

**What is the status of New England higher education's "balance of trade" in foreign enrollment and study abroad? What challenges and opportunities are presented by new higher education institutions popping up from Dubai to Shanghai? Do existing international curricula meet the perceived need to prepare global citizens? How do other countries compare to the United States in terms of intangibles such as university culture and academic freedom? What do international partnerships really mean after the handshakes and photo opportunities?**

*THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION* asked a group of educators to consider these and other questions as they explored current issues and debates in the internationalization of higher education, globalization and the future of New England.

## Campuses Abroad: Next Frontier or Bubble?

MADELEINE F. GREEN

There is enormous unmet demand for higher education around the world. In response, entrepreneurial U.S. colleges and universities are becoming increasingly mobile, setting up branch campuses and offering certifications and undergraduate and graduate degrees to students who may never set foot on the home campus in the United States. As a significant new addition to the familiar practices of receiving international students and scholars on campus, offering study-abroad programs and developing partnerships for academic and research cooperation, these initiatives have received a lot of attention in the media, creating the impression that this is the next frontier for U.S. higher education.

But is it? Although there is no precise count of the number of U.S. campuses and programs abroad, 10% of respondents to an American Council on Education (ACE) survey indicated that they had such initiatives, with a quarter of doctorate-granting universities doing so. The Australians and the British have moved very aggressively to recruit international students to their campuses and to set up "off-shore" operations, so much so that institutional leaders in both nations worry about their financial dependency on tuition revenue from international students on their home campuses and off-shore sites. Historically, the United

States has focused more on recruiting international students to come to the United States than on delivering U.S. education abroad. To date, there is no compelling evidence that they should abandon this time-honored practice in favor of establishing campuses and delivering programs abroad.

A 2008 roundtable of U.S. leaders of campuses and programs abroad convened by ACE confirmed that although there are many good reasons to venture abroad, institutions should proceed with caution. Participants agreed that taking the long view of these initiatives is essential. The start-ups were labor-intensive and the break-even point is usually several years out. They noted the challenges of connecting the foreign operation to existing institutional programs, operations and structures and the myriad challenges of navigating the legal and financial systems of the host country. Working with partners on the ground requires bridging cultural differences and deciding where to draw the line, such as in matters of academic freedom. And indeed, the recent closing of George Mason University's campus in the Persian Gulf emirate of Ras al Khaymah confirms the academic and financial risks involved.

Critics of off-shore operations raise a different set of questions. Do campuses

abroad represent a form of cultural imperialism? Do they contribute to capacity-building in the host country? Do they contribute to the internationalization of the home campus? Would all concerned not be better off if U.S. institutions partnered with institutions in that country to develop true reciprocity, rather than simply "exporting" U.S. higher education? Partnerships should provide benefits to all parties. The cooperative nature of collaborative teaching or research maximizes the impact on the students and faculty of the participating campuses. Although campuses and programs abroad may have a positive impact on the academic quality of the home campus and on the capacity of the host country, there are no guarantees.

The jury is still out on the future of off-shore operations and the impact of the global financial crisis. The financial straits most U.S. institutions find themselves in are likely to discourage risk-taking and any diversion of attention. But at the same time, the world is getting smaller and flatter. Hunkering down and looking inward is simply not an option for U.S. institutions.

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# Reaching Beyond Elite International Students

PAUL LeBLANC

The desire and need for American higher education around the world is enormous, but it largely remains within the reach of just a small percentage of international students who are wealthy or lucky. They have the resources to come to America for study or to attend one of the increasing number of U.S. branch campuses abroad, but in both cases those students were already destined for lives of relative prosperity in their home countries and usually Western-leaning in their thinking and politics.

We need to find ways to reach out to those in the teeming middle rung of the international student population—those who need much more affordable versions of American degree programs or who may be able to spend

just a small portion of their time in the United States or who have little hope of procuring a visa. Their largely wealthy peers, often members of a small elite or upper class, will live well whether or not they are educated by us. However, this less fortunate population can see their lives transformed through an American degree. They can compete for good-paying jobs and enjoy greater social and professional standing, thus improving their lives and their family's well-being.

We will increasingly serve them through online learning programs (now gaining more acceptance in many parts of the world), innovative partnerships, and more affordable models. Southern New Hampshire University is experimenting with all

three. We recently gained approval for our online degree programs in China. We became the first American university to offer a full four-year business degree in Malaysia through a university partnership (under our supervision) approved by the Malaysian government. And our bachelor of applied science in hospitality administration (BASHA) program allows students to integrate nine months of required paid field work into their degree program (through our partnerships with major hotel chains) to help make the program more affordable.

