

tended period. This mistaken assertion flows from an accurate observation: Attainment rates of the youngest and oldest groups of working adults in the United States are now roughly the same that leads many to conclude that US attainment has not grown over time. But the fact is that the rough equality in attainment rates for the youngest and oldest adult workers has largely been achieved through rapid increases in the attainment rate of the oldest group, rather than any decline or even slowing in the rate for the youngest group of adult workers.

Demographic trends that dictate the size of the population are the other less discussed part of the equation for determining the number of college degree holders. But unlike the attainment rate that has consistently increased, the size of the traditional college age group has varied over time. The number of high school graduates in the United States peaked in the mid-1970s as a result of the baby boom, fell

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**The attainment rate in other countries has grown faster than in the United States and thus the relative US ranking has declined, particularly for the youngest group of adults.**

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until the early 1990s, and then grew again, peaking around 2008–2009. That number is now projected to fall again through 2014–2015 before starting to grow again toward the end of the current decade.

Yet, despite fairly steep declines in the number of high school graduates for several decades, the number of college students and degrees awarded in the United States has consistently grown over the past 50 years. How to explain this? The basic answer is that American higher education has been very successful in increasing the number of students older than the traditional college age. As a result, participation and attainment rates for each adult age group has increased consistently over the past 50 years, as have the numbers of degrees awarded.

#### **THE EXPERIENCE IN HIGH-ATTAINMENT COUNTRIES**

Patterns of population growth and attainment rates in the United States, as described above, jointly determine the size of the current and future American labor force, with respect to college graduates. But they do not provide much insight into why the US ranking in attainment-rate charts has slipped so badly when compared to many other OECD

countries. For this, the demographics and attainment rates must be looked for those countries.

Many of the OECD countries have overtaken us on attainment rates, with large declines in their numbers of young adults—due to low-birth rates and patterns of net out-migration. For several countries with the highest attainment rates, such as South Korea and Japan, the number of 15–24 year olds and 25–34 year olds dropped by double-digit percentages between 2000 and 2010. The decline in younger age groups for many other high-attainment countries was similar. Moreover, for many of these countries, especially in Asia, the decline in the numbers of college age youth has been chronic and persists.

This means that many of the countries that now rank higher than the United States on the overall degree attainment of younger adults have accomplished this feat by educating an increasing share of a declining number of younger adults—a fact that could have serious adverse labor market implications for these countries now and down the road. For many of these high attainment countries, the number of young adults with degrees far exceeds the number of those getting ready to retire, which could also greatly add to the unemployment rate of recent college graduates in those countries.

Thus, the recent debates concerning where the United States ranks among OECD countries in attainment have not focused nearly enough on the extent that different demographics have played a role in these attainment trends or on their implications for meeting labor force requirements in the future. ■

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## Internationalization of Higher Education: Converging or Diverging Trends?

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**W**hat is the key finding in the International Association of Universities (IAU) 4th Global Survey?" This is the question that is most frequently asked about the International Association of Universities' latest survey, Internationalization of Higher Education: Growing Expectations,

Fundamental Values, which reports on 1,336 institutions from 131 countries—garnering a respectable nearly 20 percent response rate. Writing the “headlines” for a survey that covers so much ground is not only challenging but also potentially misleading. Thus, important regional variations as well as a variety of results, analyzed carefully, demonstrate a number of more nuanced realities. Nonetheless, some general findings do stand out.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

The study confirms the importance of internationalization for higher education institutions. With percent 69 percent of the respondents stating that it is of high importance, 27 percent indicating that it has remained high over the past three years, and an additional 30 percent reporting that it increased substantially in importance during that same period, the centrality of this process in higher education is clear. The results also show that 75 percent of the higher

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**Important regional variations as well as a variety of results, analyzed carefully, demonstrate a number of more nuanced realities. Nonetheless, some general findings do stand out.**

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education institutions that took part in the survey already have or are preparing an internationalization strategy or policy, while an additional 16 percent report embedding internationalization goals in the overall institutional strategy. European institutions have most frequently developed an internationalization policy or strategy, with 61 percent of the higher education institutions in this region indicating that they already have one.

#### LEADERSHIP AND BENEFITS

The 4th Global Survey continues to demonstrate that internationalization is still largely driven by the top institutional leaders, with the presidents, vice chancellors or rectors ranked as the most important internal driver of this process by 46 percent of the respondents. The findings with respect to expected benefits also show continuity over time—identifying student awareness of or engagement with international issues as the most significant benefit of the process.

