



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COVID-19 ERA A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

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- The University of Iceland had to transform itself into a distance learning university in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
 - This transformation took place almost overnight in March
 - Although it was an unexpected shock, we were well prepared to meet the challenge




COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Over the past two decades, the University of Iceland has followed the practice of establishing a clear strategy for a period of five years, which is then systematically followed up
- The current strategy covers the period 2016-2021 and has a strong focus on
 - teaching excellence
 - digital solutions
 - communication

STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND




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- In 2019, an Academic Affairs Building was established on the UI campus
 - Administration of teaching and learning
 - Centre for Teaching and Learning
 - Studio with state-of-the-art recording equipment
 - Recent strong emphasis on introducing IT solutions in teaching and learning
 - Implementing a new learning management system (LMS)
 - Digital examination platform
 - Other digital solutions, e.g., for video work

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- Students have in many cases adapted well to the new situation, but one vulnerable group is new students who require particularly close attention
 - Mental health of students is a concern – the University has taken significant actions

STUDENTS



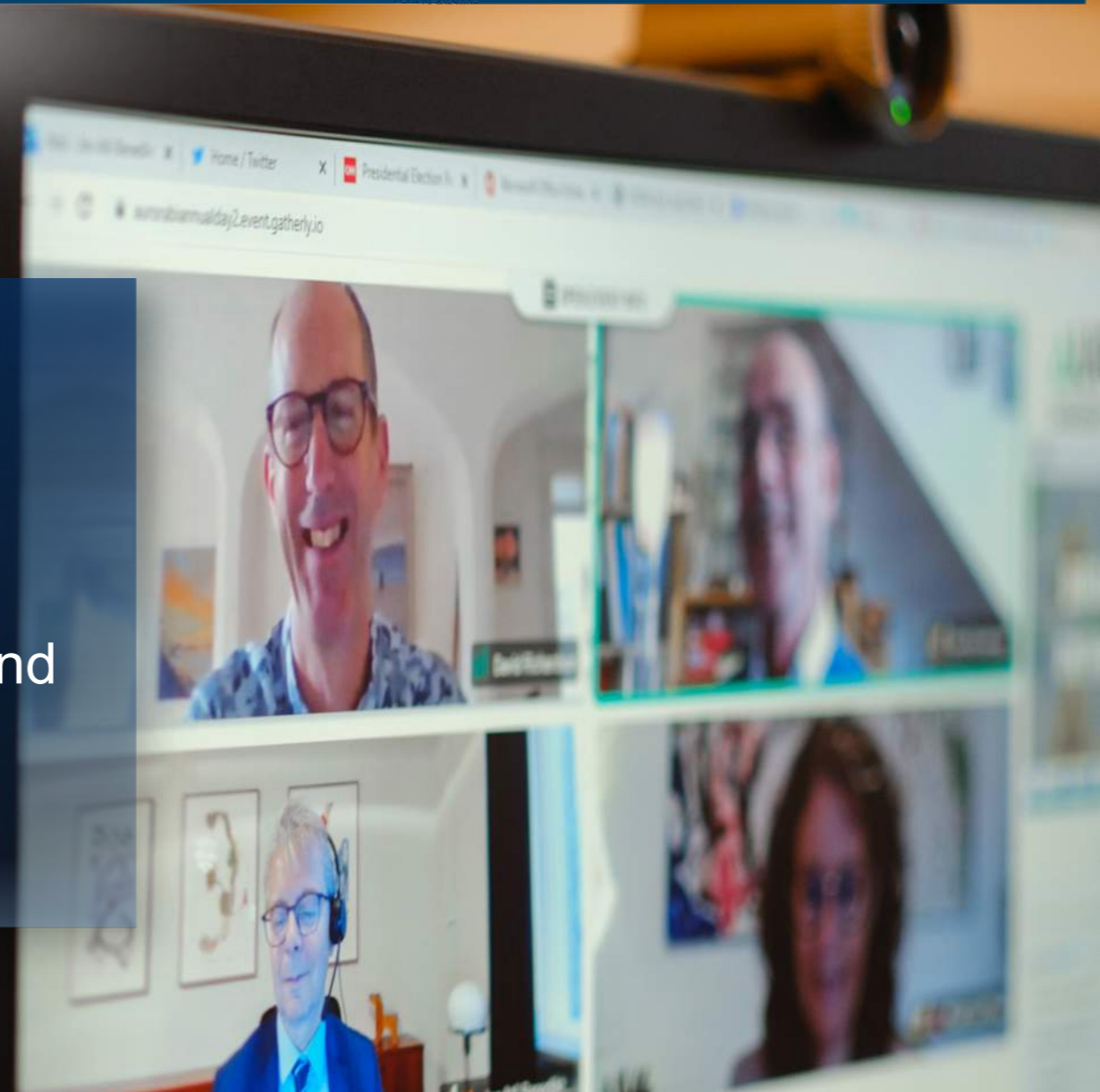
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- The COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected teaching and learning, but all aspects of work at the University
 - Management has also been transformed. In recent months, most staff members have been working from home, which means additional stress
 - Almost all meetings and events have been held remotely, including University Council meetings, the University Forum, and ordinary work meetings
 - On-line meetings have their advantages and disadvantages
 - At this time, UI is beginning the process of introducing a new communications policy


MANAGEMENT





- Superiors need to put additional efforts into taking care of their staff using innovative techniques
- Leadership training at the University of Iceland has a particular focus on staff management during the COVID-19 pandemic



