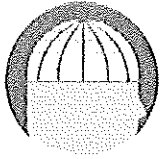

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WorldWise

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A Failure to Capitalize on Globalization

The following is by Harvey Charles, president of the Association of International Education Administrators and vice provost for international initiatives at Northern Arizona University, and Darla K. Deardorff, executive director of the association.



http://chronicle.com/blogs/worldwise/files/2014/06/Globus_im_Geographieunterricht.jp

Globalization is one of the most dominant forces facing higher education in the 21st century. Many colleges have responded to it with plans to internationalize their campuses and academic programs.

Yet all too often, college presidents fail to harness the huge potential globalization affords. That failure is most frequently reflected in a severely limited understanding of what campus internationalization involves; it is further exacerbated by less-than-ideal decisions regarding those hired or promoted to provide leadership in this area. Ignoring the reality and opportunities of globalization, particularly in an increasingly competitive higher-education environment, is a recipe for marginalization and ultimately irrelevance, which college leaders cannot afford.

It is a long-running myth in higher education that enrolling international students and sending students to study abroad represent significant campus internationalization. While these activities are important, the focus on student mobility is only one among a number of elements that make an institution truly international.

Other pieces, according to the American Council on Education, include a commitment to global work in mission, vision statements, and strategic goals; administrative structure and staffing to support such efforts; relevant curriculum; faculty policies and practices; and institutional collaboration and partnerships. In effect, managing all of these elements together in a coordinated, comprehensive, and strategic manner is what colleges and universities should be doing to meet their international commitments.

In the least, globalization now almost demands international research collaboration among scholars. It also means institutions around the world are seeking, even scrambling for, the best and the brightest minds in order to have access to the intellectual capital they bring or will help develop. It is intellectual capital, after all, that is singularly responsible for pushing the boundaries of knowledge and finding answers that will solve the many challenges, increasingly global in nature, that now confront humanity. Universities, as the incubators of intellectual capital, have a leading role to play in this regard.

In terms of foreign students, presidents too often articulate the value of attracting them only in terms of the revenues they bring. This is understandable at a time when higher education is experiencing deep cuts in its historical sources of financial support. Yet it is hardly ever the case that the value of international-student enrollment is made in terms of the diversity these students provide to the intellectual environment or the overwhelming contributions they make in advancing scholarship when they collaborate with the faculty. These contributions are central to higher education's mission.

Colleges need to prepare all students to be globally competent, particularly given the history of parochialism and insularity in the United States. It follows that very intentional steps must be taken to transform the 21st-century curriculum into one that provides students with many encounters with global perspectives. Faculty members, in whose domain this responsibility lies, must be able to operate in a context where policies and structures support their engagement in this work.

Notwithstanding the broad, urgent, and complex nature of comprehensive campus internationalization, too often college presidents do not allocate the financial resources it requires. Centers for international education are therefore generally barely able to keep

up with providing the minimum of services; more often than not, they lack the human or financial resources to pursue more-strategic objectives that actually position colleges to take advantage of the opportunities globalization offers.

Yet the colleges we know that have embraced comprehensive internationalization generate returns greater than the original investment in terms of grants, tuition revenue, reputation, and ranking. The latter two outcomes, in turn, allow such institutions to attract the best and the brightest faculty and students, which helps to further perpetuate this virtuous cycle. It is such outcomes that help colleges become exciting, progressive dynamos, able to stay on the cutting edge of changes in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

All of this progress requires capable, knowledgeable, and committed administrators to coordinate the complexities of campus internationalization, a task that clearly goes far beyond student mobility.

Sadly, the hiring decisions for the senior international-officer position that we have witnessed over the years have demonstrated a widespread lack of understanding of what this challenging position demands and who might be best suited to play this role. In fact, more often than not, it seems that university decision makers believe that no special training or expertise is needed for the role.

Individuals have been appointed, for example, because they teach languages other than English, because they are immigrants to the United States, because they served as U.S. ambassadors to other countries, or because they have an affinity for working with international students, among other rationales. In other cases, universities have specifically sought distinguished research scholars with extensive publications, believing that this kind of credibility can be leveraged to quickly transform their universities into significant global players.

None of these characteristics, in and of themselves, constitute adequate preparation for succeeding as a senior international officer. Decisions driven by this thinking result in administrators with very narrow skill sets. The colleges lose an opportunity to advance internationalization and the vision necessary to transform their institutions into truly global campuses. Furthermore, no university administrator would employ analogous logic in the hiring of a chief financial officer, a university librarian, or a director of public safety. The many examples of precisely such situations in American higher education is worrisome.

Increasingly, successful international-program administrators have backgrounds that do not necessarily reflect the conventional path, in which a faculty member climbs the ranks to full professor. Instead, they may have spent a number of years overseeing

various aspects of international-education work as administrators and may also hold doctoral degrees that prepared them for such work. There is a much greater likelihood that, unlike scholars who have spent their careers in research and teaching, such people have a much better grasp of globalization, know how to advance comprehensive internationalization on the campus, and therefore, have a better sense of how to position the institution to take advantage of opportunities being presented in the rapidly changing global landscape. There is no question that the time has come for presidents to recognize the need for senior university leadership in the area of international education, and just as importantly, to seek a competent and experienced senior international officer to lead this division.

College leaders who understand the value senior international officers bring to the realization of their strategic goals are well on their way to harnessing the advantages of globalization. What remains to be determined is whether presidents grasp the global opportunities at hand sufficiently to create the campus infrastructure necessary to support such work, and whether they will pursue the best individuals to provide such leadership.

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