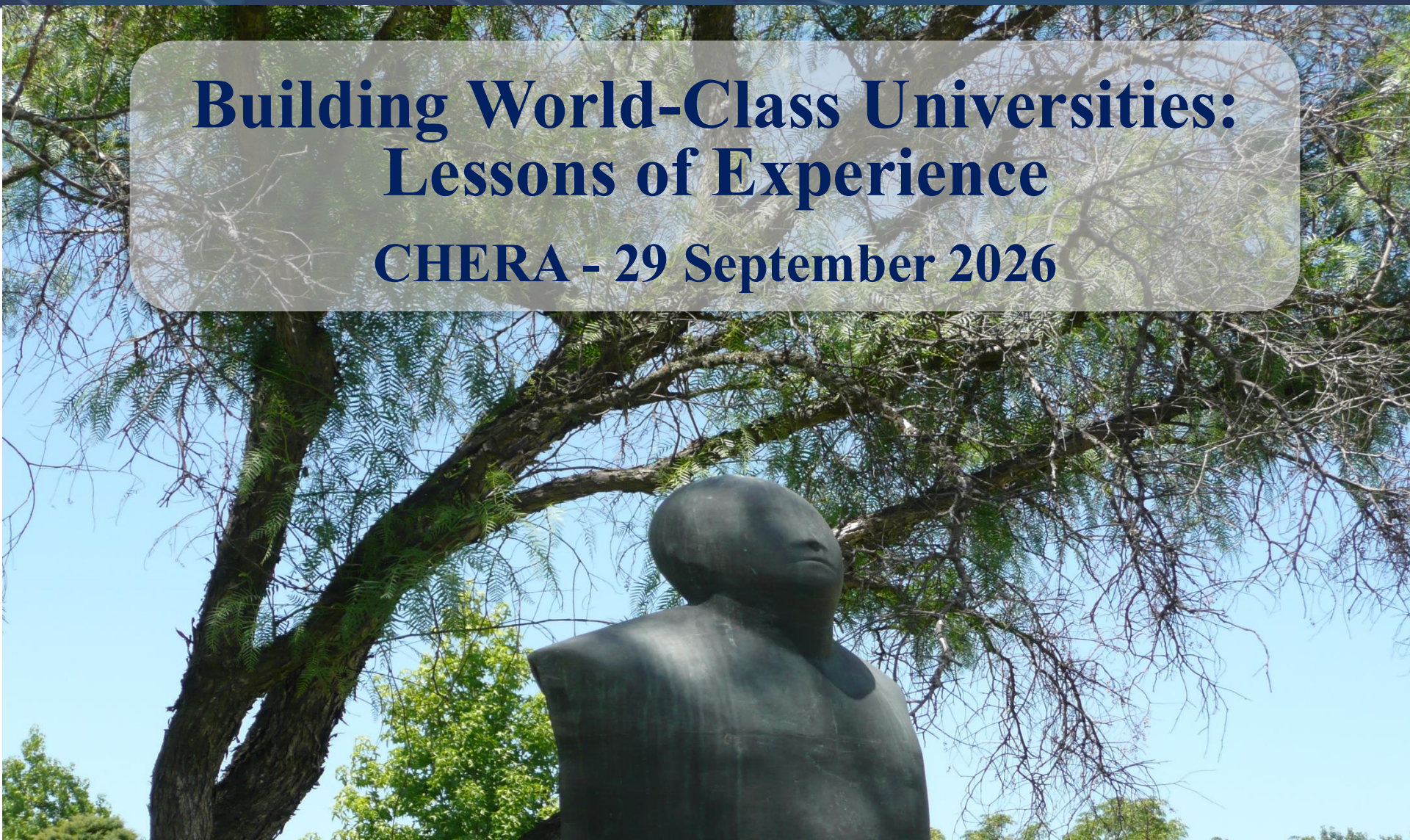
JAMIL SALMI
Global Tertiary Education Expert

Building World-Class Universities: Lessons of Experience

CHERA - 29 September 2026



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Global Tertiary Education Expert

Heroes or villains?

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QS TOPUNIVERSITIES

Ranking Web of World Universities
January 10

THE
WORLD
UNIVERSITY
RANKINGS

CHE
Centrum für
Hochschulentwicklung

U.S.News
& WORLD REPORT

Professor
TOP LISTS
2009-2010

Tertiary Education Commission
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

FT.com
FINANCIAL TIMES

BusinessWeek online

Academic Ranking of World Universities

SOCIÉTÉ

ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR

FAIBLESSE DU FINANCEMENT public de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, succès de la pétition « Sauvons la recherche », signée par 22 000 chercheurs, l'université française est en état de « crise latente », selon Michel Laurent, le vice-président de la conférence des présidents d'université. Un « **PLAN D'URGENCE** » a été réclamé lors des assises nationales, organisées jeudi 22 et vendredi 23 janvier par l'UNEF et le Snesup-FSU, les principaux syndicats d'enseignants et d'étudiants. La première faculté française n'arrive qu'au 65e **RANG** d'un palmarès international de l'enseignement supérieur établi par une université chinoise. Selon le chercheur Jean-Jacques Payan, le système français est « *le plus inégalitaire et le plus inefficace des pays développés* ». Il se prononce pour une **AUTONOMIE ACCRUE** des universités et une sélection à l'entrée.

La grande misère des universités françaises

Plusieurs conseils d'administration d'université ont menacé de ne pas voter leur budget pour protester contre l'insuffisance de leurs moyens. Malgré un budget global en hausse de 3 %, les établissements sont contraints à des restrictions sévères et font des « économies de bout de chandelle »

