University Engagement Driving Delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals: Social Enterprise

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Abstract
We face global environmental, social and economic challenges that together threaten to overstep our planetary boundaries. In 2015, 193 countries adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the first agreed actionable agenda by the global community for all citizens. Higher education institutions being ‘locally rooted and globally connected’ have significant opportunities to deliver against the SDGs, working with faculty, staff and students as well as their stakeholder community and alumni. As Jeff Sachs (Director, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network) said “Advancing the SDGs is the ‘moon shot’ for our generation”.

Here we illustrate some ways universities and colleges might step up, illustrating the account with examples from a UK university that worked as a change agent with partners to help shape new ways for the world. Adopting the SDGs at a strategic level led to the emergence of new teaching/learning and research/innovation opportunities through social enterprise, informed by stakeholder priorities but aligned with the academic mission of the institution. Changes to practices in institutional leadership and governance frameworks were identified as enablers of engagement with the SDGs.

Higher education has a unique role and responsibility to help the world achieve the SDGs with radical adaptive changes needed to deliver the necessary institutional transformation. Framed as ‘living labs’, universities and colleges can make a fuller contribution to sustaining the economic, cultural and intellectual well-being of our communities and society at large. Focusing deliberately and proactively on the SDGs, higher education can help deliver a more sustainable and inclusive future, connecting universities with the society they serve.

Introduction
We are approaching a tipping point, which is widely acknowledged, but most people are carry on as normal (Rockstrom et al., 2009). This is the case in much of the global higher education system too. Work in sustainability often sits on the margins of mainstream subjects that continue to educate for a world that is rapidly changing. We
need a more adaptive approach to higher education, helping to facilitate a more equitable society and a better world by working with partners in public, private and plural sectors to accelerate change and co-create a sustainable future (Cortese, 2003). The SDGs can be a powerful compass to help guide the transformation of universities, orienting both the university as an organization as well as its academic pursuits. In this way, higher education can become an engine of transformational sustainability, and play a critical role in developing solutions through multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships.

The ability of universities to deliver on the SDGs demands that they adapt to this new global agenda for change (Purcell et al., 2019). With the first and second missions of a university reflecting respectively teaching/learning and research/innovation, other spheres of activity are often relegated to a ‘third mission’ (Vorley and Nelles, 2008) or considered ‘other’ in audits of institutional activity. We posit that working towards the SDGs should not be a third mission for a university, rather it could be considered the mission, with institutions using the SDGs as a lens through which to view their academic undertakings. Examples of university-led SDG projects abound and are showcased on an annual basis through the International Conference [http://icsd.org/]. But is higher education acting fast enough? Are the changes sufficiently deep? Given the pace and scale of change signaled by the SDGs across multiple domains, universities can do so much more.

In seeking to promote the delivery of the SDGs we must not endanger university autonomy, neutrality and role as a knowledge-driven community of practice. Rather, faculty, staff and students of an institution should continue to pursue their activities while at the same time turning their attention to connect their work with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld]. Tensions may of course result, for example, between institutional goals, cultural preferences, and individual and organizational drivers (Bridgman, 2007) which can in turn impact on the availability and application of resources and effort. Perhaps the greatest challenge is to foster engagement throughout the organization, and thereby potentially confront the academic independence of individual departments. With calls for more inter- and trans-disciplinary working to address the systemic nature of the SDGs, it is important that this is not heard or enacted as ‘anti-disciplinary’. Disciplines need to be nurtured in order that they can collide in interesting ways, much like the best jazz comes from disciplined musicians.

