Dreaming, Doing, and Driving the Future of Learning

The 2019 ShapingEDU Memorial Union Communique

From March 11-13, 2019, at ASU’s Memorial Union in Tempe, Arizona, 200 education changemakers -- including technology leaders, faculty, and students -- convened to build upon the ShapingEDU community’s 10 Actions to Shape the Future of Education. An unconference format emphasized agility and iteration as these dreamers, doers, and drivers continuously exchanged ideas and built on each other’s work. Ahead of the unconference, participants submitted potential breakout themes in the form of ~60 utopian/dystopian future scenarios for education in 2039. A dozen of those submissions were used to seed working sessions -- or community “neighborhoods” that explored potential frameworks and outputs for achieving the utopian visions.

What emerged from the collective wisdom is a set of actionable ideas and strategies that can humanize learning, promote greater access to and equity in learning experiences, better connect education to the future workforce and world, and nurture highly collaborative communities of practice. With the 10 Actions serving as a taxonomy for change, below is a summary of the top themes from the 2019 ShapingEDU Unconference with actionable outputs -- “calls to action” -- generated by participants that will help ‘do’ and ‘drive’ these dreams.
Innovation is about much more than technology.
ShapingEDU believes real learning transformation requires building a deep understanding of the hyper-interconnected education challenges, a shared vision for progress, and concerted efforts to test, measure, and iterate new strategies. Technologies and digital tools can be effective enablers and accelerators, but first asking the right questions and then investing in changemaking communities to answer them is key. What student and educator needs are unmet? How can we increase accessibility and affordability while continuously enhancing the quality of learning experiences? How can institutions spur greater economic mobility? Authentic innovation efforts directly address inquiries like these, aligning digital strategies as one part of the approach. Technology adoption should not be narrowly considered in the context of academia; institutions must understand its influence throughout global society and consider the impact on students' and educators' evolving needs. How does technology, when coupled with the best in human thinking and processes, enhance or change the dynamic of teaching and learning -- both formal and informal?

Calls to Action: Multi-generational podcast series on transforming education from all sides | Series of blog posts/articles on transforming IT departments into changemaking orgs | Formula for embedding a ShapingEDU at every institution

‘Human-centered’ is not a trend; it’s a vital strategy for everything.
Education futurism has long revolved around generating accurate predictions about what the world will look like over time. When we focus too squarely on predicting the future, we forget that we are the ones who can shape it by establishing a conducive culture. As we make advancements in artificial intelligence, extended reality (XR) technologies, and online learning, the design of everything must prioritize, and not minimize, our humanity. We must ask, and continuously re-ask, how the development and applications of technologies are actively advancing empathy, vulnerability, inclusivity, and meaningful interactions.

Calls to Action: Cheat sheet of where faculty, staff, and students can start using immersive and augmenting learning technologies in a humanized way | Identify critical socio-cognitive needs for personalized and adaptive XR in education | Framework for humanizing online learning at scale; Workshop series championing humanized learning for faculty | Storybook that teaches humanizing learning in immersive and augmenting environments | Conduct and share research on the efficacy of XR learning experiences | Develop a body for peer-reviewing XR content | Open-source platform for XR based learning | Open-source XR authoring tool

The burden of finding supportive communities must shift from the learner to the institution.
When learners embark on their education journeys, they are responsible for moving themselves through a system that can seem confusing in its siloed nature -- the registrar, financial aid and scholarships, student advising, the learning management system, etc. After navigating through
the grocery list of “essential items,” learners are still burdened with pursuing what is too often described in the vein of an extra-curricular: finding and building supportive communities. These are life-changing constellations where learners find their people, based on affinity and/or need. Education institutions must meet learners wherever they are to establish and nurture spaces that improve the quality and quantity of the serendipitous connections that learners have access to via personal learning networks and communities of practice.

**Calls to Action:** Build a repository of exemplars about “how I built and sustained community” | Examine successful communities, look for themes, and create stories and learner journey maps of what makes them successful | Create a framework for building community, building competency around community, and imagine how it might be incorporated longitudinally across the student experience | Startup that works with students to help them build their communities of thought leadership and practice

**The lines between face-to-face, online, and hybrid learning must blur.**
If the field of education is going to champion and support lifelong and universal learners, we must be careful about making hard-lined distinctions between face-to-face and online learning. A growing body of research illuminates the effectiveness of hybrid learning -- often deemed a “best of both worlds” approach. There is great promise in fusing our analog and digital realms, allowing our experiences in this blended world to push the boundaries of what could previously only be achieved face-to-face or online. Promising practices, however, are still up against widespread perceptions of online learning being inferior. As we scale affordable opportunities to learners of all backgrounds everywhere, engagement and credentialing strategies should acknowledge that learning is learning; we must embed effective pedagogies and foster paradigm shifts with scale in mind. Where the learning takes place is increasingly irrelevant as the answer must be anywhere, anytime, and in any interaction.