Excellence initiatives

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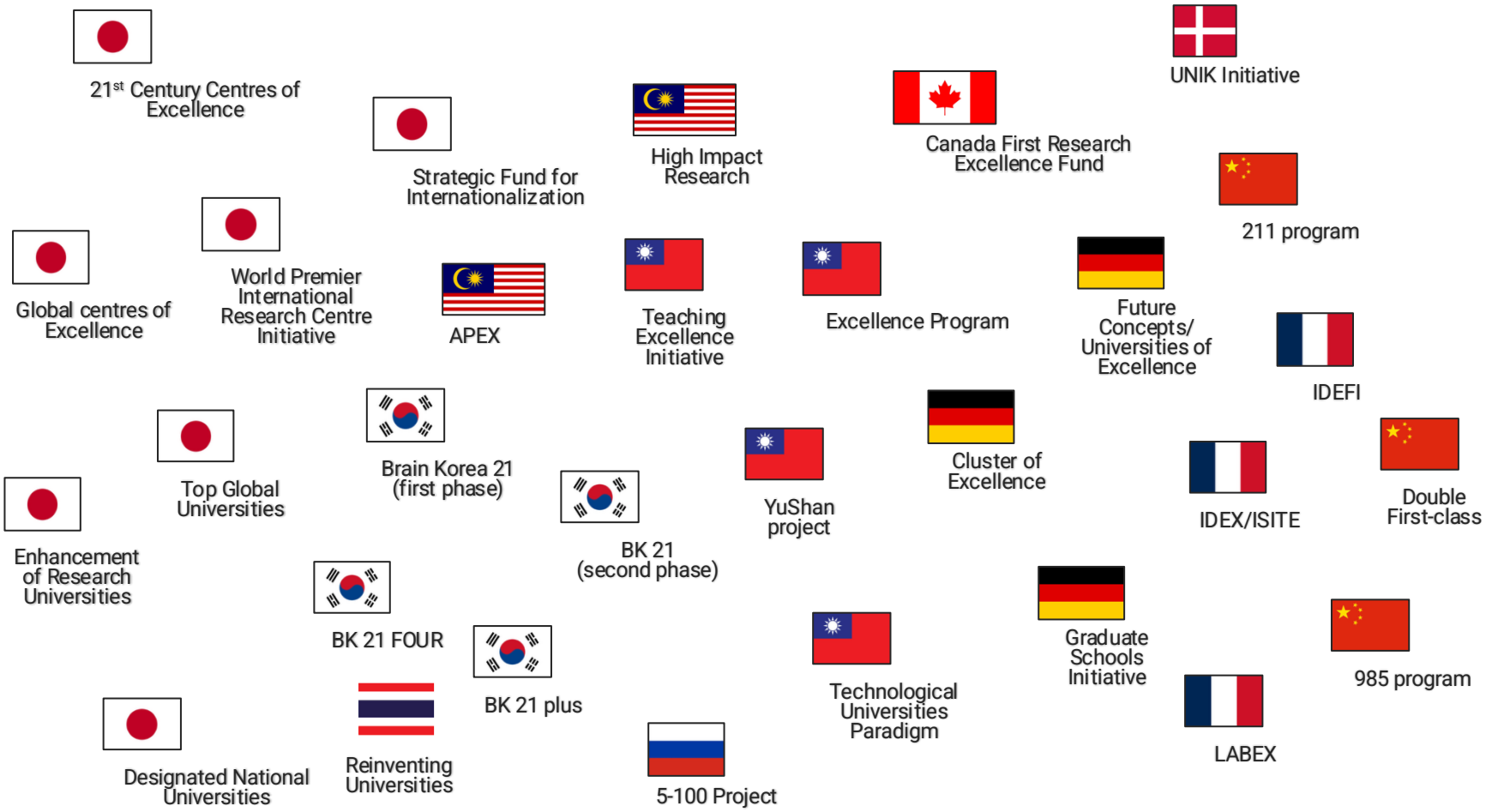

Excellence initiatives

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- Not in LATAM & Africa
- **Europe**: Germany, France, Spain, Denmark, Russia, Poland
- **Asia**: China, Japan, Taiwan, S. Korea, Malaysia

- Home
- About the University
  - Introduction
  - Faculties
  - Campuses
  - **Ranking**
  - Film
  - Student Councelling
  - Associations and Clubs
  - Mentor
  - Bookshops
  - Libraries
  - Computer Facilities
  - KUnet
  - Alumni
- Studies
- Admission
- Housing
- Residence Permit and Insurance
- Health and Safety
- Arriving and Living in Copenhagen
- Going Back Home
- For Parents
- FAQ

University ranking

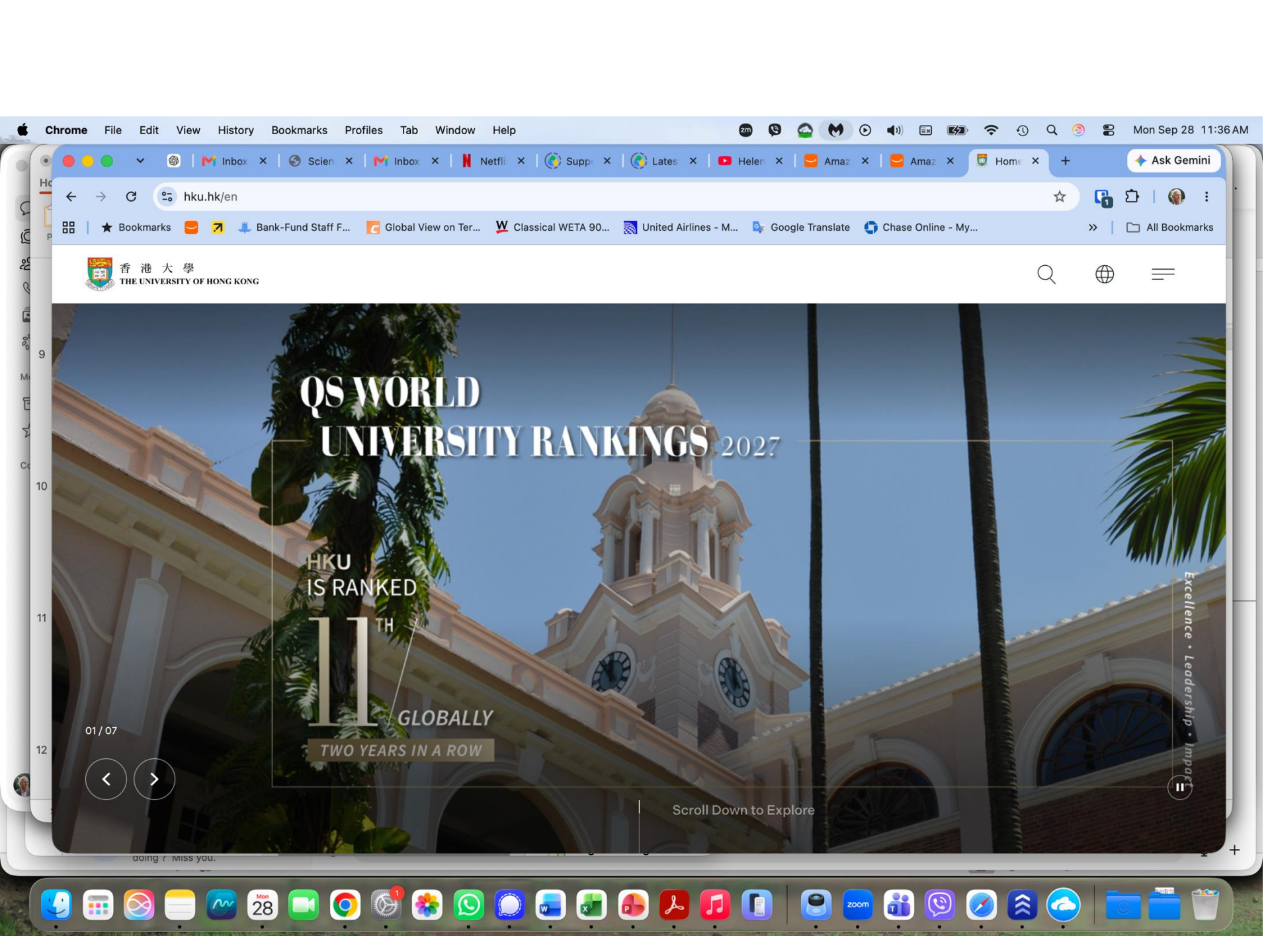
Every year, international surveys are published in the attempt to benchmark universities around the world against each other. The methodology in the rankings vary, but often include peer reviews, research articles published in important research magazines, number of nobelprizes won etc.

