

Internationalization in Higher Education: Four Issues to Consider

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I am very pleased to write this column for the *Journal of College and Character*, a journal that has had an influential history in addressing issues that many of us in student affairs have always been passionate about—holistic student development, integration of the mind and heart, self identity, engagement in the world, experiential learning, values, and spirituality. I now suggest that we include internationalization in our thinking and actions as educators. How do we guide and challenge students to live productively and meaningfully in a more pluralistic and diverse world? In my travels to many campuses over the past few years, I receive whole hearted agreement and strong commitment, especially from presidents and boards of trustees that we in U.S. universities must better prepare students to be global citizens. But what does this “preparation” mean and how can we create an environment on campus and beyond that effectively fosters holistic global learning and development?

I too am highly committed to this goal, but my level of understanding and experimentation needs to increase. Thus I see myself as a guide on the side in our journey, rather than the authoritative teacher. I want this column to be an opportunity for us to establish a loosely defined and inclusive “learning community.” I welcome you to submit your points of views and programs for sharing with the rest of us in future issues of this column. I cannot promise that I can publish everything, but I do intend to pass along what you have tried in making your campus a place that takes seriously internationalization.

Some Context

Why should we be concerned about internationalization today? Higher education leaders are not only concerned with intellectual development and learning but also moral, social, physical, and spiritual development of students, including intercultural competency or global learning and development (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2007). Many colleges argue that this kind of development is the value added to a college education, i.e., students develop their thinking, gain a better sense of themselves, and engage in relationships with others not like themselves to a greater degree as a result of their attending college. In our pluralistic world today, students now need to develop a global perspective while in college. They need to think and act in terms of living in a world in which they meet, work, and live with others with different cultural backgrounds, habits, perspectives, customs, religious beliefs, and aspirations, as Art Chickering and I have recently argued (Chickering and Braskamp, in press).

However, a gap still exists between the rhetoric and the reality of preparing students for a global society (Musil, 2006). Derek Bok, in *Our Underachieving Colleges*, concludes that our

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students today receive “very little preparation either as citizens or as professionals for the international challenges that are likely to confront them” (2006, p. 233). Kenneth Osfield, in his introductory chapter to the edited volume, *Internationalization of Student Affairs and Service: An Emerging Global Perspective*, published by NASPA, concludes that “internationalization of the U. S. educational system is an emerging trend and not yet part of the fabric of what we do” (Osfield & associates, 2009, p. 3).

Jon Dalton and Martha Sullivan present six factors that have influenced the internationalization of the profession of student affairs: “global connectedness; internationalization and the leadership culture in higher education; internationalizing influence of foreign students; influence of international study and travel; organized international programs for students affairs professionals; and student affairs and diversity” (Dalton & Sullivan, 2009, pp. 8–9).

We cannot ignore the context in which we live and work. Moreover as Dalton and Sullivan point out later, “We must examine our own personal and professional complacencies about cultural differences and recognize that our limited contact with others can foster narrowly perceived notions of how people should act and relate to one another” (Dalton & Sullivan, 2009, p. 11). In sum, we have the challenge to educate students better for their future, and we need more professional preparation if we are to be effective models, mentors, and guides to our students during their formative years.

Some Salient Issues

In this article I introduce four issues that I want to address during the next year since they can frame our approach to understanding internationalization. I include a number of articles that I recommend for your review and reading. In later columns we will go into greater depth about the latter three issues, and we will share some of your views and information about your work—programs, activities, practices—that help students, staff, and faculty enhance their global perspectives in the academy.

The selected issues are the following:

- **The language of internationalization.** What do we mean by this word? What terms are being used today to describe and understand student learning and development within the context of internationalization?
 - **Appropriate and effective interventions.** What programs and practices on campus and beyond the campus are considered effective in helping students grow in their journey that enhance a global perspective? How can we educate students locally as global citizens? What experiences do students need in order to think, feel, and act with others unlike them? How can students gain a global perspective without going abroad?
 - **Assessment and evaluation.** What is involved in evaluation and assessment of globalization? While global learning and development should be the core of assessment, should we also include evidence about the sociocultural environment of the students? What assessment strategies will enhance the use of the evidence?
 - **World Wide initiatives in internationalization.** How much do we know about the world? What are colleges and universities in other countries doing to enhance the global citizenship of their students?
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The Language of Internationalization