**Calls to Action:** Framework for education to become a lifelong personal learning journey | Recommendations for shifting the perception of online learning as a level playing field with face-to-face experiences

**Education and industry must collaborate on strategies for connecting learning experiences and pathways to an evolving workforce.**
As more research organizations publish studies about the skills needed in the future workforce, education and industry have a social responsibility to team up and build the sturdiest bridge between them. This bridge must allow for seamless return trips as those immersed in careers seek continuous opportunities for professional and personal growth from universities and colleges. While the technical in-demand skills needed to advance complex technologies will evolve, digital fluency, social-emotional intelligence, and creativity can be permanently considered essential skills. These skills are often more challenging to embed into learning
experiences and measure, necessitating a continuous dialogue and co-design efforts between education and industry to better impart them.

**Calls to Action:** Education-Workforce living lexicon | Education-Workforce Co-op -- a series of events, publications, and programming dedicated to building the bridge between edu and industry | Industry/education competency framework or taxonomy | Mapping of specific domains to serve as case studies for connecting edu to workforce needs | Cross-institutional collaborations that connect edu to workforce needs | Research connections between higher education and workplace representatives, and benefits of these connections

**There must be greater student agency to advance more creative, open, and authentic forms of learning assessment.**

As the field of education increasingly emphasizes learner autonomy and the concept of students as co-creators of knowledge, we must also call on them to re-imagine learning assessment. ShapingEDU envisions a world where on the front end of a learning experience, students help design their target learning outcomes and associated assessments based on their personal learning pathways and career goals. These personalized rubrics (or other assessment tools) can be shared in an open central location to continuously build upon available assessment strategies.

**Calls to Action:** Create a value system for advancing student agency/ownership of learning, assessment, and career trajectory | Create a set of values that assessments should embody (e.g., measurable, flexible, hospitable, holistic) and a guide for building assessments relative to these values | Develop training / training resources to improve learning assessments | Open repository of creative assessments | Student-developed assessments to benchmark start and end of learning experience(s)

**Open pedagogies, research, and educational resources hold promise for democratizing learning but require a cultural shift that includes professional development experiences and partnerships.**

There has been an open movement underway since the beginning of the 21st century; the rise of open hardware, software, licenses, and content, points to a societal value to share, make a deeper social impact, and reduce the financial, time, and human burdens associated with generating new practices and products from scratch. As open approaches to teaching, research, content, and technology development gain momentum, we must ensure there are timely professional development opportunities and the formulation of strategic partnerships that bolster the capacity for understanding and building effective models for high quality models and deployment, at scale.

**Calls to Action**
Our growing appetite for data has outpaced the creation of shared standards for student-centered data models.

Many have experienced the power of data to inform better and more personalized experiences. Education institutions have been exploring the integration of learning analytics, business intelligence, and other forms of data capture/analysis over the past 15 years. Unfortunately, the data is not often shared outside of an institutional department, is not fully harnessed to improve learning outcomes, or worse -- does not accurately reflect learning engagement and outcomes. The movement towards student-centered learning must be more tightly tied to education’s data-driven efforts. Students should be able to contribute to their own institutional data profiles, sharing interests, personal goals, and other activities to inform more personalized learning pathways. To broadly advance the collection and use of learning data towards improving student success, institutions need to develop shared standards.

Calls to Action: Innovate open research methods | Develop a recommendation for new degree pathways tool informed by data | Conduct a landscape study of institutions’ processes to develop learning analytics principles (privacy, ethics, effective use) | Develop a framework for sharing and contextualizing data between units | Student-centered data model (institutional consortium/partnership) | National/int’l standards for data sharing

Education must take a values-led approach for the development and use of AI at the intersection of teaching, learning, and student success.

Closely tied to the notion of humanizing everything, a shared set of values that guide future incarnations of AI for teaching and learning will ensure that the education sector has an active stake in how this often misunderstood technology can enhance and be enhanced by the human experience. Further, the exploration and promise of AI must transcend isolated contexts (e.g., one adaptive course or one human-like avatar) towards an understanding of the full ecosystem of interconnected people, processes, and practices that AI can impact. The creation of a values-led framework for depicting the implications for the student experience is an important step. Higher education must also consider student agency in the use of AI; *What kinds of opportunities can institutions provide to students to strengthen their understanding of where and why it’s being used?*

Calls to Action: Framework for AI at the intersection of teaching, learning, & student success (standards, intersections, ethics, knowledge sharing)
Education leaders must continuously explore and anticipate possible outliers that will impact every facet of teaching and learning.

Neither individuals nor institutions can afford to remain insular. Prioritizing more professional development opportunities and communities of leadership/practice is an important way to foster future-readiness but they may not fully prepare us for Black Swans -- unforeseen events with extreme consequences. ShapingEDU values the art of dreaming, and this involves looking back to look forward. What lessons have we learned from our most fabulous failures? What are major or nascent trends and challenges in society at large, and what are their implications for education? This field is already playing a role in solving and contributing to world issues such as poverty and climate change, but there is much work to be done to align our academic pathways and programming to better the world around us and ensure the safe passage of Black Swans.

**Calls to Action:** Connecting today to tomorrow via ShapingEDU Stories: Events, Publications, and Programming | Research project exploring Black Swan nesting grounds in education + the 'knife's edge' between utopia and dystopia | Black Swan annual open publication/journal

*Thank you to our co-conveners for making the Unconference possible!*