#### UNDERLYING VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Linked to the International Association of Universities' recent policy statement—*Affirming Academic Values in Inter-*

*nationalization of Higher Education: A Call for Action*—new questions were included in this latest survey to ascertain what values or principles are deemed important by higher education institutions in the conduct of internationalization. Although these questions about values have probably solicited somewhat “politically correct” responses, it is interesting to note that, in all but one region of the world, the largest number of respondents report that their institution's internationalization policy refers to “placing academic goals at the center of internationalization efforts.” This is not, however, the case in the Middle East, where higher education institutions report instead that their policies most frequently refer to scientific integrity and research ethics. African institutions report this as well, although it is the second most frequently referenced value in their policies. Notably, institutions in no other region have identified this value among the top three values or principles mentioned in their strategy.

A focus on values were also highlighted by other survey questions, and even more importantly, by the responses received. Equity in internationalization provides one example. At the global level and in all but one region (Europe), higher education institutions voiced their concern that access to international opportunities could be or become available only to the privileged few: the highest-ranked risk was “access to international opportunities [being] available only to students with financial resources.”

#### RISKS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

The findings concerned with risks show an interesting mix of both divergence and convergence of views among institutions, in different regions. As mentioned above, there is almost global consensus that the most important *institutional* risk of internationalization for higher education institutions is that not all students will benefit from the opportunities. This consensus breaks down, however, when looking at the second- and third-highest ranked risks. A wide divergence among the regional responses becomes quickly evident with African and Middle East African institutions pointing to the brain drain, North American institutions citing too much emphasis on recruitment of fee paying students, Latin American and Caribbean institutions identifying issues related to regulating quality of foreign programs, and institutions in Asia and Pacific finding excessive competition among higher education institutions as the second most important risk.

When asked about *societal* risks, respondents diverge even with regard to the top-ranked risk. At the aggregate level and in at least three regions—including in Europe, which had the largest number of respondents—the most important risk of internationalization is commercialization of education. However, the unequal sharing of benefits of

internationalization is identified as the top-societal risk by respondents in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In the Middle East, respondents identified the brain drain and the loss of cultural identity as the first- and second-ranked societal risks, respectively.

#### FUNDING LEVELS AND ALLOCATION CHOICES

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**The 4th Global Survey continues to demonstrate that internationalization is still largely driven by the top institutional leaders, with the presidents, vice chancellors or rectors.**

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The responses that result in near-complete consensus are rare, but respondents from higher education institutions across all regions almost unanimously point to a lack of funding, as the most important barrier to advancing internationalization. This result is also consistent over time, since a similar response was found in the 3rd Global Survey. However, questions that probe this issue more deeply present a much more diverse view of the availability of funding for internationalization. When asked how the level of overall funding to support specific international activities has changed over the past three years at their institution, the largest number of respondents in all regions indicated that their institution has *increased funding* for student mobility. Similarly, the largest number of respondents in every region, except in North America, indicated that their institutions have increased funding for research collaboration.

Additionally, the institutions in Middle East and Africa have increased their funding for almost half of the areas of internationalization proposed in the questionnaire, which included a dozen specific activities as options. This is in sharp contrast to institutions in Europe or North America, where funding increases were reported by the majority of respondents in the case of only two internationalization activities, among the 12 possibilities.

The distinct strategic choices being made by institutions in different regions can also be seen by looking at the allocation of funds for specific internationalization activities and most particularly by examining which type of activity has seen increased funding. In the Middle East, Africa, and Asia and Pacific, for example, institutions are investing more in marketing and promotion of their institutions internationally, while in Latin America and the Caribbean there is a stronger focus on out-going mobility of faculty and staff. These results are very much in line with the pri-

ority activities and challenges identified by the institutions elsewhere in the survey.

#### A COMPLEX PICTURE

It is important to keep in mind that the results of such a comprehensive survey reveal a lot more than a few key findings. This survey, like the earlier International Association of Universities survey reports, presents data on the many different dimensions of internationalization and compares results across world regions as well as changes over time. The report covers a wide variety of aspects of internationalization: such as, infrastructural supports that institutions have put in place; the expected benefits and perceived risks of internationalization; drivers and obstacles; institutional mobility patterns and targets; as well as issues related to curricular change and learning outcomes. ■

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## International Students: The United Kingdom Drops the Ball

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The United Kingdom has long been a powerful attractor of international students; and its higher education sector, from local colleges to venerable global universities, has become almost as dependent on international students, as Australian institutions.

In 2011–2012 the University of Manchester enrolled 8,875 non-European Union students, which are the high fees international students, mostly from Asia, that generate surplus (EU students pay home country tuition fees). University College London enrolled 7,565 non-EU students, Edinburgh 6,045 and even Oxford 4,685. In the United Kingdom, 81 institutions draw more than 10 percent of revenue from this source. The export sector generates nearly £20 billion a year in fees and other spending.

#### DOWNWARD TREND

Yet, after a long period of growth total full-time students from EU and non-EU countries dropped by 1.4 percent in 2012–2013. In taught postgraduate programs—such as the one-year UK business master's degrees that are short in