PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR INTERNATIONALIZING THE LAND GRANT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Some faculty in colleges of agriculture at land grant universities wish their institutions had more emphasis on international programming. Penn State University decided to conduct an internal study of the current resources, opportunities, barriers, and desired actions to internationalize the university. Faculty, staff, and students were involved in committees to identify the resources, opportunities, and barriers, and then recommend specific activities for strengthening international programs at Penn State. After eight months of discussion, data gathering, and analysis, 33 recommendations were made. A vision statement was drafted to guide the implementation of these recommendations. The recommendations generated by this study may be useful for other colleges and universities who wish to strengthen international programming in an increasingly interdependent global community.

Anyone who has represented a land grant university as an educational consultant abroad recognizes that this role has advantages and disadvantages. In spite of the resources, the support of colleagues, and the institutional base of a mutually supporting system of three parts--extension, resident education, and research--most land grant universities also present problems. They are large, bureaucratic institutions which respond slowly to the needs of individual employees; administrators often support international commitments in word but not in deed; promotion and tenure pressures seem to trouble consultants working abroad; and the vast resources which the consultant needs from the home university are often poorly organized, inaccessible, or difficult to mobilize.

These disadvantages decrease the effectiveness of the land grant university as a partner in international development. They hamper relationships between the university and institutions abroad, between the university and governmental agencies both abroad and in the United States, and between the university and non-governmental organizations. They also hamper the effectiveness of individual consultants who are working abroad.

The Pennsylvania State University, commonly referred to as Penn State, initiated an institution-wide effort to address these problems during the 1993-94 academic year by conducting an internal study of its international function. At the beginning of this effort the concept of "internationalizing a university" was not well understood. Deutsch (1970) has described three strategic options which can be viewed as aspects of internationalization: (a) increase the number of U.S. students studying abroad, (b) provide more opportunities for foreign students to study in the U.S., and (c) focus on curricula by offering more courses on international topics and adding international content to current...
curricula. Penn State adopted these three strategies in its definition of "internationalizing the university" but it also included three other approaches: (a) provide opportunities for faculty members to gain international experience through teaching, research, and service, (b) reward faculty for international work, especially by changing criteria for promotion and tenure, and (c) expand the number of international activities and opportunities on campus to benefit all members of the university community.

**Penn State's Internal Study: Purpose, Objectives and Procedure**

The purpose of Penn State's internal study was to find ways to strengthen the international dimension of teaching, research, and extension at the university. Specific objectives were to (a) assess current resources, (b) determine opportunities, (c) identify barriers, and (d) recommend specific actions to more fully internationalize the university.

The central administration of Penn State directed the Associate Vice President for International Programs to organize a faculty task force representing diverse groups to study the current situation and recommend future actions. The Associate Vice President asked his advisory committee, the International Council, which is comprised of administrators and other faculty with recognized interests in the international mission of the university, to appoint five sub-committees to study (a) internationalizing the curriculum, (b) internationalizing the campus climate for faculty, staff, and students, (c) providing international experiences to undergraduate students, (d) increasing international activities for graduate students and faculty, and (e) recognizing international experience of faculty. These sub-committees were each chaired by a member of the International Council and were comprised of faculty, staff, and students from all colleges of the university.

The sub-committees met throughout the academic year for a total of eight months to complete the objectives. Following the sequence implied in the objectives, they (a) identified current programs and resources at the university, (b) reviewed strategic plans, proposals, and suggestions that had been made by members of the campus community related to improving international resources and efforts, and identified colleges and universities which were known for exemplary efforts to internationalize their respective institutions and collected information and ideas from those institutions, (c) listed barriers to internationalizing the university, and (d) made recommendations for specific actions to more fully internationalize the university.

