

University and Research Leadership Forum

Accelerating Collaboration to Drive Innovation and Impact



Universities are essential drivers of economic growth in the innovation economy and play multiple roles within innovation ecosystems. They supply talent to all sectors, generate and move new intellectual property to the market, and train entrepreneurs.

Additionally, universities build partnerships to steer innovation, drive investments in research and new ventures, and foster the creation of new jobs.

Through their work, they develop solutions that impact local and global communities.

The GFCC University and Research Leadership Forum (URLF) serves as a living think tank for identifying and discussing trends and ideas to optimize the university and research enterprises, with a focus on advancing cross-sector partnerships, and driving innovation and economic impact.

Through this initiative, we map relevant contributions made by global education and research institutions to advance innovation and competitiveness worldwide, disseminate best practices and catalyze new partnerships.



Top: The 2016 University and Research Leadership Forum meeting in London.

Bottom: Isabel Gil, President, Catholic University of Portugal; Prof. Sethuraman "Panch" Panchanathan, Executive Vice President, Knowledge Enterprise, and Chief Research and Innovation Officer, Arizona State University; and Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President, GFCC, and President & CEO, Council on Competitiveness.

Our work provides global visibility to relevant cases and original thought on new university models, research translation, technology commercialization strategies, and initiatives to enhance universities' impact on the ground.

We operate in a multistakeholder environment to facilitate new collaborations between universities, industry, government, and civil society organizations.

Multistakeholder

Cross-Sector Partnerships

Global Visibility

Impact

Universities as Engines of Growth in the Innovation Economy

We recognize universities as vital strategic assets for enhancing a country's and region's competitiveness, as they hold immense potential to foster innovation ecosystems and turbocharge local and regional economies.

In recent years, universities have become increasingly intertwined with local economies and societies, facing a growing demand for them to embrace new responsibilities. These responsibilities include **driving regional economic growth, nurturing entrepreneurship, establishing global networks with other universities and industry, translating knowledge into impact, and facilitating new teaching and learning methods through the use of new technologies.**

To fulfill these rising expectations, visionary leadership, innovative organizational solutions, and novel management models are imperative. Universities must understand the forces that shape the world, envision their future roles, and proactively prepare to meet the evolving needs of societies and communities.

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Higher education institutions and research organizations play pivotal roles in competitiveness and economic growth. When one looks at a global map of industry clusters and thriving start-up zones, seeing universities and research institutions anchoring the most innovative cities and regions should be no surprise.

Deborah L. Wince Smith
President, GFCC, and President & CEO, Council on Competitiveness



Dr. Elizabeth J. Stroble, President, Webster University; Mr. Adham Nadim, Chairman and Managing Director, NADIM; and Dr. Mohammad Zaidi, Strategic Advisory Board Member, Braemar Energy Ventures, and Former Executive Vice President and CTO, Alcoa, Inc.



Dr. Pradeep Khosla, Chancellor, University of California San Diego.

Leadership Letter

Universities play a fundamental role in developing people's talents and competencies, training young generations, and re-skilling the workforce. But their outreach and mission go much beyond that. In today's world, universities are essential actors within innovation ecosystems, engaging with multiple stakeholders to translate knowledge into economic value and social impact.

For more than ten years, the GFCC has been a platform to share experiences, best practices, and strategies to drive innovation, competitiveness, growth, and prosperity. In 2016, the creation of the University and Research Leadership Forum highlighted our commitment to bringing education institutions to the center of the global competitiveness agenda.

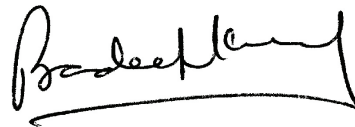
Since our inaugural meeting in London that year, the Forum has been working to stimulate thinking and the exchange of future-shaping ideas across academia, industry, government, and civil society.

Forum activities have generated valuable insights, shedding light on the multifaceted roles that universities play, the complex challenges they face, the transformations they are experiencing, and the solutions they are adopting to build relevance and expand impact.

In a rapidly evolving world marked by turbulence and multiple crises, the missions of universities hold the key to the future of societies and economies. GFCC's unique cross-sector setting creates exclusive opportunities for collaboration and to advance university models focused on innovation and impact.

