

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a student –Centered Learning and Teaching Future

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Define tomorrow

Co-Creating A Resilient Future : 4th USAf Higher Education Conference

UNISA university of south africa

ROADMAP

What We Will Cover

- Reimagination of Student Resilience & Redesign of Agile institutions
- Promoting scholarship on the area of student success in HE
- Redesign Agility in Curricula
- Technology Enhanced Higher Education System
- Fostering Inclusivity and Ethic of Care
- More beyond a single –metric outcome and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Why This Matters to the HE Institution

- Student Centricity is related to impact of HE in our times.
- It has gained traction in HE debates and theorization.
- Creating resilience in HE is not an option rather a mandate
- Digital literacy for a successful HE system is a necessity and no longer optional
- Critical skills that are a necessity, and AI is challenging the traditional notions of teaching and learning
- Universities are asked if they are still capable of producing responsible citizen, employable and Entrepreneurial graduate for an emerging world context.



THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How can we reimagine, redesign our academic futures in an unequal country such as ours?

- *Real access to education*
- *Provisioning of academic and Financial support to students*

Promoting Scholarship in this area

- Reimagining Student Success

From deficit to strengths: Reimagining the success discourse in a higher education institution in South Africa: Potential Cum Laude and Summa cum Laude Undergraduate student perspectives (Khumalo et al, 2023)

- Intentionality and determination and self authorship of success. Argue for proactive and structured academic support.

Reimagining South African Higher Education: Towards a student Reimagining learning and why culture, curriculum and context matter(De Klerk et al (2024)

-Asking us to rethink student learning, engagement, support and teaching.

Radical Reimagining for Student Success in HE (2021): How will our universities look like if student experience mattered at our universities?

-Reimagining the first year of college (44 institutions were involved in the US) The business should be about student success and not collecting revenue.

-Incremental reform for structures and cultures to center student success

-Adaptive leadership



THE CENTRAL QUESTION: What will institutions look like if students were centered?

What is the issue we trying to solve for?

If we put students at the center what will be that we need to do?

How can we really address the root issues for sustainable impact for student success

Reimagining Student Resilience

01

Fragmented Accountability

Diffused responsibility across colleges, portfolios and regions in respect to risk management

02

Inconsistent Reporting

Duplication and disconnected quality related information

03

Compliance-Oriented Drift

Enhancement focus giving way to procedural compliance

04

Institutional Risk

Governance gaps converging into a recorded high-priority risk

Redesign Agile institution

01

Redesign Agility in Curriculum

1. Interdisciplinarity & Multidisciplinary
2. Invest in developing future proof learning incorporate WIL & Digital Literacies
3. Global Citizen
4. Reimagine the infrastructure necessary for student success

02

Foster inclusivity and promote diversity

1. Dealing with the digital divide
2. Issues of access to data connectivity zero rating on learning sites
3. Ethical use of AI and related technologies
4. Engaging with human centricity in technology
5. Decentering the Academic
6.

03

Focusing on the Multi-dimensional Nature of success

1. Focus on Academic Milestone completion
2. Personal and Development growth Trajectory for a student
3. Lay a foundation for long-term student success outside the University confines

Improving Resilience

Redesign Agility in Curricula

- **Movement to Multi-disciplinary Learning**
- **Future Proof Skills**



- Include Work Integrated Learning in our qualifications
- Digital Literacy
- Responsiveness to global, continental and country specific issues
- Institutions should ensure that there is appropriate infrastructure and support systems for student success

Movement to Multi-Disciplinary Learning

- *Leads to better problem solving*
- *High Motivation as it connects with real life issues and tend to be engaging and meaningful*
- *Promotes critical thinking as there is a broader knowledge base and diverse perspectives.*

METHODOLOGY

Fostering Inclusivity and Ethic of Care

Dealing with digital divide

- Access to data and connectivity
- Application of AI and Related Technologies or tools in a human Centric ways .

Use of Student Analytics

- Early Warning Systems
- Personalised Learning pathways
- Enrolment and Retention management
- *Institutional Resource allocation (tracking physical & digital facilities usage)*

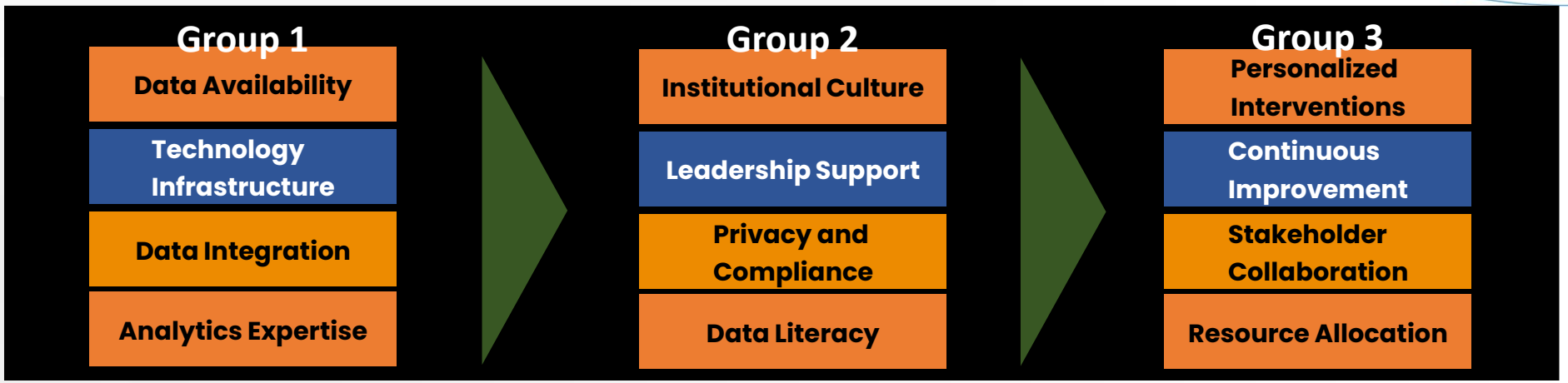
Decentering the academic

- Student Centricity for success
- Core-creation in HE
- Exposure to 4IR skills set
- Decolonise the individual, curriculum and environments.

