STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2017
AN AMBITION FOR MORE: GOING THE DISTANCE THROUGH LEARNING BY DOING
The UAE will harness the full potential of its National human capacity by maximizing the participation of Emiratis, encouraging entrepreneurship, and nurturing home-grown public and private sector leaders while attracting and retaining the best talent . . . More Emiratis will enter higher education, where they will enrich their minds with the skills that their nation needs to fuel its knowledge economy. Universities will listen closely to the needs of Emiratis and of their future employers, and will balance their teaching to the demands of the workplace . . . Innovation, research and science and technology will form the pillars of a knowledge-based, highly productive and competitive economy, driven by entrepreneurs in a business-friendly environment where public and private sectors form effective partnerships.
Overview

The Academic Year 2012-2013 marked the 25th Anniversary of the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT). This was a unique and important milestone for the HCT. Our journey, similar to that of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has been filled with many challenges and opportunities along the way. The path has not always been easy and yet the HCT has sustained its commitment to Emirati higher education and to the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may his soul rest in peace, to improve Emirati society and the quality of life for all Emiratis through the empowering capacity of education. Today, the UAE and the HCT are testaments to Sheikh Zayed’s lifelong vision and to the role that education plays in transforming a nation.

The HCT is the largest higher education institution of the United Arab Emirates providing opportunities for all qualified Emiratis to meet career and professional goals. In effect the HCT is the ‘people’s college’ that provides opportunity to Emiratis to maximise their individual potential through access to higher education. Moreover, the HCT is an institution that embraces cultural diversity and is dedicated to fostering a student-centred learning environment that empowers students to become the best they can be.

At the heart of the HCT’s strategic goals, is the educational philosophy ‘Learning by Doing’ (LBD). LBD is an educational approach where students acquire essential knowledge and skills through active, self-reflective engagement with the world inside the classroom, and beyond, and which increases the chance that concepts will be learned, remembered and used in a variety of situations. LBD can occur in many contexts including, collaborative work, clubs, applied research, course-based projects, internships, laboratory work, presentations, conferences, debates, community-based projects, field work, and competitions. In summary, ‘Learning by Doing’ is focused on active learning and applied education that will prepare Emiratis for the UAE workforce.

The HCT’s niche over the past twenty-five years has been in providing well-qualified Emirati graduates in professional fields to meet the workforce needs of business and industry across the UAE. This niche reflects the key component of the HCT’s success in the past. It must be strengthened, expanded and preserved to the benefit of the UAE’s future development. Hence, the HCT will embrace a renewed commitment to aligning its academic programmes with specific industry needs by interacting closely with all sectors of the economy, and producing entry level Emirati graduates to meet market demands.
The HCT is committed to ‘going the distance’ to achieve its goals towards student, employer and community success for the long-term sustainability, advancement and stability of the UAE. Towards this end, the HCT has identified six (6) primary strategic goals, to strengthen its mission, services and programmes over the next five years:

**Strategic Goal 1** Enhance student success  
**Strategic Goal 2** Emphasise applied education  
**Strategic Goal 3** Expand partnerships  
**Strategic Goal 4** Ensure continuous quality improvement  
**Strategic Goal 5** Encourage innovative initiatives  
**Strategic Goal 6** Support national Emiratisation strategies

Emiratisation of UAE’s workforce will be enhanced by ensuring high quality programmes that focus on targeted priorities which meet industry needs and result in effective employment. The community development role of our colleges, which already contributes to preserving local culture, history, and Emirati heritage, will be further expanded to improve the HCT’s outreach activities to all associated communities within the UAE. The HCT campuses may open their facilities to local communities, businesses and schools to actively engage in serving the needs of their respective stakeholders.

With the effective use of educational technologies (mobile, open and distance learning) the HCT has the potential to expand access to Emirati students, reduce unnecessary duplication of programme offerings, provide student flexibility for course scheduling and explore flexible options for faculty workload assignments. Mobile technologies and distance learning also provide practical experiences for students thus enhancing their personal skills towards the core graduate outcome of technological literacy. These innovations expand the HCT’s capacity for communications, partnership development, and course delivery for regional and global engagement initiatives.
Our Vision

The Higher Colleges of Technology will be recognised as the best applied higher education institution in the United Arab Emirates, producing knowledgeable, innovative and skilled Emirati graduates that support the nation in pursuit of excellence.

Our Mission

The Higher Colleges of Technology is dedicated to the delivery of applied and vocationally focused programmes that achieve national and international standards at the Diploma, Bachelors and Masters levels. Delivered through excellent instruction based on ‘learning by doing’ and in a technology-rich environment, supported by applied research, our programmes are designed to meet the employment needs of the UAE and support Emirati students in becoming innovative and work-ready.
Institutional Strengths

The HCT’s institutional strengths that differentiate it from other higher educational institutions in the UAE are:

01. Practical application of knowledge
   The HCT will remain committed to connecting the practical application of knowledge to the workforce. This is the cornerstone of the HCT learning model and its educational philosophy.

02. The quality of our faculty and learning environment
   The HCT will continue to provide a learning environment of the highest standards incorporating the latest teaching methodologies and learning technologies delivered by committed, highly qualified faculty.

03. Institutional and Programme Accreditation
   The HCT programmes are internationally accredited by professional accrediting agencies.

04. Linkages with Business and the Community
   The HCT programmes are continually aligned with the changing and emerging needs of business and industry; and are supported by state-of-the-art technologies. The HCT colleges are also cultural and community centres that contribute to local culture, history and Emirati heritage.

