

Mapping Internationalization: Accelerated Activity with Mixed Results

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It is essential to understand how US higher education institutions are internationalizing themselves—to address the goal of preparing graduates for productive lives in a society that increasingly operates across international borders. A strategic and comprehensive approach to internationalization is critical to meeting that goal.

SURVEYING INTERNATIONALIZATION ON US CAMPUSES

To analyze the reality of internationalization on US campuses, the American Council on Education recently surveyed accredited, degree-granting institutions across the United States, to assess the current state of internationalization and to examine progress since the research was last conducted, in 2006. As the third

report in 10 years, *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses: 2012 Edition* represents the only comprehensive source of data on internationalization in US higher education institutions, from all sectors.

The research inspected colleges' and universities' internationalization and global efforts across six critical areas, based on the Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement's definition of comprehensive internationalization: a coordinated process that seeks to align and integrate international policies, programs, and initiatives along several dimensions. These include articulated institutional commitment; administrative structure and staffing; curriculum, cocurriculum, and learning outcomes; faculty policies and practices; student mobility; and international collaboration and partnerships.

POSITIVE ADVANCES IN COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION

Among the most striking findings from the 2011 data is that institutions' perceptions about the level of internationalization activities on their campuses are quite positive, with the majority reporting that internationalization efforts are increasing on their campuses.

More attention is being paid, based on internationalizing some aspects of the curriculum. In 2011, a modest increase (4%) occurred among institutions—requiring undergraduates to take a course featuring global trends and issues, as part of general education programs. Even more significant were the increases across all sectors in the institutions developing global student learning outcomes—up 10 percent since 2006. Of institutions that have such outcomes, the majority of institutions assess them, primarily through course assessments or program evaluations. Assessing progress reinforces the articulated commitment

to internationalization. These are all positive signs for internationalizing the curriculum.

More institutions are considering international background, experience, and interests in hiring faculty in fields that are not explicitly international or global. Of institutions, 68 percent indicated they give such preference, which is a sharp increase from the 32 percent of institutions doing so in 2006. Faculty plays a critical role in achieving the ultimate goal of comprehensive internationalization—student learning—and, hiring practices are an important indicator that institutions recognize the authority of faculty in this process.

Student mobility continues as a focus with more institutions dedicating funding and resources in this area. More institutions are investing in sending domestic students abroad by providing institutional scholarships for students to use toward such programs. In 2011, 9 in 10 doctoral institutions had such funding available, with approximately two-thirds of master's and baccalaureate institutions and one-quarter of associate and special focus institutions. Additionally, a greater number of institutions are funding faculty to take students abroad than in prior years. Looking at student mobility from the other direction—the inward flow of international students—more institutions are also dedicating resources to this initiative. A majority of doctoral, master's, and baccalaureate institutions provided scholarships or other financial aid for international undergraduate students in 2011, and more institutions funded travel for staff to recruit this population of students. Overall, 31 percent of institutions fund such travel—ranging from 13 percent of special focus institutions to 78 percent of doctoral institutions.

Colleges and universities recognize that global education is critical to their missions, even given the high-stakes budget pressure that they have experienced in the past few years. Among institutions reporting an accelerated focus on internationalization since 2008, funding for these efforts has increased or remained steady at many institutions. However, despite this dedication of resources and progress in some areas, the results of the survey shed light on elements in which US campuses can improve.

CONCERNS IN COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION

Though perceptions about internationalization were positive and certain areas saw improvements, the general optimism is not always grounded in reality as some findings showed.

Some troubling trends occur in the data about curriculum that raise a concern about depth versus breadth. Despite slight increases in institutions offering courses directed on global issues, institutions that require undergraduates to take courses based on perspectives and issues from other countries or regions decreased across all sectors, as did institutions with an undergraduate foreign language requirement for graduation. These are essential areas if institutions are serious about global learning goals for students.

Though positive gains were seen in hiring faculty with international backgrounds, the number of institutions supporting faculty in acquiring or furthering their international knowledge and skills decreased. In 2011, for example, decreases were seen in institutions funding faculty to study or conduct research abroad and in offering on-campus opportunities such as workshops on internationalizing the curriculum. Institutions that have guidelines specifying

international work or experience as a consideration in faculty promotion and tenure decisions have remained the same—at only 8 percent, since 2006. This stands in sharp contradiction to the willingness of institutions to consider these factors in faculty hiring.

While efforts to recruit international students are on the rise, the data did not show a commensurate increase in support services for this population of students or in activities that facilitate interaction and mutual learning with American peers. Comprehensive internationalization requires careful planning for the integration and support of international students into campus life.

CONCLUSION

In an era of tight budgets and competing demands, clearly institutions must prioritize their internationalization activities and initiatives. As evidence of this, the data showed that some colleges and universities are taking action in certain areas, to increase the level of internationalization on their campuses. However, comprehensive internationalization—a process that requires a deep commitment across the institution, a dedicated team of senior campus leaders, and the support of numerous constituents—cannot be accomplished by focusing on just one element or several discrete pieces.

Moving forward, the US higher education community will need to develop and share successful comprehensive internationalization models that enhance traditional paradigms but also create new ways to bring global learning to nontraditional students. Ultimately, strategies for internationalizing colleges and universities will need to reflect the rapidly changing global environment.