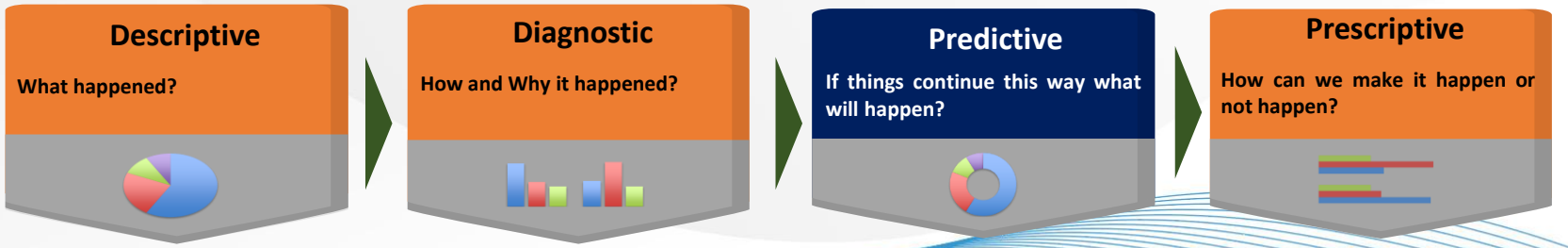
Focus: Enabling a grounded, in-depth view on use of technology in reimagining student success in 21st century .

IMPLEMENTATION OF ANALYTICS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The use of data analytics in promoting student success is contingent upon a multitude of [illegible] that enable the efficient gathering, examination, and utilisation of data to augment [illegible] experiences and achievements.



ANALYTICS MATURITY MODEL



Fragmented Accountability, Diffused Responsibility

Responsibility is formally centralised, but **implementation runs through multiple structures** colleges, support portfolios, and regional operations creating uncertainty over ownership.

- Strive for better structural alignment & clear ownership
- Create Cross functions structures to monitor and innovate in this area
- Monitor & demand accountability for student success patterns
- Have explicit metrics to department and faculties/colleges

> *-The current organisational structure is not sufficiently coherent to enhance seamless accountability, reporting and QA oversight"*
>
> — External Peer Review Panel

Multiple centres of authority, without integrated oversight mechanisms, produce accountability fragmentation.

Solution

Adoption of a case management model: assignment of dedicated success teams: clear points of contact .

Recommendation 02

Eliminate Inconsistent Reporting, Fragmented Information



Extensive duplication: similar reports submitted to multiple governance structures with only minor modification.



Quality-related data is generated widely (reviews, QMS, committees, surveys) without an integrated mechanism to consolidate it.



Self-reflection reports offer valuable evidence, but findings are rarely consolidated into institution-wide analysis for strategic use.



THE TAKEAWAY

Considerable data is collected — but data collection alone does not equal institutional intelligence.

Decentralisation supports local reporting, but challenges institution-wide learning.

Recommendation 03

Institutional Culture needs to change

Cultural Shift & Shared Accountability

- Map the student Journey
- Have explicitly student retention as part of staff KPI’s
- Incentivise cross functional team that solve complex & critical bottlenecks in student success

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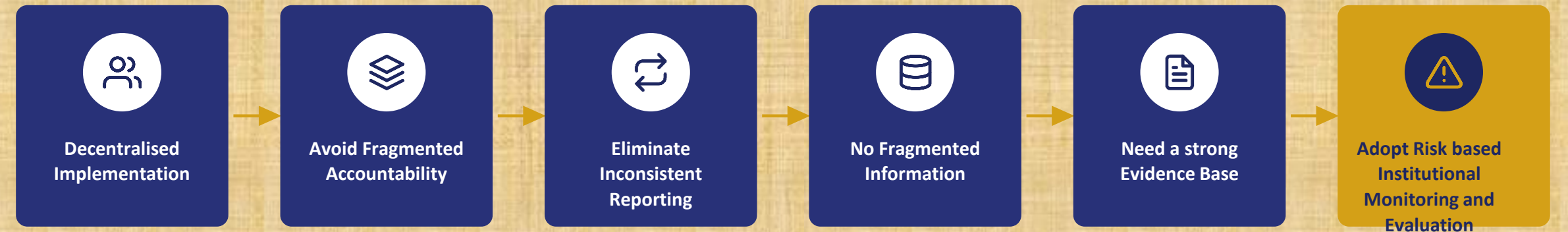
POLICY AND PROCESS SIMPLIFICATION

- Standardise on boarding of student and eliminate conflicting instructions
- Audit institutional barriers – Excessive bureaucracy that stall students' momentum

Simplification of the student walk and provision of exceptional student support (academic, socio-social and financial support) .

THE CORE CONTRIBUTION

The Reimagination of a resilient Higher Education for Student Success



Each stage compounds the last: without coordination, participation of all in ensuring a resilient HE student success could derail all efforts and investments and quietly erodes the institution's ability manage successfully this area of responsibility .

Co-creating a resilient future: USAf 4th Higher Education Conference 7-9 October 2027

Thank You

Questions & Discussion

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