COVID 19 as a Catalyst for Change and Innovation: The University of Guyana Registry

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First Official Cases of COVID 19
December 31, 2019, Wuhan, China

Declared a pandemic March 11, 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022).

Impact on Higher Education Institutions (HEI) (Devi, 2021; King, 2021; Marsicano et al., 2020)

Rapid shift to online/remote learning

Lack of access to physical teaching resources

Lack of access to physical library collections & institutional records

Loss of financial resources

Reduced enrollment

COVID 19: Changing the Landscape of Higher Education Institutions

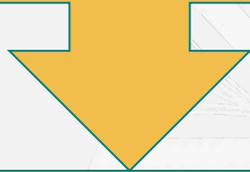This presentation focuses specifically on the University of Guyana's experience

More specifically, the University Registry's Committees & Archives and Records & Data Management Units respectively
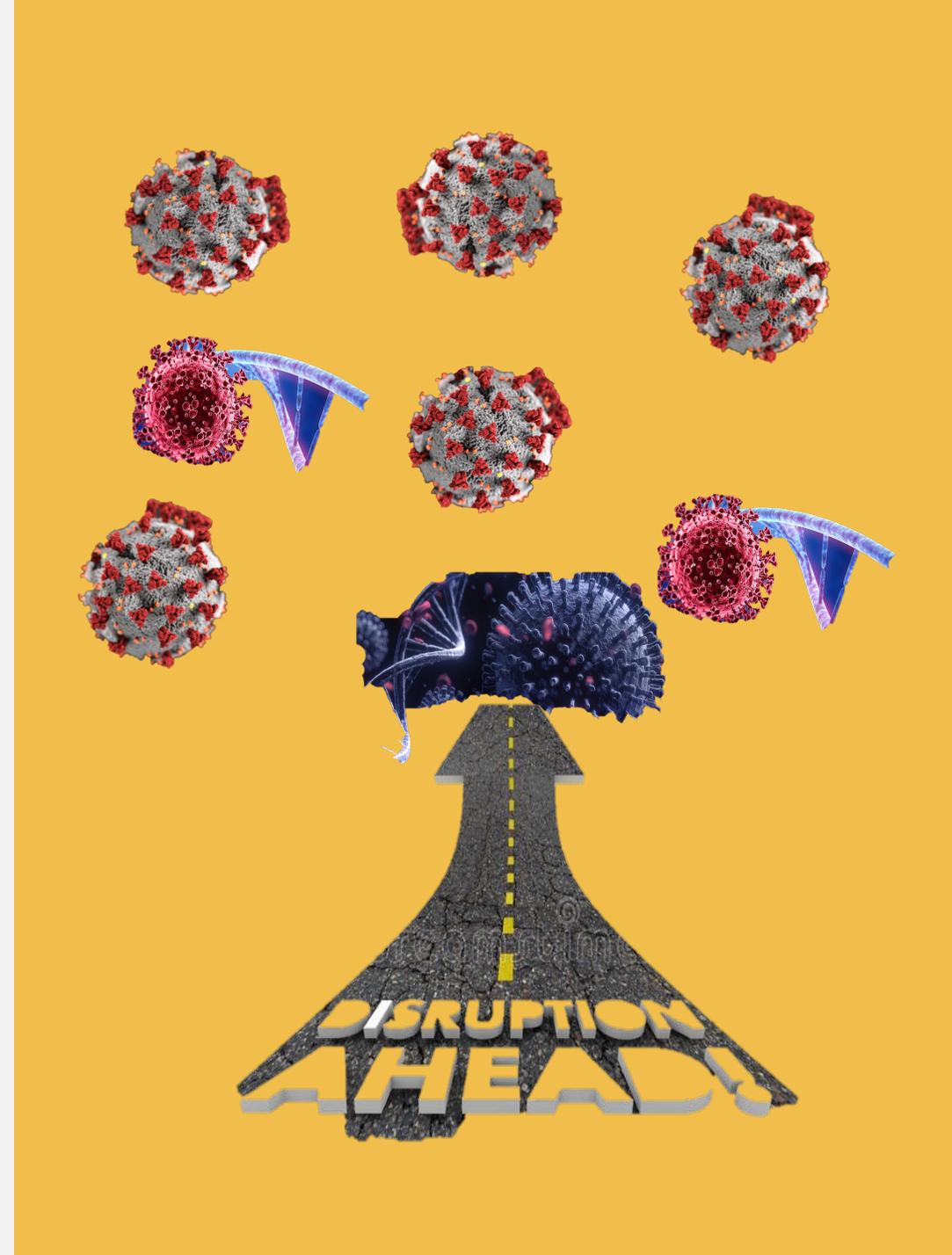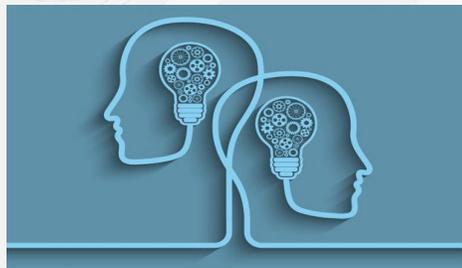
Poster Presentation Focus