Sometimes, individual surveys adjust their methodology which can explain why the results can vary quite a bit from year to year.

University of Copenhagen's placement on rankings	World	Europe
QS World University Rankings (2011)	52	13
THE World University Rankings (2011)	135	52
Academic Ranking of World Universities - Shanghai (2011)	43	9
Leiden Ranking* (2011)	46	7
Leiden Ranking** (2011)	129	46

** Based on total number of publications*

*** Based on "Mean Normalized Citatation Score"*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QS WORLD
UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2027
HKU
IS RANKED
11TH
GLOBALLY
TWO YEARS IN A ROW
01 / 07
Excellence · Leadership · Impact
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香 港 大 學
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION
WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS
BY SUBJECT 2026

NINE OF 11 SUBJECTS
RANKED
1st
IN HONG KONG

02 / 07

Scroll Down to Explore

Prof. Hashim Yacoob

JAMIL SALMI
Global Tertiary Education Expert

Outline

JAMIL SALMI
Global Tertiary Education Expert

- The shifting landscape of WCUs
- Paths to academic excellence
- Beyond academic excellence

WCU concentration index (2004 – 2025)

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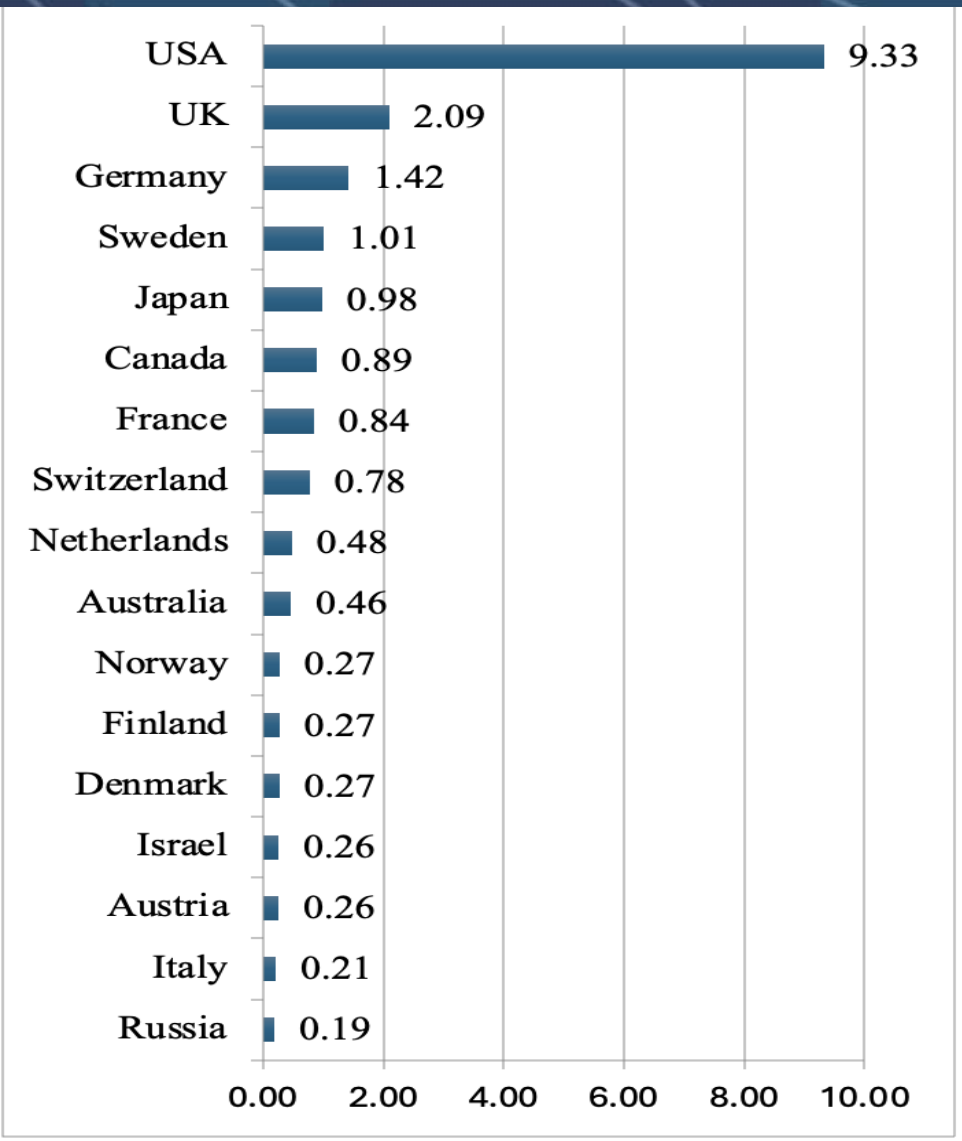