The pan-institutional transformation required to develop an SDG-engaged university can also challenge traditional academic leadership models. The management model dominant in most universities and colleges is a hierarchical, formal authority structure, with variable levels of governance shared with faculty. This bounded hierarchy is not well-positioned to support the radical collaboration necessary to accelerate delivery of the SDGs. The established governance systems and process may not be able to support organizational reform at scale, while also preserving those matters, they were set up to manage such as quality and risk. Thus, we may need to develop a “second operating system devoted to the design and implementation of strategy, that uses an agile, network-like structure and a very different set of processes” (Kotter, 2012) but complementing the traditional system. New models of leadership and governance that better reflect the innovation ecosystem based on human creativity and collaboration are required (Purcell et al., 2017; Purcell, 2019). New ways of working will need to operate
within established systems, but support individuals connecting with others in groups, with peer-to-peer exchanges characterized by dialogue and co-creation and ideas flowing across institutional barriers. Purcell (2019) described the senior management hierarchy of a university undergoing wholesale mission-led transformation as one operating system and the community of project-based social networks as a second more agile system driving innovation. Here we describe some models developed by a UK university as vehicles for collaboration in support of delivery against the SDGs.

Higher education has societal responsibilities to inspire future entrepreneurs to embrace social responsibility, and to support and add value to the communities they serve. However, universities traditionally have had little engagement with the social enterprise sector. Here, we take a deep dive into the case of a public university in the UK (over the period 2007-2015) that adopted sustainability at a strategic level to secure institutional differentiation in a disrupted global market (Purcell et al., 2016; Purcell, 2014; Purcell, 2013). Plymouth University’s (PU) mission-led transformation became a catalyst for change in regional business across the South-West of England, in the City of Plymouth, across the regional health system, and wider community. Students and faculty became involved in real-world projects of local/global benefit driving up student engagement and employability as well as research funding and impact. Embedding the SDGs into the curriculum with entrepreneurship activated leadership by students and supported future-ready students as the next generation of scholars and leaders (Purcell, 2018). Given the importance of social enterprises to the global economy in creating sustainable communities, we have highlighted examples of PU’s work in this domain in its operations and academic domains of the university.

Social Enterprise and the SDGs

Social enterprises are increasingly important to the global economy in creating more sustainable communities given their resilience to disruptive and recessionary pressures as well as their focus on addressing societal needs (Chahine, 2016). However, while their positive community impacts are recognized, their contribution to sustainable growth and place-making is not being fully realized. Universities are increasingly playing a key role in the transformation of the social and economic environment, particularly in a city-regional context (DIUS, 2008). Florida (1999) noted the role of universities in “enabling infrastructure for technological and economic development.” With the concept of ‘anchor institutions’, described as “civic, cultural and intellectual institutions which contribute to the cultural, social and economic vitality of cities” (Maurrasse cited in The Work Foundation, 2010), universities can leverage against the key assets of place to create and sustain value, placing an increased emphasis on capturing and building stronger relationships between universities and cities.

While the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1999) noted that “there is no universal, commonly accepted definition of Social Enterprise”, they do share common features. The UK Department for Trade and Industry identifies social enterprises as “Business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or community, rather than being driven by the need to maximize profit for shareholders and owners.” (DTI, 2001). Social enterprise can include cooperatives, charities which trade, mutual societies and other forms of organizations involving a range of staff from salaried employees, voluntary workers, users and supporting organizations including local public authorities as partners in the same project. The Social Enterprise Coalition stated that “Social enterprise is a
business model which offers the prospect of a greater equity of economic power and a more sustainable society, by combining market efficiency with social and environmental justice; social enterprise is the business model for the 21st century” (Social Enterprise UK, 2012). There are keen opportunities for collaboration between for-profit businesses and mission-driven individuals and organizations with social enterprises falling in the middle ground between traditional commerce and traditional charity. This is reflected in the lack of specialized structures for social enterprises in many countries, relegating them into one of the two traditional structures of non-profit versus for-profit (Kerlin, 2010; Chahine, 2016). The International Co-operative Alliance (https://ica.coop), which represents just one part of the social enterprise sector, has 240 organizations across 990 countries representing over 800 million members as employees, customers or by association. The sheer size of the sector and its societal potential led the United Nations to declare 2012 as the International Year of the Co-operatives (UN, 2012).

