



## USAID's Higher Education System Strengthening Activity

### International Summit on Shaping the Future of Higher Education in Pakistan 10-12 June 2024, Islamabad

**Session 1:** Monday, 10 June 2024 (11:00 to 13:00 hrs)

**Topic:** Positioning Pakistan's Higher Education for Tomorrow

- Speakers:**
- Dr. Tariq Banuri, Professor of Economics, University of Utah, USA
  - Dr. Khalid Hafeez, Vice Chancellor, BUIITEMS, Quetta, Pakistan
  - Dr. Casey G Hyun, Vice President/Executive Director, University-Industry Foundation, University of Utah Asia Campus, ROK
  - Dr. Mercedes Ward, Office of the Vice President of Research, University of Utah, USA

**Description:** In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture where forward-thinking strategies are imperative for the success of its academic institutions. Recognizing this urgent need, this session is dedicated to exploring proactive measures poised to shape the future of higher education in Pakistan. To this end, several initiatives and trends that could influence the future of higher education in Pakistan will be discussed, especially those outlined below.

First and foremost, it is imperative to address the pressing need to evaluate the readiness of Pakistan's higher education system to effectively tackle the challenges of the future, including rapid technological advancements, globalization, shifting demographic trends, and the increasing demand for specialized skills in emerging fields. This entails engaging in a thorough discussion on a comprehensive reform agenda that centers around enhancing accessibility, relevance, and impact within the higher education landscape. It is extremely important to strategize reforms to ensure their alignment with the ever-evolving societal needs and global trends.

On the technology front, in recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a pivotal force reshaping higher education. Its potential to revolutionize teaching, research, and administrative processes is undeniable as it offers personalized learning experiences, adaptive educational pathways, and improved student engagement and success rates. However, alongside these opportunities, significant challenges loom – ranging from infrastructure development to faculty training to ethical considerations. Addressing these challenges is of critical importance to realizing the transformative potential of AI in higher education while ensuring equitable and ethical integration.

A crucial element in shaping the future of higher education is the adaptation of curricula to anticipate and respond to the evolving needs of industries. This process not only involves identifying existing gaps between academia and industry but also actively bridging them through innovative curriculum design. Incorporating emerging technologies into the educational framework is essential to provide students with the cutting-edge tools and techniques relevant to their respective fields. Moreover, there is a growing recognition of the importance of mastering soft skills for success in careers at any level. This forward-thinking approach ensures that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in a rapidly changing job market.

Lastly, but certainly not least, advancing social equity in higher education stands as a paramount endeavor. This imperative entails delving into strategies aimed at expanding the inclusivity of higher education, enabling individuals from all backgrounds and walks of life to access and excel within educational opportunities. By dismantling barriers and addressing systemic inequalities, these strategies empower every individual to reach their full potential, thereby enriching not only their lives but also the broader fabric of society.

### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Enhanced understanding about the intricate challenges and opportunities that Pakistan's higher education system encounters including technological integration, industry collaboration, quality assurance, inclusivity, curriculum innovation, and globalization etc.
2. Acquiring a deep understanding of practical strategies aimed at harnessing technology, especially AI to elevate the quality of teaching, research, and administrative functions within higher education institutions.
3. Improved understanding of strategies and actions employed to broaden inclusivity in higher education, recognizing their pivotal role in advancing social equity.