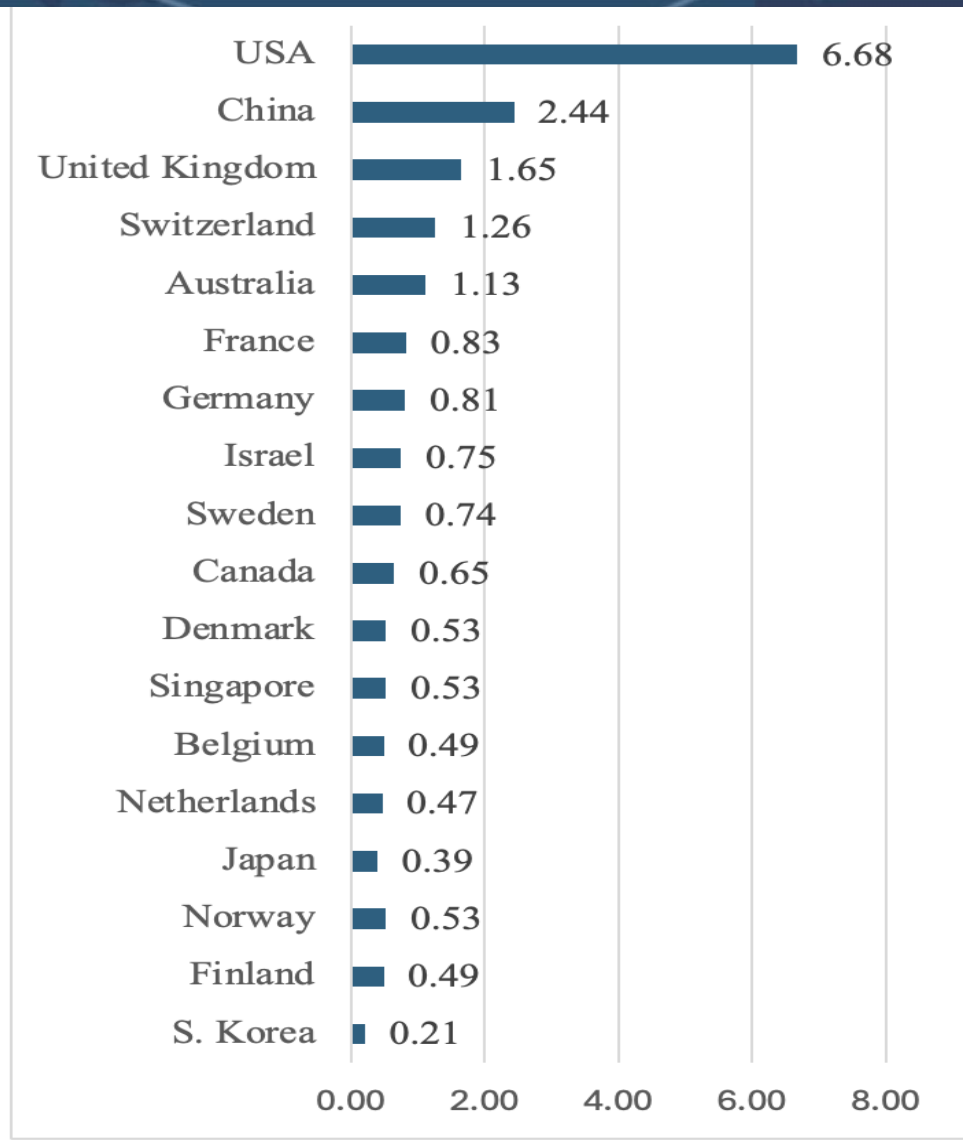

Significant changes

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- China: from 0 to 16
- Russia, Italy, and Austria out
- Newcomers: Singapore, Belgium
- Improvements for Denmark, Israel, Australia, and Switzerland
- Deterioration for Japan, USA, and UK
- Good small-country performance
- Missing major economies: Brazil, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Spain, South Africa, and Taiwan

Outline

JAMIL SALMI
Global Tertiary Education Expert

- The shifting landscape of WCUs
- **Paths to academic excellence**

The path to academic excellence

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- Creating a new institution from scratch (Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Saudi Arabia)
- Upgrading existing institutions (AEIs)
- Conglomerates
    - France, Vietnam
- Mergers

Accelerating factors

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- Leadership, inspiration and vision
- Capacity building through internationalization
- Being a niche institution and / or offering niche programs
- Curriculum, pedagogical and managerial innovations
- Strategic planning and benchmarking