The UK has been at the forefront of developing and supporting social enterprise, with the first set up in Rochdale in 1841 being a cooperative that allowed those who shopped with them to become members and share in the profits of the business – a practice which continues to today through the Co-operative Group (see http://www.rochdalepioneersmuseum.coop/about-us/the-rochdale-principles). Social enterprises represent over 5% of all business and 1% of GDP in the UK with the highest concentration (17%) in South West England where PU is based. Social enterprises are concentrated in areas of high deprivation, with over a third based in the top 20% of deprived communities (Social Enterprise UK, 2015). A key vehicle for social inclusion, 59% of UK social enterprises employ at least one person who is disadvantaged in the labor market, 40% are led by women, 40% have a director with a disclosed disability and 31% have Black and/or Asian Minority Ethnic directors (Social Enterprise UK, 2015).

The concept of shared value (Porter and Kramer, 2011) recognizes that societal needs, and not just conventional economic needs, define markets with policies and practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company also advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates. Forming ‘hybrid value chains’ (Drayton and Budinich, 2010) the for-profit and citizen sectors can together remake global economies and create lasting social change. Universities offer a unique environment to bring together experts, students, volunteers and access to resources such as specialist facilities and equipment. The Witty Review (2013) called for universities to deliver an enhanced mission to sustain growth given their deep relationship with the economic, social and cultural life of the places in which they are based. Universities are acknowledged as ‘urban innovation engines’ and can champion a new approach to business creation, development and sustainability. By promoting a social enterprise approach, in partnership, a university can help support transformation in its city and wider region (The Work Foundation, 2008).

PU is largely based in South West England, a region with the highest density (17%) of social enterprises set up in the UK. This place-based asset presented PU with a local opportunity to extend its academic mission to include social enterprise, considered a natural extension of its overall vision of ‘transforming lives through education and research’. Acting as a hub from which to develop the knowledge and skills needed to support social enterprises, the university engaged with local organizations, businesses, start-ups and charities to create opportunities for students and graduates as well as faculty and university staff. Drawing on its sustainability credentials (People and Planet, 2017); PU understood how social enterprise could further its approach to tackling the
SDGs and help create positive social impact as an agent of change in the region and beyond. We describe here some examples of this work in action over the period 2007-2015.

Examples of Social Enterprise-based Projects in Pursuit of the SDGs

1) Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise

The Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise (PDSE) (see [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/schools/peninsula-school-of-dentistry/peninsula-dental-social-enterprise](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/schools/peninsula-school-of-dentistry/peninsula-dental-social-enterprise)) was set up by PU to deliver dental care in some of the most deprived neighborhoods across the South West of England's in line its aim to tackle the extreme health inequalities in its community. PU established a social enterprise Community Interest Company (CIC) through its academic School of Dentistry to oversee clinical dental education and provide dental treatments and outreach services in four regional UK dental education facilities (Devonport, Derriford, Exeter and Truro). This was the first time a UK university had adopted a social enterprise business model to provide clinical education and practice. PDSE’s 235 students delivered 39,957 clinical procedures across 84,810 appointments in one year, with over 16,000 patients registered, and made a measurable positive contribution to public health in the region. Activities of PDSE went beyond dental treatment services, with dental students working with community groups, including local schools, people who are homeless, those with an addiction, and people with a learning disability, all as part of their registered curriculum (see [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/schools/peninsula-school-of-dentistry/community-engagement-team](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/schools/peninsula-school-of-dentistry/community-engagement-team)). Benefits included the development of dental professionals with a deep understanding of the socioeconomic challenges faced by many patients and the impact of oral health on overall well-being. For PU, the social enterprise was able to access new financial resources with PDSE able to secure training funds from the Clinical Deanery not available to the university directly; it was also able to apply for charitable and other support directly through its CIC structure. The PDSE was awarded a Green Gown Award in 2014, which recognizes exceptional sustainability initiatives taking place in universities and colleges throughout the UK, with the judges describing it as an “outstanding example of innovation, enterprise and collaboration with communities through curriculum and structure.” PDSE also won the Social and Community Impact category at the 2015 Guardian University Awards in recognition of the significant number of people to have benefited from its work.

