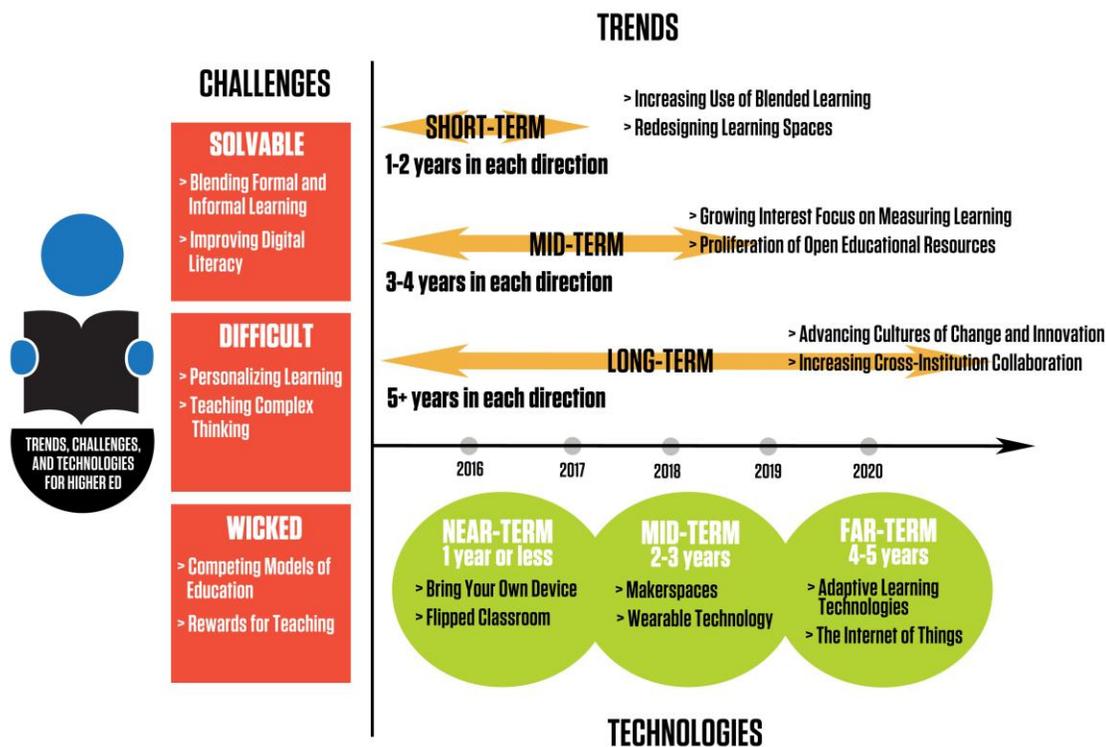## Trends, Challenges and Technologies for Higher Education
Where does AUC and our new strategic plan stand?

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Topics from the NMC Horizon Report > 2015 Higher Education Edition

TRENDS

CHALLENGES

SOLVABLE
> Blending Formal and Informal Learning
> Improving Digital Literacy

SHORT-TERM
1-2 years in each direction
> Increasing Use of Blended Learning
> Redesigning Learning Spaces

MID-TERM
3-4 years in each direction
> Growing Interest Focus on Measuring Learning
> Proliferation of Open Educational Resources

DIFFICULT
> Personalizing Learning
> Teaching Complex Thinking

LONG-TERM
5+ years in each direction
> Advancing Cultures of Change and Innovation
> Increasing Cross-Institution Collaboration

TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR HIGHER ED

2016   2017   2018   2019   2020

WICKED
> Competing Models of Education
> Rewards for Teaching

NEAR-TERM
1 year or less
> Bring Your Own Device
> Flipped Classroom

MID-TERM
2-3 years
> Makerspaces
> Wearable Technology

FAR-TERM
4-5 years
> Adaptive Learning Technologies
> The Internet of Things

TECHNOLOGIES

Infographic by the New Media Consortium (www.nmc.org)

What you see above is an "infographic" (used with permission) summarizing the findings of this year's influential NMC Horizon Report, Higher Education Edition (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada & Freeman, 2015). This edition is produced annually (since 2002) by the New Media Consortium (NMC)[i] in collaboration with the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI).

A panel of 56 experts from 17 countries collaboratively produced this year's 2015 report. The experts' research identified the six emerging technologies, the six key trends and the six challenges that would most likely influence higher education within the next five years.