Many universities are introducing similar programs. Be forewarned, the execution of such programs is challenging and requires a considerable investment of institutional resources. There is no doing this work on the



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cheap. It will require the time and often the on-the-ground presence of leadership and staff, careful monitoring and ongoing quality control, and a full-time person in-country (a NEASC requirement). It requires patience—our China initiatives are just now getting traction after three years of work with full-time in-country staff and numerous visits. With hundreds of thousands of

dollars invested, an office and three staff members in Beijing and occasional skepticism on campus and perhaps among a few board members, we are finally seeing dozens of students enroll in our online programs and groups of Chinese executives coming for summer programs.

I often had to remind people that we might fail. International markets

are volatile and subject to everything from currency fluctuations to regulatory change to civil unrest. But when successful, these programs change lives for students and their families and shape their view of America.

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## Academic Culture Shock

KARA A. GODWIN

The number of foreign students and scholars in the United States is at an all-time high. In 2007-08, U.S. colleges and universities hosted 623,805 international students, an increase of 7% over 2006-07, according to the Institute of International Education. Nearly 8% of these students studied in New England, where they contributed \$1.5 billion to the regional economy. The number of foreign faculty and scholars increased at a similar rate to 126,123 with 9% residing in New England.

Administrators and policymakers agree that the contributions foreign students and scholars make to campus global diversity, local economies and America's academic competitiveness are worth the recruitment and visa challenges. Once foreign students and scholars are on campus, however, most U.S. institutions tend to be naïve about the impact of cultural differences on their core work of teaching and learning. While some faculty and administrators are aware that differences exist, they rarely consider how to incorporate that knowledge into the work or services they provide.

While international students and scholars face day-to-day cultural adjustments, of more concern are the

often stark differences they encounter in the classroom and academic system. Based on academic norms in their home country, international students and scholars are frequently uncomfortable with the hallmark activities of U.S. higher education. American students are taught from a young age to participate and ask questions. They are encouraged and even rewarded for challenging authority. Americans expect informal student-teacher relationships, a broad choice of courses, group work and a myriad of campus support services and activities. Academic integrity rules are part of a shared value system dictating interactions among faculty, students and administrators.

In contrast, many international students and scholars come from predominately lecture-based academic traditions. The professor-student relationship is formal and involves little interaction. Instructors are viewed as authority figures, and students do not ask questions. Students typically study in a specialty field from early in their academic careers, and campus life centers around coursework with few extracurricular activities. In some contexts, behaviors that Americans generally define as cheating or plagiarism are acceptable and expected.

For the international student, the impact of these different approaches to teaching and learning may diminish individual engagement and academic success. The issue is compounded and more serious when the international scholar is also a graduate teaching assistant or a teaching member of the faculty whose expectations about instruction and learners are vastly different from those of students. For institutions, a failure to recognize, give weight to and provide support for international students and scholars in their most fundamental work means sacrificing student learning outcomes in the classroom and scholarly collaboration among faculty.

A few New England institutions have programs that help international students and instructors understand American academic culture. If the region is to reap the benefits of global diversity and its sizable international student-scholar community, institutions must assuage the cultural gap that is a detriment to their fundamental academic work.

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# MOUs: A Kyoto Protocol?

MICHAEL E. LESTZ

Several years ago, when I was working at the University of Hawaii Manoa, I went with a group of faculty and administrators to Kyoto University to explore signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to create ties with this remarkable school. Our little delegation met with KU's vice president and director of international links who took out a folder listing the university's global partners and we heard an enlightening description of KU's path to forming such agreements.

When I looked at Kyoto's list and appreciated how they tied global links to the core mission of the university, I gasped. Hawaii's work in this realm was incoherent by comparison. At Manoa, MOUs were signed regularly, usually with some short-term benefit in view, and with inadequate consideration of how they would enhance the whole global project of the university. By contrast, all the schools Kyoto worked with—a brief list of mostly tier-one universities and colleges—first formed research or small exchange projects with KU faculty. If, after three or four years, the efforts yielded results—especially in the form of a productive research project—the relationship was formalized with a contract and the collaborating university or college went into the Kyoto University register of partners.

An example of the policy at work was the KU International Symposium series launched in 2001. KU's Organization for the Promotion of International Relations sponsored international showcases of investigations that came to fruition through university-to-university agreements or multilateral arrangements; they provided proof of the viability of partnerships and a chance to assess the research product of universities.

