

Dr. Sohail Inayatullah Featured in University World News Interview, Praises Tamkang' s Strength in Futures Studies

On April 1, University World News (UWN) published an interview with Dr. Sohail Inayatullah, a visiting researcher at Tamkang University's Department of Educational and Futures Design. In the interview, Inayatullah lamented that universities today are falling behind in futures studies and praised Tamkang University' s visionary approach of requiring all undergraduate students to take futures studies courses.

Sohail Inayatullah is the UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies at the IIUM Sejahtera Centre for Sustainability and Humanity in Malaysia. Recognized among the world' s top 2% of scientists, he is most renowned for introducing and developing Causal Layered Analysis (CLA). In addition to his teaching role at Tamkang' s Department of Education and Futures Design, he participates in the university-wide futures curriculum planning, advises the University Futures Committee, and serves as editor of the international journal -- Journal of Futures Studies.

This article is part of a sustainability education series jointly published by UWN and ABET. In the interview titled "Universities lack futures studies at a time of huge change," Sohail Inayatullah explained that the thinking in futures studies has undergone tremendous changes over the past decade, with growing emphasis on agility, diversity, sustainability, artificial intelligence, global perspectives, and even spiritual thinking. As the global landscape continues to shift dramatically, more people are beginning to explore how to incorporate futures thinking into their work and decision-making. Yet, "universities are laggards in this area," he pointed out. He even joked, "For some universities, the only thing they can predict is enrollment numbers."

Sohail Inayatullah argued that when universities focus primarily on teaching classical knowledge and transmitting officially compiled textbooks, conducting forward-looking research becomes difficult. He questioned, "Is what we are teaching now sufficient to cope with the

future?" In an era marked by rapid technological and sustainability-related transformations, this traditional approach is increasingly outdated and hampers the development of futures studies. "We are currently undergoing a paradigm shift," he stressed. In the interview, he praised Tamkang University as one of the largest futures studies institutions in the world, with all students required to take futures studies courses. He further interpreted this by saying, "Smaller countries may possess greater foresight because they lack the resource advantages of larger nations."

Dean of the College of Education and member of Tamkang's Futures Committee, Professor Kuo-Hua Chen, echoed Inayatullah's views. He noted that Tamkang University introduced futures studies as early as 1960, under the leadership of founder Dr. Clement C.P. Chang, and has been cultivating it for over 60 years. In 1999, Tamkang was honored with the "Outstanding Institution Award for Contribution to Futures Studies" by the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) and was officially accredited by the WFSF last year as one of the four futures studies teaching and research institutions worldwide. In 2016, Chairperson and then-President Flora Chia-I Chang was also recognized with the "Outstanding Achievement Award in Promoting Futures Studies" by the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies (HRCFS). Dean Chen added that in recent years, Tamkang has further promoted "future literacy" by designing a series of university-mandated core courses, including Exploring Sustainability, and AI and Programming Languages. These initiatives aim to equip students with essential competencies across diverse fields such as environmental sustainability and artificial intelligence applications, preparing them to thrive in a rapidly changing society.

Link to the University World News interview:

<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20250401082446245>

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Professor Sohail Inayatullah, futures thinker. Photo: Supplied

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Universities lack futures studies at a time of huge change

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There's been a tidal shift in thinking around futures studies in the past decade. "Universities are the laggards here," says futurist Professor Sohail Inayatullah. "But working with students everywhere; agility, diversity, sustainability, AI, global thinking, even spiritual thinking – those come up more and more."

Universities may resist foresight exercises as professors protect their turf and academic tradition. "For some universities, foresight is nothing more than predicting student numbers," he told *University World News*. This is a problem at a time of profound changes, including the technology and sustainability 'revolutions'.

Born in Pakistan, Inayatullah has worked at universities around the world, and is a professor in the Graduate Institute of Futures Studies

