations. I'll briefly discuss three that seem important to me, but there's no way that these will necessarily be yours, so challenge what you hear and create your own if you want to imagine tomorrow's universities for yourself.

Learning tomorrow must be more convenient, more personally relevant, and higher quality than learning today.

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The first principle is foundational. If you create a better product at a better price, that's usually a powerful combination that encourages change. I'll talk about price in the next slide. But, for me, learning tomorrow must improve on education today. It must be more convenient to people everywhere. And it must also be more relevant to individuals. The overall quality of learning must be as good or better than what exists now.

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. ... [H]igher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.”

Article 26, Section 1
Universal Declaration of Human Rights
United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217 A of 10 December 1948
Available at <http://www.unhcr.ch/udhr/>

Everyone has the right to learn.
Learning shall be free throughout each person’s lifetime.

F
R
E
E

The second principle concerns price. The 1948 statement on human rights by the UN General Assembly was indeed a bold vision for education that we’re still far from reaching. But the statement does not go far enough. Learning is a basic human right. It should be available on-demand throughout each person’s lifetime at no cost to the individual. If we start with that as a defining principle, the learning organizations of tomorrow will look considerably different from those of today.

“Where the world makes a home in a single nest.”

Source: An ancient Vedic Sanskrit verse.
It is also the motto selected by the poet Rabindranath Tagore
for Visva-Bharati University when he founded it in 1921.

“Recognize beauty and ugliness is born.”

Source: Daodejing of Laozi, opening line in Section 2
as translated by Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo,
Tao Te Ching/Lao-Tzu, Shambhala, 2007.



The third principle I’ve called inclusion. If you link the two quotes shown in the slide, you come up with something like this. BeginQuote, learning is where the world makes space to accommodate multiple versions of beauty, EndQuote. That is, how I define beauty and what I identify as beautiful are likely not your own. The institutions of tomorrow, including the learning institutions, must allow for multiple versions of beauty to coexist. Learning then becomes a crucible within which the space for coexistence occurs.

One sketch of
tomorrow's
universities




I'll try now to apply these principles to address the problems that face learners in higher education today, the ones we looked at earlier. The question that I asked myself was ... "Is this imagination beautiful?" I know you'll have your own answers. Mine are certainly limited by who I am and how I see the world, so I urge you design the universities that look beautiful to you.

Is it beautiful yet?

Learning communities

Sketch 1:15

An abstract, colorful pattern consisting of swirling, ethereal shapes in shades of purple, blue, and green, resembling smoke or liquid light.

I'll draw a picture of tomorrow's universities along 15 dimensions. First, learning is an individual and a social activity, so let's start with a community of learners who ...

Is it beautiful yet?

Domains of interest

- Learning communities

Sketch 2:15

... are tied together through a common interest. These areas of interest are sometimes called domains. The domain can be anything ... quilting or web design or coffee roasting or string theory or whatever; anything that people find compelling and around which they can coalesce.

Is it beautiful yet?

Free

- Learning communities
- Domains of interest

Sketch 3:15

Learning in these communities will be free to everyone. I'll suggest in a moment how we might pull this off.

Is it beautiful yet?

Self-selected

- Learning communities
- Domains of interest
- Free

Sketch 4:15

Vibrancy in learning communities occurs when people join willingly because of their interest in the domain. Tomorrow's learning organizations must lower the barriers to participation.

Is it beautiful yet?

Projects, not courses

- Learning communities
- Free
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected

Sketch 5:15

The new learning organizations of tomorrow will be structured around projects rather than courses. Projects provide a unique blend of individual and group learning that occurs informally while focused on a common goal. As a model, consider scientists from throughout the world who work together conducting research.

Is it beautiful yet?

Teams, not classes

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected

Sketch 6:15

Projects typically involve individuals working alone and in small teams. Teams are fluid in the sense that they form, morph, disappear, and perhaps even come back together in different guises. People work on problems, and you do whatever it takes to grapple with those problems.

Is it beautiful yet?

Certification

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes

Sketch 7:15

Degrees and diplomas now serve a very useful purpose in the job market, functioning much like a stamp-of-approval to both learners and to employers. To be viable, tomorrow's learning organizations cannot ignore this reality. Competency certification will occur in each learning community for each learner upon request of the learner. And in a manner to be discussed in a later slide, certification that occurs across learning communities will also be possible. This will provide a more aggregate level of certification that is similar to a degree but still more expressive of individual strengths.

Is it beautiful yet?

Transportable portfolios

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Certification
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes

Sketch 8:15

Each learner will also need a portfolio that can be transported across domains and used by the individual to display learning highlights and skills.

Is it beautiful yet?

Online

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Certification
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes
- Transportable portfolios

Sketch 9:15

The online choice is an easy one. It reduces geographical isolation, improves convenience, puts downward pressure on costs, utilizes existing learning communities and content, and provides an organizing form for the network of tomorrow's learning organizations.

Is it beautiful yet?

Open content

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Certification
- Online
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes
- Transportable portfolios

Sketch 10:15

Tomorrow's universities will use and create what are now called open educational resources. Here I'll simply call this open content. Open content can be reused, modified, or mixed with other open content to produce yet new open content. This provides a gateway to personalize the learning for individual people. Lots of work is currently being done in this area.