2) National Social Enterprise University Enterprise Network

The Social Enterprise-University Enterprise Network (SE-UEN) (see [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/schools/plymouth-business-school/social-enterprise-university-enterprise-network](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/schools/plymouth-business-school/social-enterprise-university-enterprise-network)) was launched by PU to serve as a national network and policy portal “where social enterprise and best practice meet”. The SE-UEN worked across three axes: research; practice and creating and sustaining the sector. Launched in February 2012 by Lord Young, Enterprise Adviser to UK Prime Minister, and the National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education (NCEE), the SE-UEN was supported by funds and in-kind donations from the private sector (Serco and the Co-operative Group), together with the NCEE and the Social Enterprise Mark Company; PU invited
the universities of Warwick, Northampton, Teesside and Salford to join the network given their activities in this field.

The vision for the network was to provide a national infrastructure to extend and exploit the value of social enterprise for social and economic benefit, to help shape national policy (see https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/social-enterprise) and provide targeted business advice, mentoring and support. It developed a common core curriculum module in social enterprise, accessible to all university students in the network, and launched an ‘Inspiring Futures’ accredited work-based learning course to help develop graduates grounded in the principles of social enterprise. Over the launch period February to April 2012 some 641 students undertook the ‘Inspiring Futures’ course and a further 460 put the course towards a graduate award. PU also launched a ‘Social Entrepreneurs in Residence’ scheme that offered support to students to develop their ventures. The SE-UEN undertook the national evaluation of the UnLtd Award Scheme (2009-2011), funded by the UK Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) that invested £1M into 200 new social ventures across 70 universities. It determined the ventures were more sustainable than other businesses, with 72% of UnLtd-supported social entrepreneurs still active after 5-years and survival rates of organizations supported by the School for Social Entrepreneurs Fellows at 66%; this compared with survival rates of UK business at 5-years of 47%. The SE-UEN determined that social enterprise is interdisciplinary and should not be confined to business studies, rather it should feature in other subjects and beyond the formal curriculum. The SE-UEN worked with partners, such as the Real Ideas Organisation and Enactus (see https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/social-enterprise) to deliver a range of workshops and large scale events including a conference on social investment (see https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/whats-on/plymouth-vcse-conference-2016).

3) Social Enterprise Mark

In 2013, PU became the first HE institution globally to be officially classed as a social enterprise in its own right (see https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/social-enterprise) being awarded the Social Enterprise Mark – the UK’s official certification that an organization is investing in social or environmental good (https://www.socialenterprisemark.org.uk/). The university’s social enterprise status helped the City of Plymouth to secure its position as one of the first Social Enterprise Cities in the UK (see https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/), in recognition of the thriving social enterprise activity taking place largely through partnership with the university. The expertise of the university in social enterprise and higher education was recognized by the British Council which commissioned PU to undertake research on ‘Social Enterprise in a Global Context: The Role of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)’ catapulting the university’s expertise onto the global stage with associated reputational gain for the institution.

4) Community Research Awards

The President Vice-Chancellor’s Community Research Awards scheme (CRA; see http://www1.plymouth.ac.uk/research/CRA/Pages/Filming-The-Awards-2012.aspx) was designed to connect PU’s world class researchers with the local community, bringing together real world problems with the university’s expertise to co-create solutions. In 2008/9, the program launched funding six community projects ranging from an
investigation into water pollution in urban nature reserves, to examining the grieving process of young children to help prevent psychological ill health in later life. Some 30 research projects were funded over the five years of the scheme, with research questions related to spinal injuries, dementia, safety online and seaweed biodiversity to name a few, all helping local and regional community groups, charities and social enterprises.

In 2009/10 a CRA project carried out by researchers from the Faculty of Health working with the local branch of the Alzheimer’s Society investigated experiences of an early diagnosis of dementia and the support received (see http://www1.plymouth.ac.uk/research/CRA/Pages/2009.aspx). Through interviews with people with dementia and their carers and focus groups with General Practitioners (medical doctors), the team highlighted the importance of a relationship-centered approach to providing support and the potential role played by a dementia champion. This led to a City-wide Dementia Action Alliance, a partnership of over 30 organizations, being established in 2011 which set out to work towards the City becoming a dementia friendly city; the scheme was a finalist in the national Alzheimer’s Society Dementia-Friendly Awards 2015. The university went on to become the UK’s first dementia friendly university (see https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/voyage/dementia) and one of the CRA research team became a national leader of the Dementia Friendly Communities Champion Group which reported to the UK Prime Minister. Further recognition came from the British Medical Journal, where a joint university and Devon Partnership NHS Trust initiative was named Dementia Team of the Year in 2015 in recognition of the work of dementia champions in care homes in Torbay. Another CRA went to Refugees First (http://www.studentsandrefugeestogther.com) to help improve the skills, confidence and participation of refugees and asylum seekers in the City of Plymouth. Working with the university, Refugees First made a full transition from a voluntary organization to becoming a sustainable social enterprise. Locally rooted and globally connected in pursuit of the SDGs, the awards were wide-ranging, in some instances going far beyond the local area in influencing national policy and practice (see http://www1.plymouth.ac.uk/research/CRA/Pages/Legacy-of-the-Awards.aspx).