Characteristics of WCUs
Alignment of Key Factors

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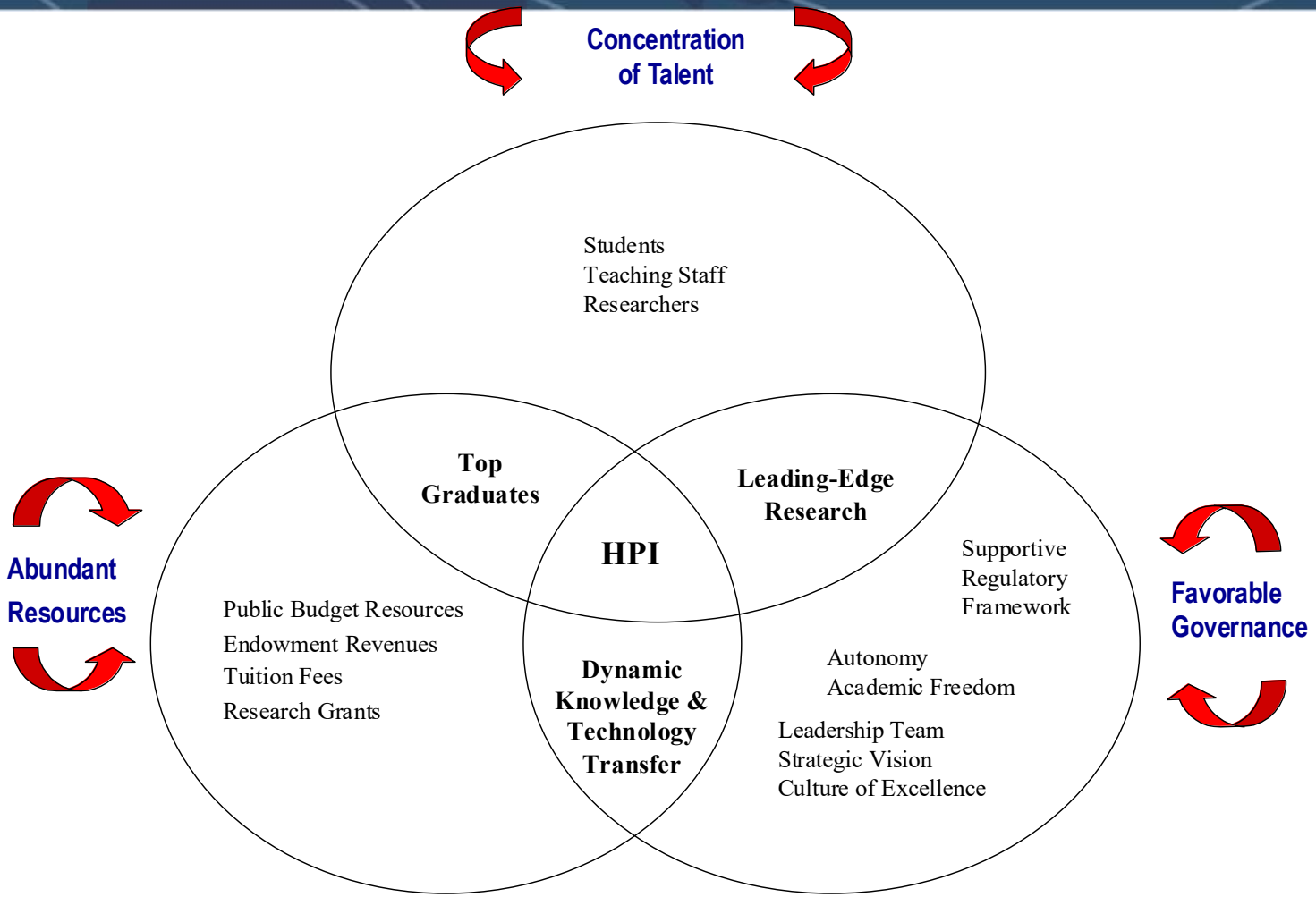

Source: Elaborated by Jamil Salmi

Highly Cited Researchers

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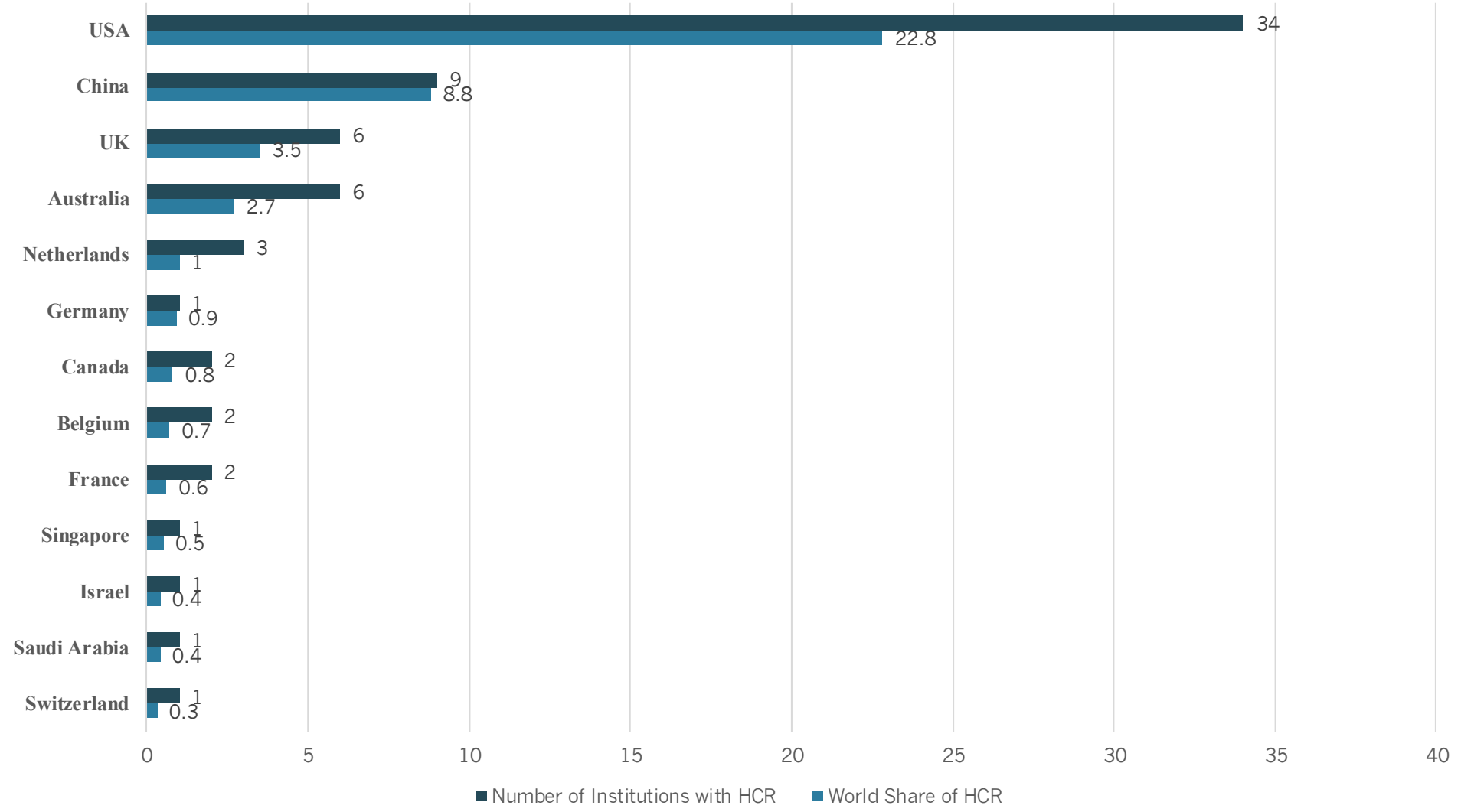