I would not be saying anything new when I say that Higher Education has been facing complex and disruptive changes in the last 25+ years. Based on research on how people learn, the teaching and learning landscape has been adjusting and adapting to new paradigms involving pedagogical and technological shifts. Emphasis has shifted from a teacher-centered model to a student-centered one, where active learning strategies, experiential learning and assessment are emphasized and where emerging technologies continue to offer innovative ways to facilitate and enable learning. Quoting AUC's new strategic plan,

> Successful institutions are not necessarily the developers of such technologies or practices but they are both alert and nimble in assessing innovation in higher education and in selectively incorporating appropriate practices into their own operation. (Strategic Plan for AUC at its Centennial, p. 7)

In the spirit of our new strategic plan, let us examine where we stand with regards to the report above. I will **only focus on** what is seen as **"short term" trends and technologies** given the space limitations of this short newsletter. The report defines "short term" trends as those that have already impacted the learning environment and would typically become mainstream in the next one to two years.

1. TRENDS: I think it is safe to say that with regards to the short-term trends we are making baby steps towards Blended Learning, (Strategic Plan for AUC at its Centennial, Objective III, D.2) although I maintain that we are far behind our peer US universities and many regional ones, including AUB.

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i. The New Media Consortium describes itself as a not-for-profit group of more than 250 higher education institutions, museums and companies that conducts research into emerging technologies. The NMC Horizon report produces 4 global editions (H. Ed, K-12, museum and library) that highlight 6 technologies that are likely to impact teaching, learning and creative inquiry within the next 5 years.

According to the most recent ECAR [i] study (to which 75, 306 undergraduate students responded from 213 campuses, in 45 US states and 15 countries including AUC):

> More students than ever have experienced a digital learning environment. The majority say they learn best with a blend of online and face-to-face work (Dahlstrom & Bischsel, 2014)
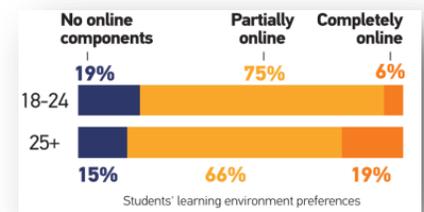
The quantitative results, summarized in the opposite graph, should give us pause for reflection. How many of our students benefit from partially online learning, and if they do what is the quality of this online learning?

Students' learning environment preferences

- EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY: In this category, the report cites the "flipped" classroom. Strictly speaking, the "flipped" classroom is not a technology as it is a teaching and learning modality where the higher cognitive skills are applied to active learning group work during valuable class time, while "content" and "information" are delivered outside of class using various technology-enabled tools: recorded video lectures, e-books with collaborative annotations, online discussion software, podcasts, formative assessments tools, plus the plethora of social software etc. This model has been mostly adopted by US institutions where 29% of faculty members are using it and 27% say they will use it within a year. (NMC Horizon report 2015 Higher Education Edition, p. 38)

  Some AUC faculty members are familiar with the term through CLT workshops and News@AUC articles, but very few have experimented with it. A lot of work needs to be done to encourage and support faculty in designing, piloting and assessing this innovative practice particularly in the STEM disciplines where it has been quite successful.

- CHALLENGES: We face many of the challenges that are cited in the report, in particular "Teaching Complex Thinking" (a much needed skill to understand and to solve today's ever increasing complex, real world problems), "Improving Digital Literacy" (for both students <u>and</u> faculty), and my all-time favorite, "Rewards for Teaching".

Regarding the latter, university administrators worldwide have increasingly been favoring funding, promoting and rewarding research over improving teaching in the classroom. This has resulted in an over reliance on poorly compensated adjunct faculty (a recent AAUP report shows that adjunct professors constitute 76% of faculty in US institutions of higher education) (Segran, 2014; Curtis, 2014)

The EU, Canada, Australia and some institutions in the US are addressing this problem by taking the lead in prioritizing quality teaching. In a 2013 Report to the European Commission (McAleese et al, p. 15), recommendations include recognizing that "the preference of research over teaching in defining academic merit needs rebalancing" and that "Every institution should develop and implement a strategy for the support and on-going improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, devoting the necessary level of human and financial resources to the task, and integrating this priority in its overall mission, giving teaching due parity with research. " (p. 64)

I was gratified to see that AUC in its new strategic plan is taking the lead in this direction with the promise that "we will need to incentivize, train and reward faculty to teach in novel ways" and to "ensure that they are recognized for agility and innovation in teaching as well as in their own research, scholarship and creative expression." (Strategic Plan for AUC at its Centennial, Objective I, B.3 and Objective II, B.5)

Our challenge remains to ensure that these objectives are realized and that the proposals above do not end up collecting dust on a shelf, as is often the case. For its part, CLT will update its own strategic plan and will see to it that it will be implemented in a timely fashion. However, only with the support of the university administration and in particular the Provost, Deans and Chairs, can such initiatives be successful.

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i. ECAR: Educause Center for Applied Research