COVID 19 had both negative and positive impacts on the HEI environment

Positive impacts of COVID 19 may be related to the effects of Disruptive Technologies on the way we do things

Disruptive Technologies/Disruptive Innovations
(Kumaraswamy et al., 2018)

Enhance the value of existing services	Render existing business models obsolete	Disrupt value-networks	Prompt providers to rethink who their customers are	Lead customers to rethink what they value

Innovate, Create, Adapt ➡ Change

Notwithstanding all the negatives that COVID 19 has inflicted on us, can we say that it has also forced us to show resilience, adaptability, innovativeness, and creativity?

Can we say that it has acted like a disruptive technology in some ways?

Can we say that COVID 19 has caused us to create disruptive innovations?

"And so Rise Ye Sleeping Giant ... The evolution of the National University in an Age of Rapid and Unyielding Disruption"

Title of a presentation done by Professor Paloma Mohamed Martin, Xi Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana, November 13, 2020 to the University Council

In response to the shift of the entire University to online operations, the Registry was forced to consider how it could deliver all its services in a virtual environment. This meant adapting our admissions, exams, data & records, committees & archives, and students' services to suit an online mode. This had to be done in a seamless and efficient manner.

Were we prepared? No!

But challenges often brings resilience and creativity to the fore and we had to step up, to join the entire University in an attempt to provide a cohesive response to the shift in order to ensure that our University remain relevant and competitive.

Impact of the COVID 19 on Services of the University of Guyana Registry

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Strategies and Activities Undertaken by the University Registry:

Stepping Up

» Switch to online verification of students' application documents

» Switch to Zoom platform to host all governance meetings

» Circulation and storage of all documents in electronic format

» Devising of online signing mechanisms

» Employment of additional man power and resources to augment pre COVID structure

» Implementing & monitoring of a virtual student helpdesk

Strategies and Activities Undertaken by the University Registry:

Student Surveys were conducted through the Students Records Management System (SRMS) to ascertain their needs during the period

Data from the SRMS was used to determine how the switch to online learning was affecting students in terms of retention, performance, gender, available resources etc.

DBDM is the systematic collection and analysis of different kinds of data to inform decision making in educational institutions (Mandinach & Schildhamp, 2020)

Implementation of Aspects of Data Wise Decision Making (DBDM)

Experiences Had & Lessons Learnt

We were unprepared for the switch to online operations, thus the transition was inefficient in some areas and required a lot of man hours to simply stay on top of it. This was particularly true for the use of an email system to verify student documents.

Paper based institutional record keeping systems are highly inefficient in this fast paced electronic world that is today's HEI environment. Working from home meant no access to our paper files and records and in many cases we did not have electronic copies.

We had an SRMS that could provide data for decision making and to support student success, but this approach was never used until COVID19 and other competitive factors forced us to examine the way we do things especially with regards to student support systems.

Experiences Had & Lessons Learnt

Zoom meetings meant a better system for recording the meetings and saving recordings for future use. This required very little training in learning how to manage and use Zoom. However, keeping track of who attended the meetings became a challenge as persons entered with all manner of devices and user names. This was quickly rectified with the waiting room solution.

HEIs exists to serve their students, COVID 19 forced us to remember this and to devise ways to do this effectively.

Success of change initiatives in HEIs is highly dependent on the way student and institutional records are used for decision making and planning.

Plans & Recommendations

We plan to institute data wise decision making in all departments to help us better serve our students.

Work is being undertaken to implement an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) for institutional records under the purview of the Committees & Archives Unit.

A system for the upload of student documents directly into the SRMS needs to be devised to allow for a faster and more efficient verification system.

Work needs to be done to link old student files which have been digitized to the SRMS for ease of retrieval and access.

In collaboration with our Software Services & Educational Technology Applications (SSETA- Team) we plan to work on improving our current reports on student data as the current reports do not provide a comprehensive view.

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Thank You

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