5) Social Enterprise Incubation and Innovation Centers

Drawing on PU’s enterprise mission and role as an ‘anchor’ institution (The Work Foundation, 2010; Allan, 2015), within the landscape of SMEs, micro- and social enterprises across the South West of England, PU developed an organizational vehicle as an operating system termed the Growth Acceleration Investment Network (GAIN; see https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/business-partners/gain). Led by PU, its partners included the City Council, the Science Park, local Chambers of Commerce, business networks, entrepreneurs and investors; the two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs: Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; Heart of the South West) and a third LEP in the West of England were also part of the network. In the large geographically dispersed and predominantly rural area where PU was based, GAIN connected the university’s knowledge base with those interested in working with it to accelerate the creation, growth and investment in high quality businesses and ideas to create wealth and jobs in the South West Peninsula in line with the SDGs. Through the GAIN, £100M of innovation assets were assembled under one portal offering local and regional incubation and business support. The innovation centers provided an environment within which knowledge transfer, business support mechanisms and growth activities could take place. The physical space was
designed to support a group of people to become an innovation community through conscious and careful stewardship.

6) Local Procurement Program

PU launched a Sell-2-Plymouth (S2P) scheme to encourage local procurement, with a focus on social enterprise, joining a national £1BN procurement challenge. S2P was led by the university and included all the local public-sector bodies as partners with business support provided by the Federation of Small Businesses and the city’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Some 5,157 businesses registered on the platform and, using a simple e-tendering process, could access public sector contracts up to the value of £20,000; this was later increased to several hundred thousand for some businesses. Through S2P the university commissioned several local businesses to deliver estate services, with the ‘commission locally’ ethos permeating all contracting decisions made: for example, in 2013/14, the university purchased some £24M of consultancy and sundry services from local businesses against previous spend of under £4M. Reflecting the university’s successful leadership of S2P, PU was awarded the Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Award – an award given to higher education institutions for outstanding work in sustainable procurement. The £1BN procurement challenge was launched to encourage all UK universities to use their £7BN spend per annum to drive up local procurement to sustain local employment and drive down transport costs.

7) Graduate Placement Scheme

In the South West of England, SME’s make up 99% of employers with most having no staff other than the owner. The PU Graduate Internship program placed 274 interns into 151 businesses in its first year, of which 66% were retained in newly created graduate-level jobs; some 20% of these businesses were social enterprises. The scheme increased the capacity and capability of these businesses to absorb graduate talent to drive business growth and help arrest the flow of graduate talent away from the South-West to London. Through the scheme, businesses received a subsidy of £1,450 to support employment costs, along with a free recruitment service offered by PU to support them identify the right graduate candidate. The flexibility of an internship enabled a business to gauge the caliber of a graduate’s work in the short term, but also to assess the cost-effectiveness of creating new roles in a ‘try before you buy’ approach to recruitment. Graduates also cite this as a benefit, using internships as a platform on which to secure more long-term employment within an organization locally.