By focusing from the first on patient exploration of research opportunities, high-quality science and the publication and display of results, Kyoto ensured joint investment in existing exchanges that could be perpetuated and expanded.

In the end, the University of Hawaii Manoa did sign an MOU with Kyoto in 2003 that fit KU's paradigm for such links.

So many MOUs languish in drawers, together with pictures of banquets where the hopeful partners pledged to work hard to give their new friendship "legs." When the tie atrophies, a common reason is that the partners were insufficiently familiar with each other's capacity as they put pen to paper and did not foresee adequately what new fiscal arrangements would be necessary to nurture the tie. An unsupported set of objectives can doom the best intentions to frustration. If, for example, the MOU foresees faculty exchanges, but emerges without sufficient departmental consultation to ensure that the transfer of personnel is realistic and in line with the career

patterns of the faculty who would take part, the prospect of the agreement will not be bright.

The Kyoto University model, to the contrary, ensures a good result. When the parties come to the table to sign the agreement, there is a careful calibration of what the MOU can accomplish that derives from a preexisting array of bought and paid-for activities. The already achieved successes, such as language programs, laboratory-to-laboratory exchanges and multilateral research projects, prove a signing ceremony is a good idea.

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This website enables users to search for careers that best match their interests. There are descriptions of multiple careers and the tasks involved, average salary, and the education and/or training required.

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# Extra Step for Study Abroad

KERALA TAYLOR AND NICHOLAS FITZHUGH

Let's face facts: study abroad is not always all it's cracked up to be. After all, the common perception of the study-abroad experience as a semester-long party has some basis in truth. This is not to say that students shouldn't have fun overseas, but how can we ensure that they break out of the famous "American bubble" and pursue meaningful cross-cultural experiences?

All too often, the common wisdom seems to be that if we can just get students on a plane, true learning will inevitably follow. As co-founders of Glimpse.org, which publishes stories written by young Americans about real life abroad, we know that is just not the case. While we receive many

insightful, inspiring story submissions, we also get many disheartening ones—stories by students who have spent months abroad and whose most profound cultural insight is that Australians like to surf, or that Brits drive on the other side of the road, or that the French like strong cheese.

Glimpse.org, our user-generated, professionally edited website, acts as a catalyst for more meaningful overseas experiences. With some nice incentives thrown in (career training, online publication, contest prizes) we encourage students to get out there, to talk to people, to pursue cultural adventures. Our contributors and official correspondents have done

everything from exploring gay night-life in Jordan to visiting a prosthetic foot factory in India to voyaging with Maori fishermen in New Zealand. The first step is getting on that plane, but it's the extra step a student takes on the other end that makes all the difference.

Study abroad has enormous potential when it comes to fostering a new generation of "global citizens"; the challenge is ensuring that it lives up to its promise.

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# Water of Life

ANTHONY ZUENA

Bernard Amadei, a civil engineering professor at the University of Colorado, recently wrote about the grandiose, steel-and-concrete wonders that serve as daily reminders of just how successful and prosperous the human race can be. "The world needs no more big structures that satisfy the needs of only one billion people in the Western world," Amadei wrote. "It needs a massive, sustained outpouring of compassion in action for the billions of impoverished, but resilient people asking to be seen, dreaming of a better life."

Thanks to Amadei's nonprofit humanitarian organization Engineers Without Borders-USA (EWB), engineers and engineering students across the United States are playing central roles in helping build a more sustainable future for those living in developing countries.

Recently, engineers from S E A Consultants Inc., and engineering students from EWB's Northeastern University chapter in Boston participated in designing and constructing a water-distribution project in the Honduran village of Los Planes. The group identified a cleaner, more reliable water source. Then, with the help of villagers, they built a pipeline from the source to the village and a distribution reservoir along with water service taps for each house in the village.

With a new water-distribution system in place, the quality of life for the villagers improved dramatically over the course of a few months through improved sanitation and the ability to irrigate modest crops. The system also helped strengthen the villagers' ability to maintain their community and their culture.

Thanks to organizations like EWB, more engineers and engineering students are taking part in global construction projects that make everyday life healthier and better for people in developing countries. While these projects require extensive design and technical research—and some colleges award credits to students who participate on EWB projects—the students are learning that skills such as compassion, resourcefulness and determination are also necessary. By looking beyond their own borders, our engineers of today and engineers of tomorrow are helping to dramatically improve our world.

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