Importance of good governance

- Russia (centralism)
- France and Germany
  - Limited institutional autonomy
  - Segmentation of research institutes and universities
- Selection of leaders

Appointment of leaders in top 100 universities

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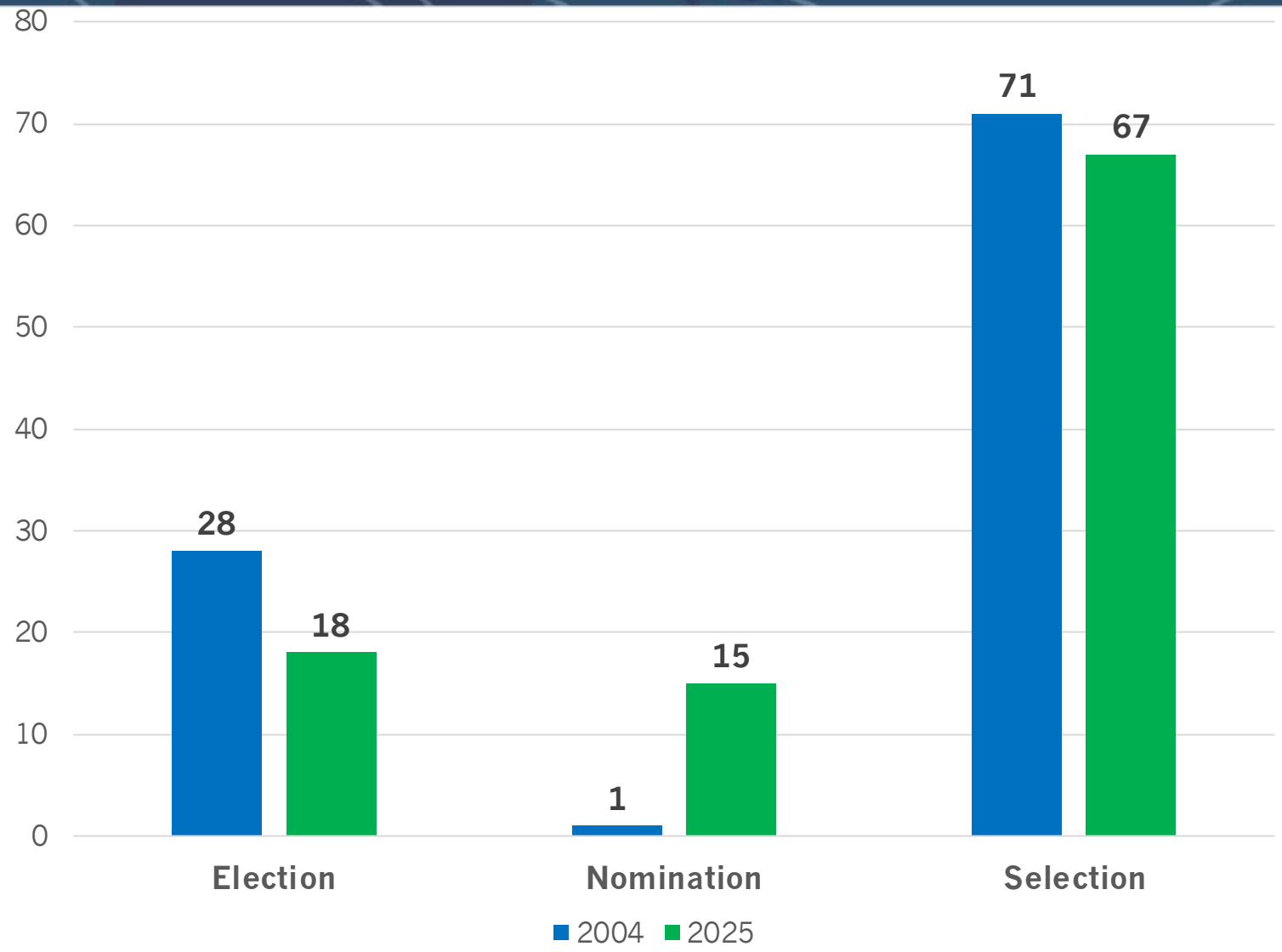

Leadership

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- Transformative vision and inspiring goals
- Innovation, exploration and experimentation mindset
  - empower people to believe in themselves
  - exceed your own expectations
  - learn from failure and success
- Be a good listener
- Embrace ambiguity
- Think about consequences

World-class universities vs. world-class systems?

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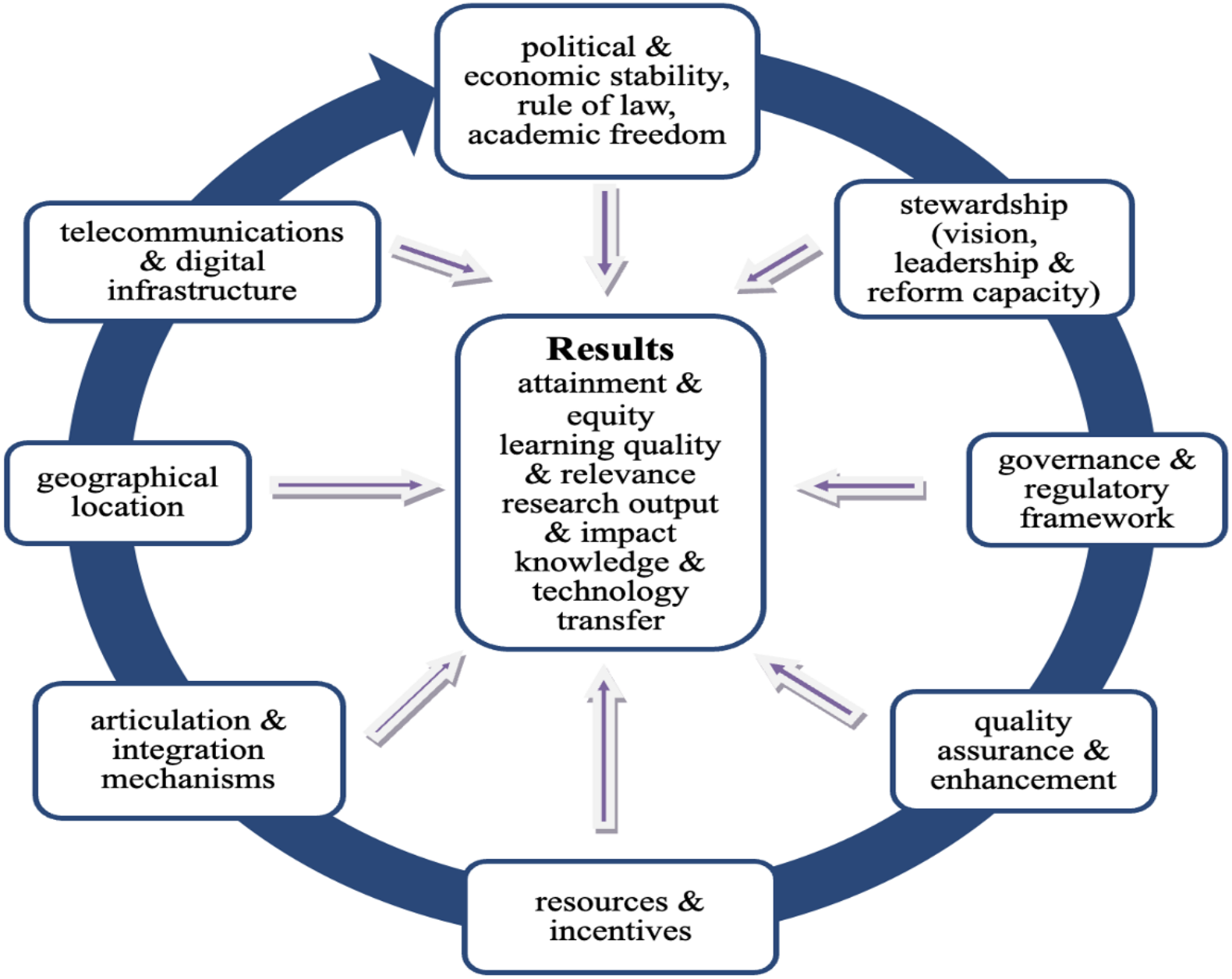

