articles. Furthermore, 8 percent published at least one paper in a foreign refereed journal. Overall, faculty who were relatively active in research constituted only about 5 percent of all academic staff in the study—that is, when the measurement of "research active" consists of publications in Russian and international refereed journals as well as grant activity of faculty.

### Prospects for the Research University

The challenges of globalization suggest that research activity in Russian universities should be intensified. A survey of faculty research in Russia shows that the higher education system is far from achieving an appropriate level of research activity. Among the factors working against this progress are the Soviet tradition of allocating research mostly to research institutes, the traditionally high teaching loads of junior and middle academic personnel, inadequate government funding of universities, and limited opportunities for faculty to raise research funding directly. Faculty members need to spread themselves among multiple jobs because one salary is not enough to live on. Besides, a model of appropriate knowledge production requires a certain financial autonomy of research organizations, whatever their kind. In Russia such autonomy has been shrinking, especially in higher education institutions and also requires appropriate legislation on intellectual property. These conditions simply are not in place.

Under present circumstances Russia cannot build knowledge production as a national asset and develop a robust research university sector. The external incentives for research are weak, in a natural resources–based economy with a state sector whose priorities now seem to be elsewhere. The internal mechanisms governing faculty research are also weak (e.g., evaluation and peer-review practices). Cultures of strong research performance and productivity are on average absent.

In the post-Soviet period, government has initiated a set of programs designed to encourage the integration of higher education and research. However, genuine integration faces legal, organizational, social, and psychological barriers. ■

# No World-Class University Left Behind

**Robert Birnbaum**

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I don't wish to appear alarmist, but to judge from the growing literature we appear to be facing a world-class university ranking crisis. The problem is not the lack of such lists but rather that they are too numerous and too different.

Without uniform rankings, many institutions across the globe claim that they plan to become world-class universities by a certain date or that they have already achieved this status. World-class status has been projected or claimed for institutions in Vietnam, Turkey, Chile, Kashmir, and Malaysia, among other countries. Thailand has been particularly blessed by three institutions with such aspirations. The University of Timbuktu (which apparently was a world-class university in the 12th century) has announced its intention of regaining that status; and the president of the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research has claimed world-class status, even as the source of the institution's accreditation is being questioned.

As for the United States, a list of acknowledged or self-proclaimed world-class universities include not only the usual suspects of Association of American University members and wannabes but also a number of institutions that some observers would identify as having merely regional or local recognition. The United States can, however, probably boast having the only institution actually *named* World Class University. I was hoping that studying this institution (in Tennessee) might clarify the problem until I read their self-identification on the Internet as "the only barber college teaching the New Millennium Fading Technique."

*World-class status has been projected or claimed for institutions in Vietnam, Turkey, Chile, Kashmir, and Malaysia, among other countries.*

Perhaps globalization is to blame. For some people the concept suggests the desirability of constructing a single measure of world class that can be uniformly applied to institutions across all nations. In an effort to encourage scholars to think outside the hegemonical box, I propose to consider five alternative ways to go about identifying world-class institutions. Each alternative has its foundations in a sound conceptual orientation.

*Bentham System*—this scheme, based on the 19th-century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham's principle of utilitarianism, proposes that the best universities are those that bring about the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. Certainly the intellectual pleasures created by the development of a new theory should be included in developing the Bentham ratings. However, should not the pleasures obtained by students in their university experiences, whether in their dorm rooms or classrooms, be given equal weight? After all, there are many sources of happiness and little justification for selecting one source as superior to another. As the 19th-century French politician and gourmet Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin said in his classic book, *The Physiology of Taste,* "the discovery of a new dish confers more happiness on humanity than the

discovery of a new star."

*Olympic System*—we can all agree that the ranking of a university depends on the quality of its faculty. Competent faculty in the appropriate fields can easily deconstruct a novel, derive a mathematical formula, or compose a string quartet. And some faculty can also run a decent 100-meter dash or swim the butterfly. However, following the ideal of the Roman poet Juvenal's call for "mens sana in corpore sano" (a healthy mind in a healthy body), it takes truly world-class talent to calculate an asteroid orbit or produce a new philosophical theory, while at the same time engaging in gymnastic or shot-putting competition. In the Olympic System, teams of university faculty would compete every four years in head-to-head competitions combining athletic and intellectual prowess to determine their world rankings. This would finally give unequivocal meaning to the term "scholar-athlete."

*Since there is no agreement on which of the variables used are the most important, weighting them is of no benefit in developing a ranking system; the same general result can be determined merely by addition.*

*Borges System*—this system is based on the model developed in the short story, "The Library of Babel," by the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. The story posits the existence of a library of indefinite size with all the books that could possibly be written and that express all thoughts ever conceived in any language. Obviously, a library with all the books that ever were or could be written must, by definition, contain a book presenting a true ranking of all the world's universities. There is no need to engage de novo in elaborate data analyses to determine world class. Our scholarly task, as simplified by Borges, is merely to identify the book of *true* ratings from among the infinite number of books that contain very similar, but false, ratings in the library

*Sausage System*—this system takes a problematic characteristic of rankings (a large number of different systems, each with different results) and turns it from weakness to strength. Since there is no agreement on which of the variables used are the most important, weighting them is of no benefit in developing a ranking system; the same general result can be determined merely by addition. Throw *U.S. News and World Report*, the *Gourman Report*, the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, and other rankings created by systems of all kinds into the same bowl, add and average out the results, and voila! Include rankings for best college newspaper? Best for community involvement? Most diverse? The best party school? The rankings of the National Collegiate Athletic Association in various sports? Why not? Just as we do not know how a sausage is made (or, more to the point, we don't *want* to know), the Sausage System makes it difficult to understand just what has gone into any particular set of ratings. Opaqueness is its virtue. The system rejects the concept of "either/or" in favor of the more inclusive "both/and" concept.

