

sionally donors that attempt to bypass priorities, developed internally and on academic grounds, etc. I have never seen an outstanding research university that does not enjoy academic freedom or a form of shared governance.

One has to be clear. I am in no way implying that all people who share in governance should be university insiders; but internal academic voices need to be heard and considered. It should also be stressed that academic freedom—the freedom of teachers and students to teach, study, and pursue knowledge without unreasonable interference—is not the same thing as political freedom, although they are practically twins. The ever-present challenges are obvious.

Twenty years is not a very long time, and one can assume that the intellectual climate will not be subject to abrupt change. And that introduces another predictable challenge: professionalism and/or an increasing anti-intellectualism. In the United States, and elsewhere also, I am referring to the view that learning for its own sake is somehow a frivolous activity—perhaps a luxury and not deserving of support. From the point of view of the student, the purpose of education is job and career. That is how curriculum is frequently structured—accounting: Yes; computer science: a shouted Yes; Shakespeare: if there is a little spare time. From the point of view of the state what matters are “human resources to meet workforce needs.” Basic science needs support because the study of biology may lead to a cure of some disease, especially the diseases that afflict funders. There is some truth in all of these propositions, but why does it also imply that sociology is quite useless and that the humanities are not deserving of support?

I am, of course, familiar with the more standard challenges to higher education: disruption caused by technology, high cost, massive open online courses making residential education a useless indulgence, and others. I do not dispute their great importance, but I add disinterested learning—for undergraduates we would call it liberal education—because it is only rarely mentioned. Yet, fundamental intellectual progress has most often started with disinterested investigators attempting to solve a problem, because it is fascinating and has not been done before. In the social sciences and humanities where problems are very rarely solved in definitive form, each generation of students and teachers needs its own reinterpretation of the big questions asked by these fields of study and investigation. These endeavors are the intellectual essence of research universities. ■

“Intelligent Internationalization”: A 21st Century Imperative

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One of the most important issues facing higher education around the world for the next two decades is the crucial need for “intelligent internationalization.”

Internationalization—as a response to globalization, as a strategy for enhanced quality or visibility, or as an isomorphic response to developments in the environment—is arguably one of the most significant phenomena, currently affecting higher education institutions across the globe. Internationalization may be seen as both a cause and an effect of the advent of the global knowledge economy. To varying degrees across national and institutional contexts, it is also the manifestation of fundamental—and still evolving—changes in the way we think about what constitutes relevant, high-quality tertiary education today.

Mobility is still “king” in most internationalization discussions, and growing student mobility numbers worldwide indicate that mobility will continue to be highly significant for the foreseeable future. However, in many countries, crucially important aspects of the internationalization agenda are now moving from the periphery to the center, in matters of both policy and practice. We see this clearly in the long-overdue, rising prominence of the discussion around “internationalization at home,” the increasing importance placed by universities on developing and sustaining international partnerships of both breadth and depth, and growing interest in providing more internationally and interculturally oriented training and support for faculty and staff.

Meanwhile, these developments are unfolding against a backdrop of unprecedented complexity and flux for higher education, more broadly. Political, economic, and social developments are exerting enormous pressures on higher education to (among other things) “perform,” “respond,” “innovate,” “incubate,” “evaluate,” and “lead.” The internationalization agenda is deeply implicated in these processes. Dealing effectively with this complexity requires a commitment to “intelligent internationalization,” which is grounded in a body of knowledge that coherently encompasses both theory and practice aimed at improving our understanding of the complex realities of internationalization locally and globally. It demands a commitment to the train-

ing of thoughtful practitioners in the field, working in tandem with researchers, policymakers, and institutional leaders who are sensitive to the practicalities that reside within the “big issues” dominating so many strategic discussions about internationalization today.

Around the world, there are research centers and programs devoted to the education and training of higher education professionals, many of which seem to be concerned about matters of internationalization. But, the scope of these research and training efforts is very unclear, as is the quality of the products they produce or the training they provide. Equally, there is a very uncertain connection between the needs for information and expertise by policymakers and practitioners, and what researchers and educators/trainers actually produce.

“Intelligent internationalization” demands the development of a thoughtful alliance between the research, practitioner, and policy communities. Those participating in the elaboration of internationalization activities and agendas have access to the information, ideas, and professional skill-building opportunities that will enhance their ability to navigate the complex and volatile higher education environment of the next 20 years. ■

To Be or Not to Be—A World-Class University?

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With the 2003 publication of the first international ranking by Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the subsequent emergence of competing global league tables (*Times Higher Education*, Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan, QS, and others), more systematic ways of identifying world-class universities have appeared. As a result, a major concern of governments has been to find the most effective method for inducing substantial progress in their country’s top universities. While a few nations—Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia, for example—have opted for establishing new universities from scratch, most countries have adopted a strategy combining mergers and upgrading of existing institutions.

In order to accelerate the transformation process, several governments have launched so-called “excellence initiatives,” consisting of large injections of additional funding

to boost their university sector. The recent excellence initiatives have been launched mainly in East Asia and Europe. These programs usually have a limited number of beneficiary universities and focus on research upgrading.

Many of these excellence initiatives mark a significant philosophical shift in the funding policies of the participating countries. In France, Germany, and Spain—for instance, where all public universities have traditionally been considered equally good in terms of performance—the excellence initiative represents a move away from the principle of uniform budget entitlements toward a substantial element of competitive funding.

Measuring the effectiveness of excellence initiatives is not an easy task for at least two reasons. First, upgrading a university takes many years. Since many excellence initiatives are fairly recent, attempts at measuring success would be premature in most cases. The second challenge is related to attribution. Even if a correlation could be identified on the basis of a large sample of institutions, establishing elements of causality would require an in-depth analysis of case studies.

In the meantime, it is possible to identify a number of risks and challenges associated with the ongoing race to establish world-class universities. The overemphasis on research sends the wrong signal that the quality of teaching and learning is not important. International rankings clearly favor research-intensive universities at the cost of excluding excellent undergraduate teaching institutions. In the United States, for instance, liberal arts schools such as Wellesley, Carleton, Williams, and Pomona Colleges, and engineering schools such as Olin College are all recognized as outstanding colleges, but fail to be included in the rankings.

The focus on world-class universities is likely to further promote elitism. In the search for academic excellence, top universities are very selective, which bears the risk of keeping away talented students from families with low-cultural capital. With a 1:100 success ratio, the Indian Institutes of Technology are the most selective institutions in the world. Similarly, the Ivy League universities are the most selective universities in the United States.

The search for academic excellence is in danger of being thwarted by restrictions on academic freedom in non-democratic countries. While it may be a lesser constraint in the hard sciences, it certainly hinders the ability of social scientists to conduct scientific inquiries on issues that are politically sensitive in China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia, for example.

At the end of the day, instead of focusing exclusively on building world-class universities, governments should worry more about developing well-balanced tertiary education systems that encompass the whole range of institu-