Drivers of performance

Outline

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- The shifting landscape of WCUs
- Paths to academic excellence
- **Beyond academic excellence**

2017 Shanghai principles

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- Social inclusion
- Scientific truth
- Ethics
- Social responsibility

Meritocracy, a century later

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- Oxford and Cambridge: 18% of first-generation students compared to 48% UK-wide
- No change at elite US colleges; still more students from the top 1% than from the bottom 60%
- IITs: 1%
- French Grandes Écoles for the elite
- Tsinghua: 0.1% of Gaokao applicants

Excellence with inclusion

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- Berkeley (#5)
- Top 20: LMU Munich, Zurich Polytechnic, University of Toronto, University of British Columbia

"No culture can rest on a crooked relationship to truth".

Robert Musil

Critical thinking & respect for scientific evidence

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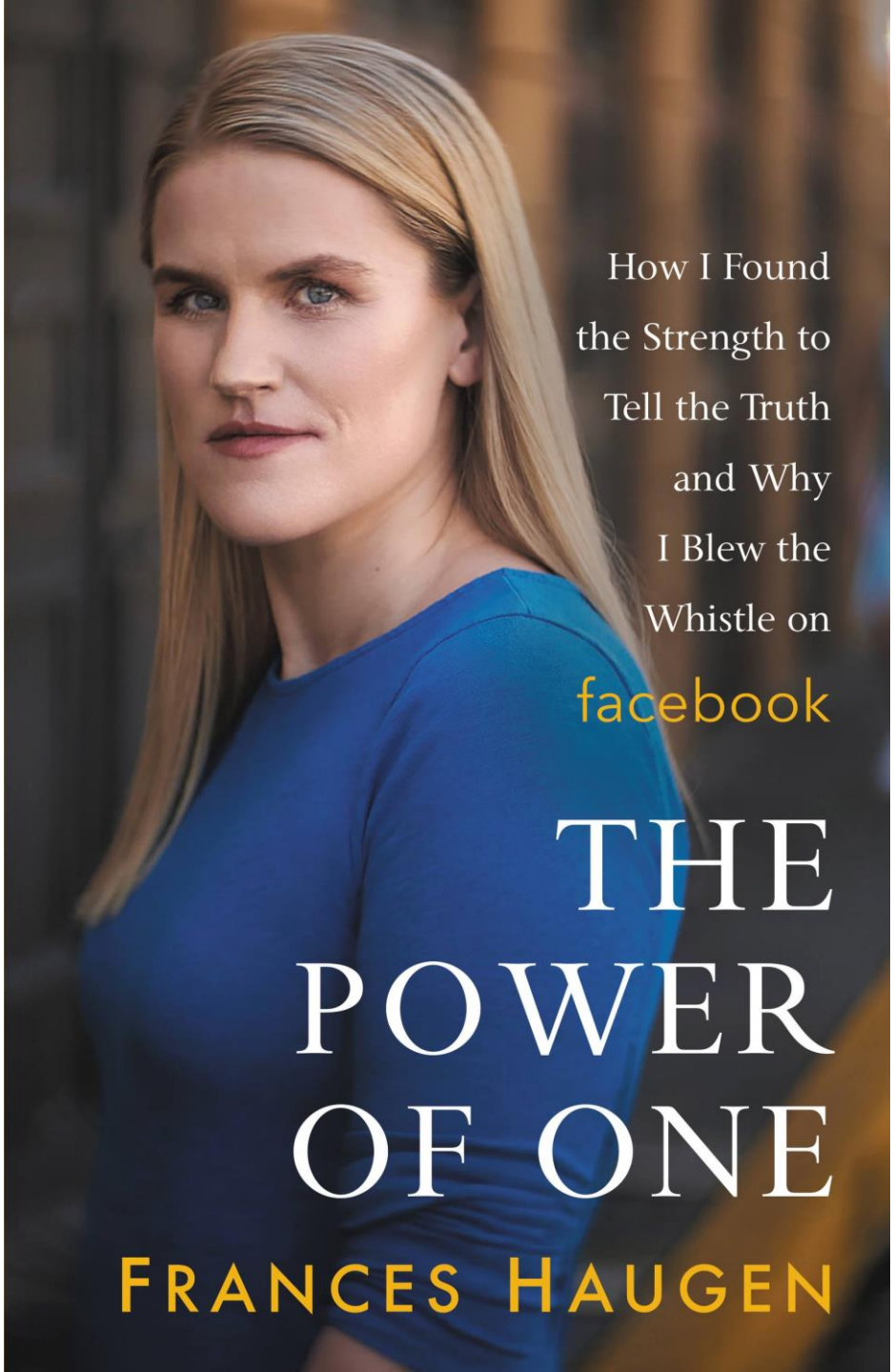
- Distinguish between real evidence and fabricated information (truth-seeking skills)
- Reinstate academic tradition of free and fair debates, undermined by relativism and political correctness
- Rebuild trust in academics and science
- Improve communication channels between universities and society

Ethics

- Code of conduct
- AI
- Embedded in curriculum
- Values & citizenship skills


How I Found
the Strength to
Tell the Truth
and Why
I Blew the
Whistle on
facebook
THE
POWER
OF ONE
FRANCES HAUGEN

Ivory Tower or agent of change?