One of our first challenges is to understand better the scope and nature of internationalization. What do we mean by internationalization? At its most general level it means the act of having a worldview that stresses global interdependence, stretching beyond any national, regional, ethnic, and racial boundaries. Within the context of higher education, it includes perceptions of culture, policies, practices, and programs at colleges and universities that promote and foster a global perspective for all members of the higher education community—students, staff, and faculty. The question we need to ask is: “How do we as leaders on a campus internationalize our campus so that its members think, feel, and behave in ways that promote, honor, and respect a diverse and pluralistic society?” While we will focus on a global holistic student development perspective, given our responsibilities on campus, internationalization also includes such areas as research and scholarship, outreach into the communities all over the world, collaborations and partnerships with civic, business, and religious organizations, and public policy. Being international is being inclusive and not being strictly compartmentalized or departmentalized.

Internationalization is often viewed in terms of a global international perspective rather than a domestic concern. However, I encourage us not to think this way. The American Council on Education has addressed this issue in an insightful publication, *At Home in the World* (Olson, Evans & Shoenberg (2007). The authors note that many in higher education want to make a distinction between internationalization and multicultural education. They state, “In the U.S. context at least, multicultural education focuses largely on domestic diversity, while internationalization focuses on knowledge of cultures outside the United States, on relationships between nation-states, and on global trends and systems” (p. v). It is important to recognize the differences between a domestic and an international focus, because each focus represents different histories, goals, and practices. However, Olson et al. make the case that this division is not a productive one for us to make. Instead we need to find common ground between these two perspectives of pluralism and diversity and cultural differences, even though it is difficult. Olson et al. argue, “visible leadership and collaborative strategies that transcend the historical divide between internationalization and multicultural education are needed to ensure that students can live ethical, meaningful, and productive lives in an increasingly diverse and complex world” (2007, p. v).

I like this focus on integration since it bridges the gap between two sides of a coin that deal with diversity and difference. This focus indicates that we need to help students understand and honor differences, and that these differences exist both within a country like the US and among countries around the world. In short, internationalization can be very local.

We can address this fundamental issue productively by asking ourselves this question: What are the “desired ends” of a college education in terms of student learning and development? If we think of ourselves as sojourners—guides and mentors to students—on a journey with students, we can ask the question: What do we want students to be and become in terms of their developing holistic and global perspectives? Moreover we can easily concentrate on connections between desired student learning and development and the sociocultural environment—a set of interventions in the lives of students in and out of the classroom on campus and beyond—that can most effectively help students grow in ways that are congruent with the desired ends.

Student global learning and development as desired ends of a student’s collegiate preparation have been interpreted and defined in a number of ways—intercultural sensitivity (Bennett and Bennett, 2004), global learning (AAC&U, 2007), intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006), global citizenship (Nusbaum, 2009; Schattle, 2009) and intercultural maturity

(King and Magolda, 2005). Colleagues and I use the term, “global perspective” (Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill, 2009), which reflects both a global and a holistic human development perspective and encompasses two theoretical perspectives: student development and intercultural communication. It is based on the seminal work of Robert Kegan (*In Over our Heads*, 1994), who identified three major domains of human development: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. Persons do not develop their cognitive skills and learn to think with more complexity separately from further developing their emotional maturity, their sense of self and identity, and their ability to relate to others. Instead their cognitive skills develop simultaneously and continuously along several dimensions. A way to get a handle on this is to ask three questions of college students as they are challenged to have a global perspective in their journeys of life:

“How do I know?” reflects the **Cognitive** domain. Cognitive development is centered on one’s knowledge and understanding of what is true and important to know. It includes viewing knowledge and knowing with greater complexity and taking into account multiple cultural perspectives. Reliance on external authorities to have absolute truth gives way to relativism when making commitments within the context of uncertainty.

“Who am I?” reflects and highlights the **Intrapersonal** domain. Intrapersonal development focuses on one becoming more aware of and integrating one’s personal values and self-identity into one’s personhood. The end of this journey on this dimension is a sense of self-direction and purpose in one’s life, becoming more self aware of one’s strengths, values, and personal characteristics and sense of self, and viewing one’s development in terms of one’s self-identity. An ability to incorporate different and often conflicting ideas about who one is from an increasingly multicultural world is now an important aspect of developing a confident self-identity.

“How do I relate to others?” reflects the **Interpersonal** domain. Interpersonal development is centered on one’s willingness to interact with persons with different social norms and cultural backgrounds, to accept others, and to be comfortable when relating to others. It includes being able to view others differently; seeing one’s own uniqueness; and relating to others moving from dependency to independence to interdependence.

