2014 Annual Report

University of the World
Currently a Division of Future Generations Graduate School
390 Road Less Traveled
Franklin, WV 26807

Background
Concepts and planning for University of the World were initiated within the Future Generations Graduate School in 2008 as part of strategic planning to expand this graduate school's reach as well as pedagogical effectiveness.

The family of Future Generations organizations globally (then seven organizations) has as its underlying charge in the organization's founding by UNICEF's Executive Director understanding and furthering the objective of "going to scale with community-based social change." Its short summary is that in addition to conventional scaling up that drives growth with external resources, an internally driven growth approach can begin in seeds of localized success and use existing societal systems of personnel and financing to grow these seeds so that not only is there scaling up of numbers but also the quality of life changes, and that rising quality of life carries forward growth.

Utilizing this approach, Future Generations, an admittedly tiny organization with minimal budgets, grew:
- A network of one dozen national parks through the Himalayan region of China, India, and Nepal
- A network of community-based health projects across the country of Peru such that this service now provides approximately one-third of Peru's national health services
- A movement of community-based schools in the highlands of Afghanistan based in the mosques such that over 400 mosques now function as schools on week days when not used for religious services
- A range of interdependent community services throughout Haiti, in the largest slum in the Western Hemisphere

Consequently, when in 2009 the Higher Learning Commission gave full accreditation to the Future Generations Graduate School for its Master's Degree in Applied Community Change (a degree that teaches others how to utilize the above scaling up method within an academic framework of understanding larger social change methods, planning began to take those modest class sizes the Future Generations Graduate School had piloted (using a pedagogy termed Applied Blended Learning) and scale that up.

In September 2010, Future Generations Graduate School filed with the West Virginia Secretary of State for a new organization termed: University of the World. The name speaks of the central aspect of its pedagogy "of the world." Instruction is community-based; the classroom is in the world, not in buildings or in computer software. Learning is to be in grounded in work experience, mentored by faculty and peers, and international standards must be achieved to graduate.

In May 2012 the Rockefeller Foundation hosted a planning meeting in New York City. A Board of Governors was formed drawing on academic and international leaders from around the world. In September 2013 University of the World applied for state authorization to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC). Following a first submission to which helpful suggestions were made by HEPC, a more developed application was submitted. Planning continued, and in January 2014, another high-level meeting took place in New York to which educators came from around the world. In September 2014, a further major planning meeting occurred of governors, advisors, and staff. In November 24, 2014 University of the World received "preliminary authorization."

Immediate Challenges Now Being Addressed
Before moving to an implementation mode—aside from the essential need of raising money—the University of the World must prove its innovations in the areas of assessment, pedagogy, and partnerships. Continued progress toward accreditation cannot happen until the innovations are proven with evidence to show their effectivness:

- The metric for measuring achievement must be proven
- Organization of class structure and student connectivity
- Utility of the pedagogy across cultural differences
- Exploration to find the optimal structural and legal framework

Demonstrate Effective "Direct Assessment" Metric –Central to University of the World's design is the concept of "Direct Assessment." The term is used in its formal sense, which is that academic progress is measured directly as students prove competence of knowledge and skills learned. This differs from the conventional metric of academic advancement that is time-at-task–where course credits have a numerical hour work expectation.

Our mode of Direct Assessment is being designed in collaborative consultations. These include: faculty at the Center for Assessment & Research Studies at James Madison University, individuals from MIT's Media Lab, as well as faculty at the Stanford University School of Engineering, and on-going internal review of the literature.

Our approach differentiates the learning process into Learning Activities (what students do) and Learning Artifacts (what students produce). This method of "getting inside learning" differs from customary assessment that looks at learning inputs and outputs. To describe the process itself (and not just an output as would be a test or paper) another feature is that students document Learning Activities and Learning Artifacts utilizing multiple media and centralizing their work in ePortfolios. Thus, our assessment mode has innovations both in its method and in its documentation.

Organization of Learning among Students
The University of the World plans to gather students in class in two ways. As traditionally, students will physically come together in Local Classes where students who live close to each other aggregate in groups to see demonstrations, talk and critique, and work under expert leadership. Also, as now done in online learning, students will connect in virtual Global Classes where around common subject themes that students work around.

