

**Sustaining Strategic Innovation in Higher Education:
Can Insights from the Corporate Sector Help?
CHERD webinar October 13, 2021**

As a sector, higher education is at the low end of innovation rankings¹. While start-up institutions often seek to break new ground in teaching and learning, few have been able to sustain a strategic intent in innovation over time. Sustaining more strategic innovation in our higher education institutions may be critical to addressing the many challenges facing us – changing demographics, diminishing government support, the need to equip students for an uncertain future of work².

Experts in teaching and learning in higher education have suggested that lessons learned in the corporate sector could be adapted to our context³. “Higher education will not figure out its future by only thinking about higher education. We need to look outside academia, and – where possible – use these examples to think about our possible higher ed futures⁴.”

In this session, we will describe our research to adapt insights from a two-decade long research program with corporate sector leaders in strategic innovation⁵. This research has demonstrated how strategic innovation can be sustained through development of specific organizational capabilities that support strategic innovation initiatives, creation of professional development and career paths for innovation staff and the management of the innovation portfolio to align with the organization’s strategic intent.

We will outline three aspects of this research:

- how we selected insights from this corporate research for potential adaptability to foster strategic innovation for teaching and learning in higher education;
- the process and results from our initial proof-of-concept tests, using scenarios for sustaining strategic innovation in two region-serving comprehensive universities;
- our current plans to apply the results in prototype tests across a range of institutional partners, on issues arising from their current strategic intent for innovation in teaching and learning.

More information appears in our project blog posts at <https://www.wincan.ca/projects#sustaining> and in the forthcoming chapter Baregheh, A, Carey T. and O’Connor, G. (2021). Beyond the Champion: Governance and Management of Strategic Innovation in Higher Education Teaching and Learning. To appear in Sengupta, E. and P. Blessinger (eds) (2021). *Governance and Management in Higher Education: International Perspectives on Strategic Planning*, a volume in the series *Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning*. Emerald Publishing Group.

¹ Layne, P. (2015). Transforming higher education institutions. In *Global innovation of teaching and learning in higher education* (pp. 27-45): Springer.

² Tierney, W. G., & Lanford, M. (2016). Conceptualizing innovation in higher education. In *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 1-40): Springer.

³ Bass, R. (2012). Disrupting ourselves: The problem of learning in higher education. *EDUCAUSE Review*, 47(2).

⁴ Kim, J. (2020). ‘Lights Out,’ GE and the Fall of Elite Higher Ed. *Inside Higher Ed*, July 30, 2020.

⁵ O’Connor, G. C., Corbett, A. C., & Peters, L. S. (2018). *Beyond the Champion institutionalizing innovation through people*. Stanford University Press. O’Connor, G. C., Leifer, R., Paulson, A.S., & Peters, L. S. (2008). *Grabbing Lighting: Building a Capability for Breakthrough Innovation*. Jossey-Bass; and Leifer, R., McDermott, C. M., O’Connor, G. C., Peters, L. S., Rice, M. P., & Veryzer Jr, R. W. (2000). *Radical Innovation: How Mature Companies Can Outsmart Upstarts*. Harvard Business School Press.