8) Faculty Promotion Criteria

While a strategic mission to engage with the SDGs can be articulated, it is necessary to align incentives, bonuses and promotions. PU reviewed its Academic Staff Promotions criteria in line with its institutional mission and developed a route to Associate Professor (Reader) and full Professor based on excellence and impact in external engagement, which included the pursuit of work in line with the SDGs; this was offered as an equivalent route alongside the more traditional paths to promotion via teaching/learning and research/innovation. The criteria demanded the candidate evidence “a substantial level of achievement in external engagement which may include consultancy, knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship, contribution to professional practice, working with commercial and/or community partners, not for profit organizations and/or social enterprises”. Although other universities have introduced wider promotion criteria to tie in
with the UK’s national Research Excellence Framework impact statements (http://www.ref.ac.uk), PU introduced this as an integral part of its strategic mission (Purcell and Chahine, 2019) in support of delivery against the SDGs.

Discussion

The SDGs represent a period of ‘punctuated equilibrium’ (Schot, 2007), and demand radical collaboration among public, private and plural organizations. In an increasingly uncertain global environment, the higher education sector can embrace social responsibility and support the communities it serves in a sustainable way. Using the SDGs as a lens to view the portfolio of work undertaken by a university, new opportunities for teaching/learning and research/innovation can emerge in support of sustainable development (Sterling, 2001). Using a case study of a UK university to exemplify the ‘art of the possible’, we drew attention to ways it adopted a community leadership role as part of its academic mission (Purcell and Chahine, 2019). By embracing the SDGs, PU leveraged a key asset of place to better serve its students, faculty, the local community and wider stakeholder group to deliver measurable social outcomes. The case offers examples of strategies that universities can apply to develop their academic portfolio to deliver against the SDGs. Without necessarily investing in new infrastructure, universities can leverage existing physical and social capital to foster increased innovation.

Drawing inspiration from PU’s projects over the period 2007-2015, universities are called to redirect existing resources – including financial, physical, and human – to increase social impact in pursuit of sustainable development. While many hundreds of universities are already integrating social enterprise into curricula, career placements, and networking activities (Ashoka U, 2017), universities have more to do as agents of change. Indeed, the transformation of PU as a public university became a source of inspiration for the transformation of the local and regional community and the engine for a new order of social agreements through social enterprise and innovation (Hinske, 2017). Through its strategic vision, PU showed how universities can make a material contribution to the economic, cultural and intellectual well-being of a city and wider region and society at large as well as driving up its academic reputation and the student experience. For example, the university became the first higher education institution globally to be officially classed as a social enterprise and helped its community secure status as one of the first Social Enterprise Cities in the UK. This case highlights the role of social innovation as the university evolved to create academic value and societal value in the communities it served though social enterprise (Vorley and Nelles, 2008).

Leadership in delivery of the SDGs requires a different set of attributes defined by the connections an organization has locally and with the rest of the world and how it enables human flourishing and purpose. With the history of the 20th century intimately linked with the human construct of ‘the firm’ for creating money and meaning, in this new century leaders need to think differently and embrace the ‘edgeless’ organization as it bumps up against issues of energy, water, security, public health and so on as leaders are impacted by regulations and stakeholder activism. The construct of the ‘hero’ leaders and leadership as the preserve of the few must be challenged as no one individual leader can possibly possess either all the desirable capabilities or all the necessary information. Given the complexity of delivery against the SDGs, partnerships among organizations in the public-private-plural sectors will reflect hybrid value chains (Drayton and Budinich, 2010) and networked organizations that convene around shared purpose
to create value. Universities can position themselves appropriately in this new landscape, thinking at a systems level but acting entrepreneurially. Here, the SDGs as a global strategy can support organizations ‘zoom out’ to develop strategic vision and then ‘zoom in’ to action, working with others to pursue sustainable development.

Universities in the era of the SDGs need to be able to read the planet as well as the balance sheet. In this Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by unprecedented changes driven by new technologies and changing behaviors, universities bring a range of direct and indirect economic, environmental, human and reputational benefits to a city-region relevant to accelerating deliver of the SDGs. With 21st leaders found at all levels, distinguished by their ability to make progress in situations characterized by so-called VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) conditions, people can adopt the SDGs as their compass. Universities can help accelerate delivery of the SDGs and make sustainability ‘just the way we do things around here’. Working around inherent organizational inertia include connecting the SDGs with the academic mission of an institution as well as establishing new vehicles that support multi-actor partnerships convened around shared purpose where people can co-create a new future where no one is left behind.

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