In the coming years, the URLF will serve as a dynamic platform for generating fresh ideas, systematizing knowledge, and forging new connections. As the Forum enters a new phase, it will strive to unveil the secrets behind university-anchored, high-performing local and regional innovation ecosystems worldwide and further emphasize the role of transformational university leaders in shaping the future of the innovation economy.

We urge universities worldwide to embrace this mission and hope new visionary leaders join us for the journey.



Pradeep K Khosla
Chancellor, UC San Diego
Founding Chair, URLF



URLF members during a meeting in 2017 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

A Novel Chapter Starts

In the years ahead, the University and Research Leadership Forum will craft and disseminate a novel toolkit designed for universities to promote innovation, deepen community engagement, and create an impact on local economies and the communities they serve, all while enhancing their global relevance.

The GFCC network will work to distill and systematize learnings gained from university activities and their impact on local economies. We will do that in three ways. First, via a series of global leadership dialogues. Second, through site visits and in-depth case studies about innovation hotspots linked to universities. And third, by developing a unique body of knowledge outlining new partnership models, leadership roles, tools, processes, and digital solutions to advance cross-sector engagement and university impact.

Goals

- Promote innovation
- Deepen community engagement
- Create impact on communities and local economies
- Build global relevance

Forum Activities

- Global leadership dialogues
- Site visits
- Case-studies
- Concept development
- Tools development



GFCC members and fellows discuss the concept of University 4.0, in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Our Numbers

57 Universities have participated in URLF activities since its inception.

We hosted **3 plenary meetings** (London, Kuala Lumpur, Buenos Aires) and **8 workshops** in São José dos Campos, Brazil (2018), Doha (2019), Washington, D.C. (2019), and São Paulo, Brazil (2019 and 2022).

2 Global Task Forces, led by university presidents from different parts of the globe, researched and systematized learnings about research innovation toolkits and moonshot initiatives.

We published **6 ground-breaking reports:** *Convergence and Circulation, Speed and Leadership, Optimizing Innovation Alliances, Leveraging Extreme Innovation, Shift: Universities in Transformation, and Industry-University Partnerships for Impact.*

We published **1 Executive Summary** on *Future Innovation Trends Influencing the Higher Education Business Model* in partnership with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

We published **3 University 4.0 Discussion Papers** authored by members, and we released **3 exclusive interviews** with them to discuss the main findings: Drivers of Resilience, Prosperity and Recovery (Queen Mary University); Technology as a Transformation Enabler (RMIT), Universities of the Future (University of Auckland).

We hosted **7 online events** to discuss key trends and solutions for universities to advance innovation.

Join Us for a New Phase

We will expand the work of the URLF and want to engage new members to help us develop a groundbreaking initiative to drive innovation and amplify the economic impact of universities.

Over the course of the next two years, the URLF will foster dynamic discussions, conduct workshops, develop research, and systematize best practices, among other activities.

What Universities Get

- High-profile networking across sectors in more than 32 countries.
- Access to talent and funding agencies in global markets.
- Visibility across the GFCC network.
- Access to exclusive insights on local realities.
- Access to knowledge and information from an exclusive, multistakeholder setting.
- Participation in a unique platform to develop new ideas, content, and initiatives.
- Speaker engagements in GFCC events.
- The opportunity to host events in partnership with the GFCC and showcase local innovation ecosystems.

2024–2025 Activities

- Multistakeholder discussion sessions.
- Learning sessions and best practices group calls.
- Development of case studies highlighting university models, roles, and initiatives to advance innovation and impact.
- Exclusive insider visits to innovation hubs worldwide.

Membership in the GFCC

University and Research members are higher-education or applied research entities that emphasize their roles as economic growth engines. They want to engage globally in a multi-stakeholder setting to share best practices and build new partnerships.

Annual membership fees for universities are set at \$5000.

Universities located in least developed countries can avail themselves of discounted membership fees. These requests undergo a thorough review process and require approval from the board.

Get involved

If you want to get involved, please contact GFCC Executive Director, Dr. Roberto Alvarez, by email, ralvarez@thegfcc.org.

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