The sub-committees were not asked to review literature on the need for internationalizing Penn State. But they used several supporting studies (Carlson & Widaman 1988; Council on International Educational Exchange 1988; Hembroff, Knott & Keefe 1990; Lambert 1989; Sell & Craig 1983). These studies supported efforts to internationalize university curricula, described benefits to students and institutions, and documented progress in efforts to internationalize universities during the 1970s and 1980s. They also noted the increasingly complex, shifting global environment which necessitates strategies to continue a flexible process of internationalization of American universities.

Each sub-committee submitted a written report in March 1994 to the International Council. These reports were merged into a single document, entitled "University-Wide Strategic Plan for International Education at The Pennsylvania State University," which was published by the International Council in April 1994. Hereafter, this document will be called "Strategic Plan" when referring to information drawn from it. Information which is not referenced from the Strategic Plan comes from the author's experience while serving on the sub-committee for internationalizing the curriculum and while serving as coordinator of the Minor in International Agriculture.
Study Findings

Penn State's International Resources

Penn State, like all land grant universities, has many international resources. The student body is composed of representatives of most countries of the world. The faculty have contributed to various major institutional projects and have engaged in individual study and consulting which have built international expertise. In 1994 Penn State and the University of Indiana were tied for the largest number of faculty, 14, selected for Fulbright Fellowships abroad for the 1994-95 academic year (Centre Daily Times, 1994). The University Office of International Programs has been recognized repeatedly for the breadth and quality of its programs. It maintains faculty resource inventories which list faculty by language competence and by work experience in other countries.

All 12 colleges of the university and most departments offer courses and academic programs which include an international emphasis. An informal count recently identified 655 courses with significant international content, meaning that at least 20% of the course content and class time was devoted to issues and skills which would make students more sensitive to diversity. Majors and minors are available in language studies, area studies, and international studies. An example is the minor in international agriculture which is administered by the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education. Any Penn State student can complete this minor with 18 credits approved by the coordinator of the minor. About half of the 35 current minors are in the College of Agricultural Sciences. The other half come from five other colleges. Students are required to complete two three-credit hour courses, Introduction to International Agriculture, and Problem Solving in Tropical Agriculture. The latter course includes an 11-day field trip to Puerto Rico for a problem-solving exercise.

Many other programs offer direct international experience. Over 600 Penn State undergraduates (6-7 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment) participated in 67 education abroad programs in 27 different countries in 1994. Forty-six of these programs were administered by Penn State and 21 were through the Council on International Education Exchange (Strategic Plan, p. 17).

Opportunities for Strengthening International Programs

Each sub-committee identified universities with exemplary international programs in order to suggest opportunities for improvements in internationalizing Penn State's offerings. Highlights of their findings are included in this section.

Due to the emphasis on international study of many liberal arts colleges in the United States and because they are smaller in size, as many as half of their students have participated in education abroad programs by the time they graduate. These colleges (a) provided several clearly focused options for study abroad, (b) publicized these options to potential students, (c) prevented unnecessary problems in logistics and the administration of the programs, and (d) assured that funds were sufficient to assist students who could not afford the costs.

One sub-committee studied ways and means by which 21 exemplary universities are internationalizing curricula. It found that 13 institutions have a central office for international education which coordinates and facilitates the development of an internationalized curriculum. Fourteen institutions offer an undergraduate major in international studies with required proficiency in a foreign language. Four universities require an education abroad experience for graduation. Nine universities offer international minors, four offer an option in international studies, and five have a certificate program in international studies (Strategic Plan, p. 19).

A 1990 survey of 183 universities disclosed that those institutions that recognize and reward the
faculty's work in international education have achieved a greater degree of internationalization than those that give little or no recognition and rewards for these initiatives. The survey further indicated that faculty tend to focus their research on projects to be pursued in the United States unless strong encouragement, recognition, and rewards are provided at each level of the university (Washington State University, 1990).

Apart from other exemplary universities in the United States, one of the sub-committees noted the ERASMUS program (European Regional Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students). This program has had some success in implementing exchanges of students at universities in the European Community (Strategic Plan, p. 17).