Is it beautiful yet?

Permeable structures

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Certification
- Online
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes
- Transportable portfolios
- Open content

Sketch 11:15

Existing institutions of higher education are bounded by both space and by organizational form. Permeability and fluidity will be important aspects of tomorrow's learning organizations, as members participate in multiple learning communities and move throughout the network of communities.

Is it beautiful yet?

Public good LLC

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Certification
- Online
- Permeable structures
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes
- Transportable portfolios
- Open content

Sketch 12:15

Tomorrow's learning communities will be legally organized as limited liability companies that serve the public good. There is certainly precedence throughout the world for legal entities similar to this. In the United States, for example, the state of Vermont has recently revised legislation that makes these LLCs possible.

Is it beautiful yet?

Hybrid profit/non-profit

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Certification
- Online
- Permeable structures
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes
- Transportable portfolios
- Open content
- Public good LLC

Sketch 13:15

An LLC serving the public good is a hybrid legal structure. It has both profit-making potential and a non-profit designation that can attract donations, foundation support, and government funding. Learning communities thus have a range of revenue options, and where they choose to place the emphasis will vary across communities.

Is it beautiful yet?

Learning network

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Certification
- Online
- Permeable structures
- Hybrid profit/non-profit
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes
- Transportable portfolios
- Open content
- Public good LLC

Sketch 14:15

Tomorrow's learning organizations will be a network of learning communities each organized as an LLC that serves the public good through a for-profit and non-profit hybrid structure.

Is it beautiful yet?

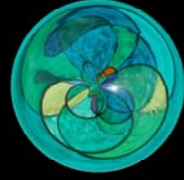
Learning hubs

- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Certification
- Online
- Permeable structures
- Hybrid profit/non-profit
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes
- Transportable portfolios
- Open content
- Public good LLC
- Learning network

Sketch 15:15

We need one other component in the architecture of tomorrow's universities. The network of learning communities will contain hubs that relate learning communities to each other. These hubs will serve back-office functions like accounting and membership services, but they'll also provide learning certification across multiple domains and communities.

What about now?



- Learning communities
- Free
- Projects, not courses
- Certification
- Online
- Permeable structures
- Hybrid profit/non-profit
- Learning hubs
- Domains of interest
- Self-selected
- Teams, not classes
- Transportable portfolios
- Open content
- Public good LLC
- Learning network

Source: <http://garymlewis.com/instchg/2008/08/10/sketchy-business-plan-for-tomorrows-university>

If you'd like more detail, please take a look at an FAQ that I wrote several months ago. The url is located at the bottom of this slide. It's a short document, only four pages long, but can fill in some of the gaps that I cannot get to in a slidecast.

It's probably pretty clear to you how this imagination address the problems of access, convenience, and preparation. In none of these areas does it provide a complete solution, but it does seem possible to do better than what we're doing presently.

Whether we can actually provide learning for free is probably much more difficult to see. It certainly is for me. Free is surely affordable to learners, but is it affordable to anyone else?

Well, learning communities have several sources of strength. And the for-profit nature of the LLC allows them to earn revenue from such project work as contracts, consultancies, workshops, and training programs. The non-profit nature of the LLC allows learning communities to receive support from public donations, charitable foundations, international organizations, and governments.

Is free affordable this way? Honestly I don't know. And we may not know for certain until someone tries. Should we strive for free? Absolutely.

Imagination for tomorrow's sake



This was a pretty fast romp through complex territory. I harbor no illusions that my image of tomorrow's learning organizations is actually beautiful. The analytic and critical me can take any one of the 15 dimensions that I used and punch holes in them. So can you. And at some point this may be necessary. But that's not the purpose of the slidecast. Rather I hope that it provides an illustration, maybe just a glimmer, of what we can do. **We can** create better learning institutions than we have presently. At the same time we can also serve a much broader portion of the world's population. But we need people to imagine the beautiful and then to forge the spaces where multiple versions of beauty can simultaneously exist and flourish.

“The storyteller is deep inside everyone of us. The story-maker is always with us. Let us suppose our world is attacked by war, by the horrors that we all of us easily imagine. Let us suppose floods wash through our cities, the seas rise ... but the storyteller will be there, for it is our imaginations which shape us, keep us, create us - for good and for ill. It is our stories, the storyteller, that will recreate us, when we are torn, hurt, even destroyed. It is the storyteller, the dream-maker, the myth-maker, that is our phoenix, what we are at our best, when we are our most creative.”

Doris Lessing
Nobel Lecture
December 7, 2007

http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/lessing-lecture.html

I'll end with some thoughts that Doris Lessing delivered in her Nobel address in 2007. Note the wonderful imagery and the use of the word imagination.

Please. Imagine tomorrow. And then build it.

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Last, but certainly not least, I'd like to acknowledge the people who took the terrific photographs used in this slidecast and who, then, in an act of generosity, made them available under a Creative Commons Attribution license. It serves as a great example of the type of open content that will be used and created in tomorrow's universities.