

The Alternative Universities Game - COVID-19 Edition

A Black Swan game by Ruben Puentedura, based upon utopias and ideas from David Staley's *Alternative Universities: Speculative Design for Innovation in Higher Education*

The Cards:

1. Platform University:
 - Permeable with respect to students, faculty
 - Emergent academic structures
2. Microcollege:
 - Singular leader, defining theme *vía* lecture, research projects, pluralizing into tutorials
 - Multiple learning resources for personalized, mastery-based learning
3. The Humanities Think Tank:
 - Defined by translational humanities, articulated by working groups
 - Focus on policy: research, development, and forums
4. Nomad University:
 - Institutional location project-determined, ephemeral
 - Student outcomes assessed by embedded success of gap year-like projects
5. The Liberal Arts College:
 - 7 key skills: complex problem solving, sense-making, making, imagination, multimodal communication, cross-cultural competency, leadership
 - Based on month-long courses plus semester-long apprenticeships in each focus area
6. Interface University:
 - Based on symbiotic interaction between human intelligence and AI
 - Students develop new forms of AI to tackle new problems in progressively more complex projects
7. The University of the Body:
 - Learning and cognition embodied in full sensorium
 - Creative mastery of a range of sensory literacies
8. The Institute for Advanced Play:
 - Exploration of “what if” and the adjacent possible through play
 - Groups organized according to preferred modes of play and exploration

9. Polymath University:

- Students work in three disciplines in separate domain areas (Sciences & Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities, Professions), with full competency
- Student projects are transdisciplinary and domain-bridging, evolving from group work to individual integration

10. Future University:

- Four divisions: scenarios and systems, design fiction, platforming, science fiction
- Coursework divided evenly between pure and applied futuring

The Rules:

1. Up to 5 teams can play the game.
2. Each team draws two cards at random from the deck.
3. After studying the cards, the team will choose to keep one as the basis for their university design, and return the other.
4. The cards returned are shuffled, and each team draws a card - they will have to pick one of the two characteristics listed on the card to add to their design.
5. The design that each team creates will have to be robust or antifragile against a sudden unexpected pandemic, i.e. it will have to retain its fundamental character in the face of quarantine, travel restrictions, etc.
6. An unannounced Black Swan will fly in halfway through the design period, and need to be addressed by the design team.
7. At the end of the design period, each team will have 3 minutes to present the key features of their design, including its robustness/antifragility features.
8. Participants will vote on the design that they believe has best met the challenge, thus determining the winner(s).