Barriers

An important barrier to internationalizing Penn State is institutional complexity -- many departments within the 12 colleges. This institutional complexity hampers communication and decision making. Administrative and academic turf delays or prevents solutions to problems which cut across real or perceived boundaries.

Funding is another obvious barrier. One concrete example at Penn State is the lack of funding to hire new faculty needed to increase the number of sections in the first two years of language instruction (Strategic Plan, p. 20).

Developing linkages with institutions in other countries takes time, patience, language skills, and competence in cross-cultural communication. These same requirements are necessary to maintain institutional linkages. When linkages become too unbalanced they tend to end. Exchange programs, for example, become unequal when one institution sends more students than it receives (Strategic Plan, p. 23).

Lack of vision can also be a barrier. This problem may arise from ethnocentrism, lack of international experience, or other demands of time and attention which divert individuals from considering international opportunities.

Administration of international programs can be a barrier. If individuals (including students, staff, faculty, and administrators) perceive that participating in a particular program may be an unnecessary waste of their time, they are not likely to participate. If students learn from other students about problems in planning travel to education abroad sites or about problems in getting foreign courses accepted by Penn State, they may be deterred from applying for education abroad programs.

Recommendations for Strengthening Penn State's International Programs

Recommendations emerging from each sub-committee's work took the form of specific actions to strengthen the university's international programs. Actions recommended are listed by the sub-committee which proposed them.

Internationalizing the curriculum.
1. Require strategic plans of each academic unit to include provisions for internationalizing its part of the curriculum.
2. Raise the requirements for foreign language competence and provide options for students and faculty to gain and demonstrate language competence.
3. Design international curricula using an issue-oriented approach rather than the traditional single-discipline method. Issues might include energy, war and peace, pollution, food, and population.
4. Create an "international programs advisory committee" for each college, branch campus and the Division of Continuing and Distance Education.
5. Designate a curriculum development coordinator to assist faculty and students in developing mini-grants to strengthen the international component of their teaching, research, extension, or study.
Internationalizing the campus climate for faculty, staff and students.
1. Develop a marketing communications plan that will cultivate an awareness among students, parents, faculty, and administration that global understanding is a critical element of the university.

2. Provide in-service education for advisors on counseling domestic students on the international resources of the university and assisting international students with their unique academic and social needs integrating into the academic life of the university, while taking advantage of their cross-cultural perspective.

3. Provide financial support for academic units and student organizations to plan and conduct symposia, colloquia, speakers, programs, and cultural activities focusing on particular cultures or international issues.

4. Organize a university assembly for a "global briefing" on current and future issues, events, conflicts, and "areas to watch."

5. Increase U.S. students' participation in international clubs on campus.

6. Strengthen the university's emphasis on cultural diversity by providing workshops on racial discrimination for faculty as well as students.

7. Educate international students and faculty to make full use of existing channels for conflict resolution.

8. Compile and distribute widely a resource inventory of students from other countries who are available as resources for academic studies and extracurricular activities.

9. Review the university's policies concerning insurance for international students to make certain that enrollment barriers are not excessive.

10. Enhance mentoring programs for new international faculty including visiting scholars.

11. Insure that central administration reminds academic administrators periodically of the importance of Penn State's international priorities and commitments.

Providing international experiences to undergraduates.

1. Create an international studies minor which is administered by an intercollegiate committee through a network of advisors in all academic units.

2. Hire more faculty with international experience in teaching, research, and service.

3. Provide information on education abroad opportunities during orientation for new students and faculty.

4. Expand the number of education abroad sites (cooperating universities) from 21 to 50 and give 20% of each undergraduate class direct experience on one of those sites making certain that the experiences are affordable and will not delay students' graduation.

5. Facilitate the transfer of credits more easily from institutions in other countries.

6. Take more advantage of international study and travel opportunities afforded through other Big Ten universities and consortia of which Penn State is a member.

Increasing international opportunities for graduate students and faculty.

