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AT THE CROSSROADS
OF DISRUPTION

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The University of the
21st Century

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Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2021

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80071-504-2 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80071-501-1 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80071-503-5 (Epub)



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PREFACE

Nothing is constant except change

—Heraclitus of Ephesus

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus once explained that no man ever can step into the same river twice, as the current constantly flows, constantly changing the river. Or, put differently, “Nothing is constant except change.” Universities, though, have long been viewed as resistant to change, monolithic, and highly inflexible.

This unflattering image of higher education has been shaken up with the unprecedented Covid-19 crisis, compelling universities worldwide to move their entire curricula online, in many cases within just days. Higher education impressively pivoted to be adaptable and flexible in an emergency.

The sector’s transformation, however, has been ongoing for some time now. Its digitalization, but also general societal, economic, and ecological developments have led to higher education institutions undergoing profound changes. Therefore we can say that higher education is at the crossroads of disruption, thus shaping the university of the twenty-first century.