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Universities fighting climate change

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- Becoming a green campus
- Incorporating climate change into the curriculum
- Climate science research
- Climate mitigation projects with local communities
- Divesting from fossil fuel companies

Contribution to the Green Economy: Tertiary Education (including TVET)

Education, Training & Capacity Building

Environmental Education

- Scientific understanding of environmental issues & solutions
- Ethical dimensions of environment
- Target populations: students and society at large

Skills Development for the Green Economy

- Technical skills and competencies for new jobs
- Reskilling for changing jobs
- Lifelong learning pathways

Capacity Building for Guiding the Green Economy

- Training of leaders of public agencies supervising and regulating the green economy
- Training of professionals, scientists and technicians for green economy public agencies

Knowledge Generation & Transfer for Innovation

Research & Development for the Green Economy

- Scientific & economic modeling on climate change
- Renewable energy
- Land and water use
- Environmentally friendly production processes and outputs
- Sustainable cities
- Green transportation, trade & tourism
- Green financing
- Chemicals & waste management
- Disaster prevention & risk management

Engagement with the Green Economy

- Public space function
- Problem-solving consulting
- Scientific infrastructures
- Knowledge and technology transfer
- Information for green policy decision-making

Green, Resilient & Inclusive Campus

Conclusion

Beware of the rankings!!!

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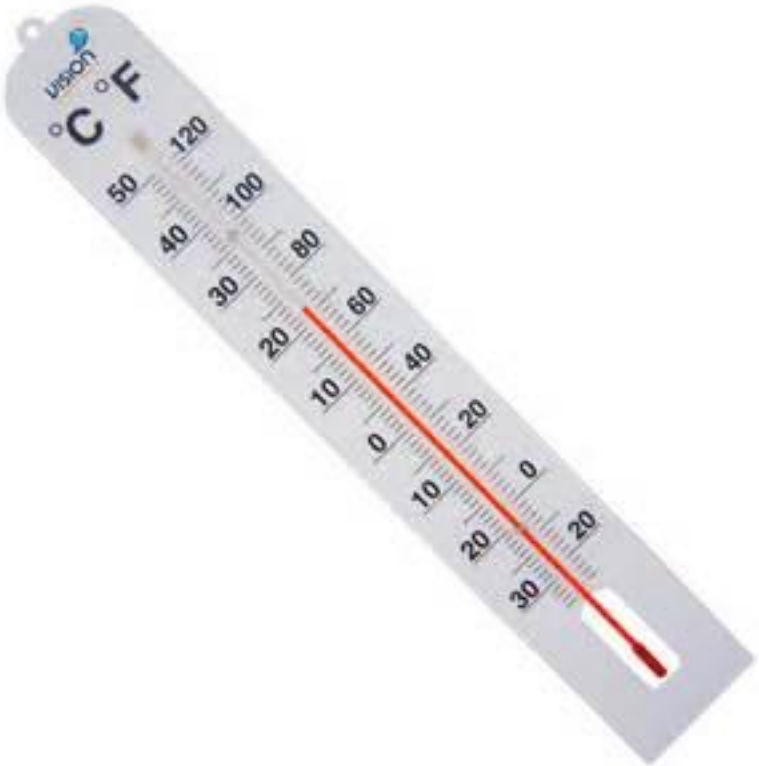

Universities under threats

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- 1933-45: Nazi Germany
- 1950-54: McCarthyism
- 1966-76: Cultural Revolution in China
- More recently: political crises in many countries

“University is the enemy”

Changing geopolitics

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- UK Brexit
- USA assault on universities
- France
- Russia
- The Middle East (Emirates, Qatar, Israel)

Global solidarity

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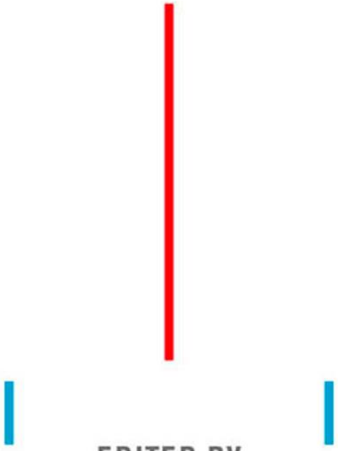
- Talloires network
- Aix-Marseille University (safe place for science)

Academic Star Wars

EXCELLENCE INITIATIVES IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE



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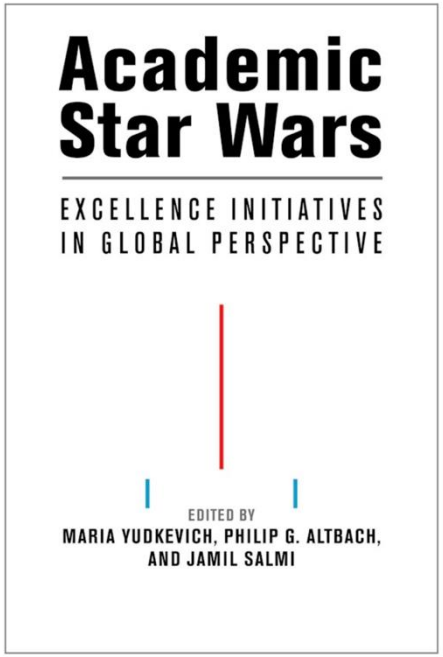

Country cases:

- China
- Japan
- Malaysia
- Korea
- Taiwan
- Denmark
- France
- Germany
- Russia