05. Graduate Employment
   The HCT will continue to produce graduates with superior technical skills and high English language competency, that are in strong demand by employers across the UAE and prove to be productive and contributing members of the UAE society.
Opportunities and Challenges

As the largest higher education institution in the UAE, the Higher Colleges of Technology will continue to play a pivotal leadership role in meeting the UAE’s human development priorities. The HCT has a proven ability to swiftly adapt to change by aligning its academic programmes towards clearly defined workforce needs, through the modification of existing programmes and by designing new programmes. This will continue to be an essential requirement in meeting the growing human capital needs of the country. The HCT’s response to these needs will continue to be aligned with the HCT’s proven programme quality assurance processes, and within its resource constraints. The HCT will select its programme and sector priorities carefully to ensure it is in the best position to provide for the particular educational need. This will require improved communication and collaboration with business representatives across all sectors to ensure the HCT is ‘getting it right.’

The HCT will play a major advocacy role for its graduates to enter the private sector employment, particularly in the case of women, who are essential for the long-term growth of the UAE economy. The HCT will continue to explore unique programmes and services that provide ‘value-added’ opportunities for all its graduates, whilst ensuring that cultural and social norms are respected and honoured. The HCT recognises the challenges posed by the rapidly changing and evolving demands on the workforce and is ready to upgrade and retool existing employees with the skills, knowledge and understanding requisite to empowering and managing one of the world’s most sophisticated technological, economic and industrial environments. The UAE’s economic diversification agenda focuses on the development of small to medium enterprises as essential to the long-term growth and sustainability of the UAE economy. Entrepreneurship will be encouraged and developed among the HCT graduates.

The HCT is well-positioned to expand its role in national development initiatives. The HCT Colleges will continue to expand their collaborative partnerships with local K-12 schools to strengthen the preparation of high school graduates for entry into higher education, and engage with their local communities to promote community and cultural heritage activities. The HCT campuses aim at being recognised as cultural hubs in the preservation of Emirati culture, history, traditions and heritage, recognising this must be balanced with resource priorities and capacity.

Finally, as a government entity, the HCT has a responsibility to enhance its operational efficiencies that result in quality improvements for students, faculty, key stakeholders and our communities. As efficiency initiatives are implemented, these will need to be evaluated in accordance with agreed metrics to assess if the changes have resulted in improved quality, service and effectiveness. Some initiatives would also require the HCT to raise alternative funding and develop partnerships to diversify resource support beyond the Federal Government sources.
HCT Strategic Goals

Aligned with each of the six strategic goals below are objectives which will enable the HCT to pursue its strategic goals. The strategic goals and objectives are interconnected and envisioned to position the HCT College System to sustain its position as the ‘access institution’ that provides practical and applied education to the UAE workforce for the next five years. The HCT will develop operational plans aligned with these strategic goals and related objectives.

**Strategic Goal 1  Enhance student success**

- Expand student access to our programmes.
- Create education pathways for all credentials offered by the HCT.
- Manage enrolment growth aligned with funding.
- Improve student retention especially in the Foundations Programme.
- Establish a student portfolio requirement as a tool to evaluate student achievement of programme and experiential learning outcomes.
- Ensure that the HCT graduates have the requisite skills to obtain productive employment.
Strategic Goal 2  Emphasise Applied Education

- Ensure all programmes are applied in design and aligned with the philosophy of Learning by Doing.
- Make curricula and structural changes that emphasise our commitment to Learning by Doing.
- Intensify engagement with industry and the community to ensure our programmes are relevant to the needs of the UAE economy.
- Differentiate the HCT programmes from those of other higher education institutions through continuous re-alignment of curricula with industry needs.
- Use technology and mobile learning to support students in independent and group learning and to increase their learning productivity.
- Execute an effective public communications plan to improve community understanding of the value of applied education.
- Ensure that students learn and can do what the country and industry needs to be competitive in a global economy.
- Graduate students that are both able and motivated to contribute to national development.
**Strategic Goal 3  Expand partnerships**

- Expand community connections and industry interactions that enhance applied education.
- Address issues that affect the community to optimise both teaching and learning environments.
- Ensure relevance of all programs through effective Industry Advisory Committees.
- Expand international connections to enhance options for students and promote innovation.
- Assist in transforming public schools into exemplars of active learning as part of the HCT’s community engagement.
- Become community centres for activities related to culture and the arts.
- Organise fundraising to contribute to the HCT’s financial stability which will assist the HCT in ensuring its equipment and facilities are aligned with latest teaching technologies.

**Strategic Goal 4  Ensure continuous quality improvement**

- Make excellence the defining quality of all operations.
- Expand international accreditation at institutional and programme level.
- Continuously improve institutional culture consistent with adherence to high standards, accountability, transparency and teamwork.
- Ensure rigorous academic standards in all curricula offerings.
- Subject all academic programmes to strong oversight through programme review and approval processes.
- Continuously develop strategies to assess, evaluate, and improve programme outcomes.
**Strategic Goal 5  Encourage innovative initiatives**

- Elevate attention to innovation, creativity, and technology transfer.
- Develop and support the staff and faculty to excel.
- Promote effectiveness and efficiency among faculty and staff.
- Become the hub for innovative activities within local communities.
- Increase access to the HCT programmes through e-learning with emphasis on Learning by Doing.
- Become a leader in sustainability practices in all of the HCT’s operations.
- Expand the HCT programmes to include continuing education and training in meeting the needs of industry and the community.

**Strategic Goal 6  Support national Emiratisation strategies**

- Increase Emiratisation of staff and faculty.
- Develop programmes in support of academic and skills growth of Emirati staff and faculty.
- Conduct recruitment campaigns within local communities and amongst students to attract Emirati staff and faculty.
- Establish financial support mechanisms that enable Emirati staff and faculty to improve their academic qualifications.
- Create career pathways that allow Emirati staff and faculty to reach their full potential.
- Encourage recruitment of Emirati adjunct faculty.