In both Local Classes and Global Classes there is faculty mentorship and oversight. But beyond this traditional leadership, the University of the World also introduces a component of peer-mentoring. Peer review is, arguably, the hallmark of scholarship. Usually peer reviewers are senior individuals who jury academic work. But in the University of the World peer review is one basis of learning. Another way to frame this is that from the outset students are both learning and teaching.

A further organizational feature is that education customarily is viewed as a process to which students "go." They go to a campus; they go to simulations in their computers. The University of the World comes to the student—wherever the student happens to live, that place becomes their learning platform. Education is thus 'of their world'—and to each student's individual experience

comes the best of world knowledge, that they use under supervision, and that localized product becomes credentialed to international standards.

Effectiveness of Pedagogy Across Cultural Differences
Given that University of the World projects to be a global institution, its range of innovations requires testing across cultures. The preliminary authorization given by West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, however, does not allow student recruitment or awarding degrees. This created a challenge because the accreditation process with the Higher Learning Commission requires evidence of effectiveness (especially of our Direct Assessment approach, though also it would help to test the Local Class/Global Class approach with its peer-mentoring emphasis).

So a pilot class is needed—as the University of the World has long proposed. The partnership with Future Generations Graduate School provides that platform. While Future Generations is not approved for Direct Assessment (less than a dozen schools in the USA are), and the Future Generations degree is in Applied Community Change not the subjects planned for the university, the Future Generations class size was expanded from under twenty students to over fifty. The class of 50+ will be created with at least fifteen students from each of three regions: USA (Appalachia), East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia), and the Himalaya (India, Nepal, Bhutan). Fifteen students in each cohort with some cultural similarity begin to give workable sample size to address cultural traits.

Structural, Legal, and Management Aspects
In financial management and personnel, the University of the World is currently a division within the Future Generations Graduate School. Funds raised by the University of the World were re-directed to Future Generations and did not go through the accounts of the University of the World. The Future Generations finance office handles the audit and other reporting requirements.

As a result, the Board of Trustees of Future Generations governs the earlier described program. University of the World Governor, Ron Carrier, currently chairs the Future Generations Board of Trustees. Further, the following personnel of the University of the World are employees of Future Generations on a full-time basis: Daniel Taylor, Ruben Puentes, Paz Magat, Jesse Pappas, and Luke Taylor-Ide. Part-time from the university are: Win Burleson and Eric Pappas.

In 2014 and before, an assumption was that the University of the World would be an autonomous educational institution. It was with the intention of autonomous operations that it applied for authorization from West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. But with its personnel now inside the Future Generations Graduate School one option is for the university to remain there, as a division. Another option is for the university over time to subsume Future Generations within it, where it has a specialized graduate school as a constituent. This structure will take some considerable administrative challenge to execute. What makes this difficult is that a university has to be accredited before it can "take over" another accredited institution. Moreover, the wider range of distinctive concepts within the university (Direct Assessment, Local/Global Classes, Competency-based Learning, Semi-open Admissions) will require a series of new permissions if Future Generations elects to go in that direction.

The most possible structure, it seems now, is to partner with an institution or multiple institutions that are not educational. This seems easier than partnering with educational institutions (not the least because educational institutions are typically controlled by faculty, and the university's different utilization of faculty can be expected to be blocked). Partnership options have been thus far

explored including with CISCO the information technologies company, International Foundation of Boy and Girl Scouts, and Google. But the most promising now appears to be National Geographic Society or collaboration with major world religions.

In sum, the six months since the University of the World received "preliminary authorization" by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission has been a period that moved forward the university project in two major aspects. First, key issues were refined so that they could be tested for their effectiveness. Second, a degree platform was created in the accredited Future Generations Graduate School.

Additionally, the context of higher education continues to call for deep structural change as existing approaches exceed affordability, the benefits of learning delivered are increasingly questioned, and groups such as the U.S. Congress examine major changes to both financing and accreditation of higher education. The continuing numbers of long-established institutions going out of business stand as evidence that positive new directions are needed. In this, the University of the World is a design that appears to have connected promising answers to major questions in higher education.