Student development in all three dimensions (cognitive, intrapersonal, interpersonal) proceeds “both within and across three dimensions of maturity . . . as college students become increasingly capable of understanding and acting in ways that are interculturally aware and appropriate” (King and Magolda, 2005, p. 547). “Those for whom development in one or more dimensions does not provide an adequate basis for coping with the complex life tasks they face often report being overwhelmed” (p. 574).

Thus I want to offer a starting point for us to think about internationalization on a campus: Begin with a focus on desired student learning and development, classified in terms of one’s head, heart, hands or mind, spirit, and body. You may use the terms, “global citizenship,” “global perspective,” or “intercultural competence,” but always keep students at the core of the discussion.

Appropriate and Effective Interventions

Students do not grow and develop in a vacuum. Their sociocultural environment makes a difference. Thus we need to connect what we want students to become as global citizens with

interventions, i.e., what experiences best provide students on campus and beyond to develop a global perspective? We have to address the issue of the sociocultural environment—campus culture, curriculum, co-curriculum, and community (Braskamp, Trautvetter, and Ward, 2006). As we and others (Dalton & Sullivan, 2009; Chickering & Braskamp, in press) argue, this environment is now much more diverse and pluralistic. So how do we create these conditions on and away from campus that will foster global citizenship? As we all know, experiential learning, active learning, learning communities, study/education abroad, service learning, and other active engagements are recommended as effective factors in fostering student development. What ones are particularly effective in promoting global citizenship? In a future column we will address this issue.

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation (I use these two terms interchangeably) are essentially about collecting evidence and communicating judgments of quality to audiences and users of the evidence. The first question we need to answer in assessment and evaluation is: What are we intending to assess and evaluate when we are discussing internationalization? While I consider student learning and development to be the centerpiece of our discussion, just focusing on students is not enough. We need also to examine what we as educators are doing and how well we are planning and implementing interventions in the lives of students. In response to this question, others (e.g., Deardorff, 2009) and I argue for a more inclusive approach to assessment. One way to begin an assessment is to start with desired ends, i.e., student learning and development, and then make sure that the core of an assessment or evaluation includes connections between student learning and the sociocultural environment. In this way assessment becomes the vehicle for focusing on what is important to us as we take responsibility for providing an optimal environment for students.

World Wide Initiatives in Internationalization

Osfield defines internationalization as “the process by which a university changes the infrastructure or the campus ecology to keep up with the changing demand for more direct links to higher education outside their [sic] own country of origin” (Osfield, 2009, p. 3). This definition is more focused than the definition I used to introduce this column, but he makes an important point. We in higher education in America cannot be isolationist in our outlook and consider our way of educating students to be better than those in other countries.

I begin with some statistics to show the scope and magnitude of higher education in this world. About 153 million students are enrolled in universities worldwide, a 53 percent increase since 2000. It is estimated that about 2.9 million students worldwide pursue their education outside their home countries, which is a 57% increase since 1999. (IIE, *Inside Higher Education*, May 6, 2009.) Approximately 20 million are enrolled in U. S. post secondary education institutions. Of that number about 250,000 students are enrolled in a university or college in a foreign country, but twenty years ago less than 50,000 were enrolled elsewhere. Of the U.S. colleges and universities, N.Y.U. (over 3000 or 42% of their students) and Michigan State (2800 or 31% of their students) are the leaders in the number studying abroad. Liberal arts colleges often have a greater percent enrolled elsewhere. Of the students studying aboard more than one half are enrolled in European universities, with the United Kingdom attracting the most students followed by Italy, Spain, and France. About 550,000 international students are enrolled at U. S. based colleges and universities and make up about four percent of the student population. Southern California enrolls over 7000 international students or 22% of their undergraduate

population, followed by N.Y.U. with 6400 or 14% of their population being from a country outside the U.S. As these numbers clearly illustrate, study abroad while important is not the complete solution to internationalization. We first need to be become educated about this world.

I like the idea of helping students to “Know yourself; know your world.” One fruitful way I have found is to view the world in terms of how different countries around the world are thinking about issues like income, health, education, and well being. I find the global behavioral economic data conducted by the Gallup World Poll (www.gallup.com) to be a good start. In sum, if we are to be global citizens, we need to know more and have experiences with people unlike us, so we can share with them our experiences and perspectives. Only then will we be able to assist our students in profound ways.

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