

100 Million Learners

Francis and Dionne Najafi Global Initiative



Summary

On January 20, 2022, Thunderbird School of Global Management (Thunderbird), home of the world's No. 1 ranked Master's in Management, and Arizona State University (ASU), ranked No. 1 for innovation in the U.S., launched the Francis and Dionne Najafi 100 Million Learners Global Initiative. It is the boldest and most ambitious global education initiative in higher education history.

Through the Francis and Dionne Najafi 100 Million Learners Global Initiative, Thunderbird will offer an accredited online global management and entrepreneurship certificate, consisting of five world-class courses in 40 different languages to learners across the globe. Women and young women will account for 70% of the 100 million learners the program will reach worldwide. The certificate will be covered by full scholarships and thus no cost to students because of the philanthropic support undergirding the initiative.

Once the learners in the Global Initiative complete the certificate courses, they will have an almost limitless number of lifelong learning options and alternative educational pathways through Thunderbird and ASU. Providing these opportunities over the long-term ensures that the Global Initiative will continue to pay dividends well into the future, breaking down barriers and opening new educational opportunities for underserved communities worldwide.

The Global Initiative will further advance Thunderbird's mission to empower and influence global leaders and managers who maximize the benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to advance equitable and sustainable prosperity worldwide. The Fourth Industrial Revolution refers to the current era characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. This Global Initiative fundamentally advances Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, far exceeding it in both ambition and boldness.

The Need

In the new global economy, where technology has displaced so many workers, obtaining a future ready skillset is a necessity for both personal and professional opportunities. Yet too many of the world's learners lack access to quality education and 21st century skill sets, a problem that will only be exacerbated in the coming years.

The demand for higher education is projected to grow from approximately 222,000,000 in 2020 to more than 470,000,000 in 2035. In order to meet that demand, the world would have to build eight universities that each serve 40,000 students every week for the next 15 years. In addition, 90% of the world's university students do not have access to the resources or recognition of top-ranked universities. In addition, the demand for skillsets needed to succeed in the new economy from members at the base of the economic pyramid, such as women entrepreneurs, is projected to exceed another 2-3 billion people.

The Francis and Dionne Najafi 100 Million Learners Global Initiative will help address this problem by providing accessible world-class education with accreditation in 40 languages at no cost to the world's underserved communities, with an emphasis on women and young women.

The Certificate

The online global management and entrepreneurship certificate consists of five ground-breaking courses taught by Thunderbird's world-renowned faculty:

- 1 *Global Leadership in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*
- 2 *Customer Experience and Digital Marketing in a Global World*
- 3 *Global Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business*
- 4 *Data Analytics and Digital Transformation in a Global World*
- 5 *Global Financial Accounting*

Learners will earn badges for each digital course satisfactorily completed, and an accredited certificate for the successful completion of all five courses. This certificate will award 15 credit hours, which can be used toward the completion of degrees at Thunderbird, ASU, and virtually any university across the globe.

Our first course will launch on April 8, 2022, coinciding with the celebration of Thunderbird's 75th anniversary and the grand opening of Thunderbird's state-of-the-art global headquarters in downtown Phoenix. Subsequent courses and languages will roll out continuously thereafter.

Our Learners

This Global Initiative seeks to provide accessible world-class business and entrepreneurship education to underserved communities around the globe at no cost. Whether it is the 220 million unemployed or underemployed workers around the world, the 26 million refugees, or those in need of upskilling or reskilling in order to stay competitive in the global economy, this Global Initiative will provide the necessary tools and a clear pathway to success.

Languages

As courses are built out, they will be translated utilizing the unique Google engine purpose-built for the Global Initiative. Instructors with native language proficiency will be retained and provide quality control on the digitally-translated languages. These languages include:

Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Czech, Dutch, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Hausa, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian (Bahasa), Italian, Japanese, Javanese, Kazakh, Kinyarwanda, Korean, Malay, Mandarin Chinese (Simplified), Mandarin Chinese (Traditional), Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek, Vietnamese, Yoruba, and Zulu.

Reaching Scale

To reach scale, Thunderbird will leverage a global network of 50,000 alumni in over 100 countries and growing network of 16 Centers of Excellence around the world to build local and regional partnerships and amplify word of this groundbreaking initiative.

In addition, external partnerships will be critical at both the global level and across the regions for a range of key aspects of the Global Initiative, including: branding and publicity, language translation, technology platform development, marketing and recruitment of learners, etc. We will work with global partners as well as partnerships in each region to reach the scale necessary to meet our goals.

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Global Initiative



“Along with ASU, we measure success not by whom we exclude, but rather by whom we include and how they succeed. This initiative will enable Thunderbird to provide quality higher education to people from all over the globe and advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education.”

– *Dr. Sanjeev Khagram*
Thunderbird Director
General and Dean.

“Our lives were transformed by our experience at Thunderbird and we wanted to extend that same transformative experience to people around the world who do not have the opportunity to access this world-class education.”

– *F. Francis Najafi '77*