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**Abstract**

African higher education, at the beginning of the new millennium, faces unprecedented challenges. Not only is the demand for access unstoppable, especially in the context of Africa's traditionally low postsecondary attendance levels, but higher education is recognized as a key force for modernization and development. Africa's academic institutions face obstacles in providing the education, research, and service needed if the continent is to advance. Generalizing about a continent as large and diverse as Africa is difficult. Yet there are some common elements ? and there are certainly some common challenges. In our discussion, we are not generally optimistic either in analyzing the current reality in much of Africa or in pointing to future prospects. The fact is that African universities currently function in very difficult circumstances, both in terms of the social, economic, and political problems facing the continent and in the context of globalization, and the road to future success will not be an easy one. Based on Africa-wide research, this article discusses such topics as access to higher education, the challenges of funding, the growing role of private higher education institutions in

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Africa, governance and autonomy, management challenges, gender (including the access of women to higher education and the problems faced by women students and academic staff), the role of research and the problems of scholarly communication, language issues, and the brain drain. These issues are at the heart of Africa's future academic development. (HRK / Abstract übernommen), Teferra, Damtew, E-Mail: [teferra@bc.edu](mailto:teferra@bc.edu)