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- A recent staff survey demonstrates that, despite increased stress, people have generally adapted well to the new situation
 - Staff with children at home stands out
 - This is particularly true when preschools and schools have had to be temporarily closed due to infections or quarantine



- Some changes to the work environment will be long-lasting and there will probably be more remote working after the pandemic has subsided
- Particular care must be given to mental well-being.
 - The University offers specific resources for staff psychological support and many have made use of these resources
- Other health promotion measures have also been introduced, e.g., online gym classes, which have been popular



WORK ENVIRONMENT - STAFF



- The University of Iceland has, taken the step to stream music concerts this semester with great success. Audience numbers have been much higher than ever before
- Large visual art exhibitions have also been set up in UI buildings




CULTURE AND THE ARTS



- UI has a large campus in the centre of Reykjavík, but one of the five schools is located in a different part of the city
- As part of our current strategic plan for the University, we aim to have all our major operations on the main campus
- Furthermore, our vision is to shift the University of Iceland campus from a series of buildings connected by indifferent car parks to a coherent green campus, putting people in the centre




CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

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- Our plan is to emphasise high quality public spaces and dense collective facilities
 - A strong new green identity through a sustainable, healthy and holistic campus




CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

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- This vision is called Green Edge Campus
 - Building guidelines provided in this re-envisioned **framework plan** will ensure flexible, adaptive and sustainable buildings

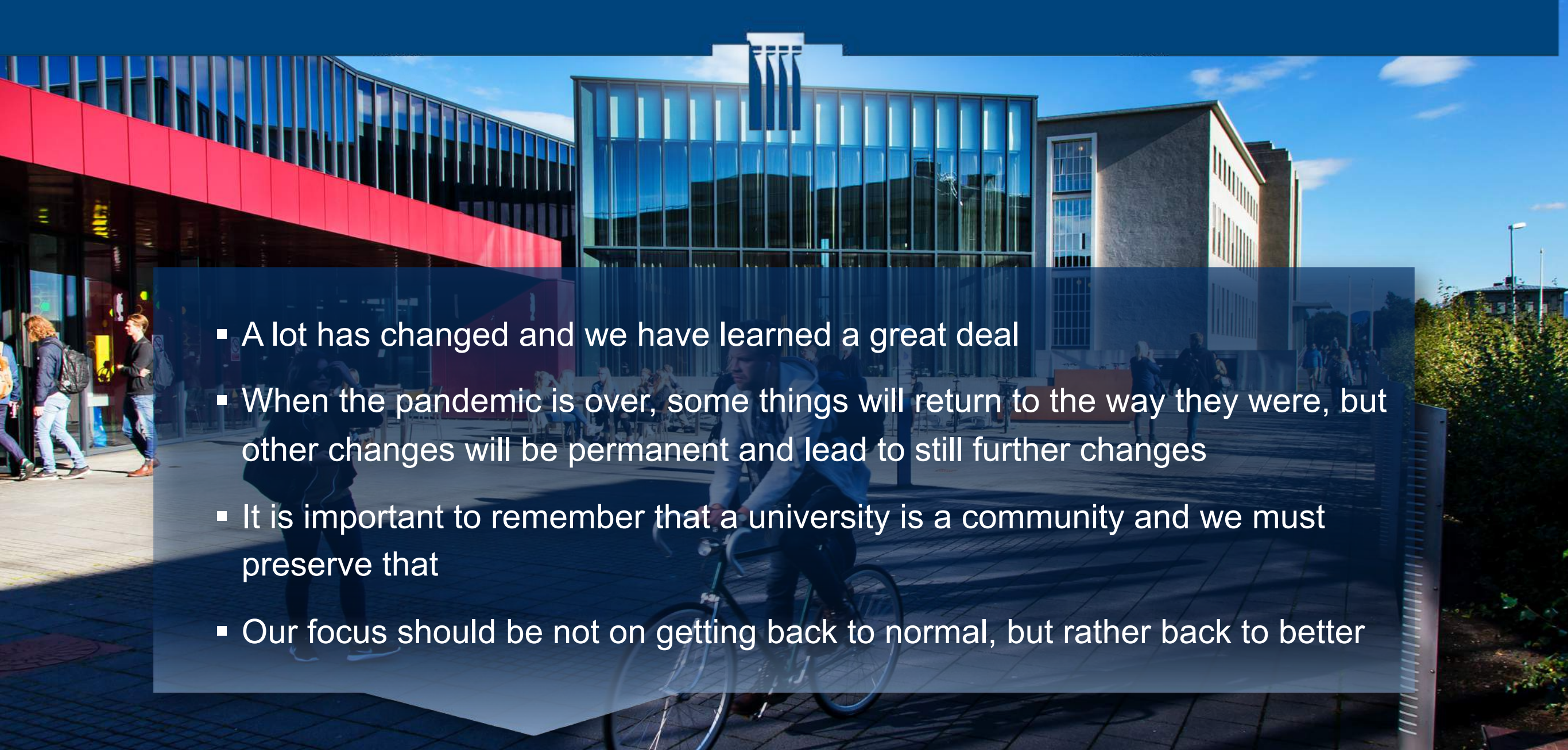


CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

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- We are also in the process of planning several new buildings with smaller, more flexible spaces in contrast to the University's traditional lecture rooms. Blended learning, based on our experiences from COVID-19 online teaching, will help us here



CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

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- A lot has changed and we have learned a great deal
 - When the pandemic is over, some things will return to the way they were, but other changes will be permanent and lead to still further changes
 - It is important to remember that a university is a community and we must preserve that
 - Our focus should be not on getting back to normal, but rather back to better



VISION FOR THE FUTURE