*Lake Wobegon System*—world-class rankings of all kinds establish artificial limits in the number of institutions that can be included. As an example, under our present system a listing of the top 20 world-class universities will contain the names of only 20 institutions. But in Lake Wobegon, you will remember, all the children are *above* average. This suggests the possibility of significantly expanding the number of institutions that can be ranked as world class merely by increasing the number of institutions in each category. Naming perhaps 30 institutions as being in the top 20 might be a way to start, increasing numbers as we gain more experience. At least 50 research universities in the United States have stated their intention of moving into the top 20. Under our present system most of them will be doomed to failure, but under the Lake Wobegon System many more may be able to satisfy their ambitions.

These examples provide merely a start for considering alternative ways of identifying world-class universities. I am certain that other scholars will propose additional systems to rank institutions. For example, the Kenneth Lay System could compare institutions based on the total income earned by graduates; the Robert Putnam System could base ranks on the degree to which an institution contributes to the development of social capital; and the Kermit System could assess institutional commitments to sustainability (it's not easy being green).

My suggestions, while tongue-in-cheek, should not be taken as a denigration of world-class elite institutions. These institutions help define our civilization, serve as bastions of original thought, and respond to the quintessential human need for knowledge. And we have many of them, even if we may not completely agree on their exact number or definition. But on a planet plagued by famine, genocide, war, preventable death due to diseases, and even unavailability of drinkable water, the need for additional world-class universities as a priority is at best unclear. At the very least, countries thinking about creating such institutions should consider alternative ways in which the resources they allocate for higher education might be expended.

Before developing more elite universities we might focus attention on strengthening what we now refer to as second- or third-tier institutions. Using the metaphor created by the philosopher Daniel Dennett, educational policies should be built using cranes rather than skyhooks. A crane stands on solid ground. A skyhook, on the other hand, posits some kind of supernatural force that can raise things without any earthly support at all. Cranes require time and great effort, but they work. Skyhooks can be set up quickly and require little effort, but they don't work. We can establish world-class universities using cranes when they are built, over time, on strong and indigenous educational and social foundations. But trying to

develop them by using imported rhetoric, imported models, and large sums of money is to follow the failed policies of skyhooks. Attempting to build world-class universities without attending first to the educational and social ground on which such institutions might stand is, as Ivan Illich once said, "like trying to do urban renewal in New York City from the twelfth story up."

Rather than more world-class universities, what we really need in countries everywhere are more world-class technical institutes, world-class community colleges, world-class colleges of agriculture, world-class teachers colleges, and world-class regional state universities. The United States doesn't have a world-class higher education system because it has many world-class universities—instead it has world-class universities because it has a world-class higher education system.

Ratings or rankings pretend to be objective and scientific; in reality, however, they are manifestations of ideologies about the purposes of higher education. In an era of globalization, world class has increasingly come to be synonymous with Western. That means science, research, and lots of money; poorer nations cannot afford to compete in this arena. The pressure to conform to "universalistic standards" is constant. Thus an institution that should be lauded for doing admirable work in its own domain may be considered a failure using world-class university standards. As nations strengthen and diversify their institutions, their excellence should not be judged by how well they emulate the West but rather by how successfully they exploit their rich traditions and cultures so that their institutions develop their own unique character. ■

# International Students in the United States: The Current Picture

**Rajika Bhandari and Hey-Kyung Koh**

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International student mobility is a rapidly growing phenomenon worldwide, with over 2.5 million students pursuing higher education outside their home country. Of this large number, over 500,000 students have studied in the United States in each of the past seven years. Although the United States has successfully maintained its status as the leading higher education destination for international students over the past half century, the numbers of these students and the leading countries of origin have varied in response to domestic and international political, economic, and academic factors.

The Institute of International Education (IIE) has collected data on international student enrollment in the United States since 1919 and in the form of the *Open Doors* survey since 1954/55. Approximately 3,000 regionally accredited US higher education institutions are surveyed annually on various aspects of international educational exchange. This article presents a summary of the key findings from the international student component of the *Open Doors 2006: Report on International Educational Exchange*.

> *The number of international students enrolling in US higher education in the 2005/06 academic year stabilized at 564,766*

After several years of minimal growth followed by modest declines (with steeper declines in certain fields and from certain world regions), the number of international students enrolling in US higher education in the 2005/06 academic year stabilized at 564,766—a nonsignificant decline of .05 percent from the previous year. While total international student enrollments remained steady, enrollment by *new* international students—students enrolling in US higher education for the first time—increased by 8 percent from the previous year.

### Where Do They Come From?

While the United States hosts international students from all regions of the world, the majority of the international student population on US campuses (58 percent) came from Asia. In 2005/06, four of the leading 5 and 10 of the leading 20 places of origin were in Asia. Despite a 5 percent decline in numbers of students since the previous year, India remained the leading place of origin for the fifth consecutive year, accounting for 76,503 (14 percent) of all international students. India was followed by China (11 percent), Korea (10 percent), and Japan (7 percent). The only non-Asian country in the top five was Canada. The second-largest region of origin for international students was Europe, followed by Latin America, Africa, North America, and the Middle East. These regional distributions have remained relatively stable since 2002/03.

### Who Are They?

In terms of academic level, the majority of international students in the United States are graduate students, as has been the case since 2001/02. In 2005/06, 47 percent were enrolled at the graduate level as compared with 42 percent at the undergraduate level, while 11 percent were enrolled in nondegree or certificate programs or pursuing postdegree "optional practical training." In addition, while international students overall