1. Develop a program through the central library for acquisition of international curricular materials, and training in their use across the university.

2. Increase awareness and opportunities for study, exchange of scholars, and collaborative research with universities abroad and with neighboring universities which have unique educational programs or resources.

3. Organize field trips for faculty to international sites so they may develop a greater international perspective, with special attention given to faculty who have not had an international experience.

4. Include Cooperative Extension agents in international trips as resources and consultants.

5. Educate students and faculty about the availability and uses of foreign television broadcasts shown on campus.

6. Expand the number of personnel in the College Deans' offices who are responsible for coordinating international programs for the colleges.

7. Organize task forces to apply for major grants which will allow for interdisciplinary experimentation in various alternatives for...
international study, including internships, block semesters for motivated students and faculty, and job placement.

8. Appoint a task force to continue exploration of continuing barriers and emerging opportunities for international studies, research, and extension work.

Recognizing international experience of faculty.

1. Provide cash prizes for outstanding teaching, research and extension programs that focus on an international dimension.
2. Revise promotion and tenure guidelines to more clearly recognize work done on campus with an international focus as well as work done outside the country.
3. Establish a university award for the International Educator of the Year to recognize faculty accomplishments in this area.

These recommendations (Strategic Plan, pp. 35-103) were not prioritized. Since the committee which generated the recommendations had no authority for their implementation, and since implementation was anticipated by a wide variety of administrative units, priorities were left to the administrative units.

A Vision for International Education

As a result of this comprehensive effort to develop new initiatives to internationalize Penn State, a vision statement for international education was developed. In part, this vision comes from the deliberations which initiated the institution-wide study. In part, this vision comes from the work of the five sub-committees. The statement reads:

The Pennsylvania State University envisions university-wide, integrated programs with a strong international dimension as a central part of its commitment to cultural diversity. These programs will enable present and future members of the university community to benefit from multicultural emphases and from comparative perspectives and to initiate positive changes in their fields. This reciprocal vision is consonant with each of the university's overarching goals and will hasten its advancement as a world-class teaching and research university. By employing the Strategic Plan for International Education as a blueprint, Penn State can assume national and international leadership in educating all persons on its campuses to understand traditional political alignments and cultural values and to respond effectively to the continuous changes that characterize an interdependent world community (Strategic Plan, p. 7).

Notable in this vision statement, which mentions teaching and research, is the absence of any reference to extension programs. University outreach programs, including Cooperative Extension, are still not always recognized on the same level as the teaching and research missions of the land grant university. A vision of Penn State as a world-class university is incomplete without a full understanding of Penn State's mission as a land grant university.

Actions Taken to Further Internationalize Penn State

Since the initiation of this study, a number of steps described below have been taken to internationalize Penn State. Some steps were already under consideration before the study began. Some resulted from sub-committee deliberations prior to the publication of the report. Some have resulted from the Strategic Plan.

1. The Office of International Programs has requested that central administration establish an endowment of $22.76 million. This endowment would be divided in the following way:

Scholarships of grant-in-aid to realize the goal of 20% undergraduate participation in education abroad programs ($600,000 annual interest from a $12 million endowment); funds that will increase support for the research of faculty and
graduate students in other countries ($50,000 annual interest from a $1 million endowment); development of international exchanges ($210,000 annual interest from a $4.20 million endowment); and tuition grants and scholarships for international students ($275,000 annual interest from a $5.5 million endowment) (Strategic Plan, pp. 5-6).

2. The University Faculty Senate approved a semester of education abroad as an option for fulfilling Penn State's cultural diversity requirement for all undergraduates. The Senate also added "international programs" and service "abroad" to the promotion and tenure criteria for teaching and for service activities.

3. The University Future Committee, an institution-wide group charged with cutting unnecessary programs, eliminating overlap, and focusing existing programs for greater efficiency, endorsed the goal of providing an international experience for 20% of each undergraduate graduating class.

4. The College of Business Administration has made a semester of education abroad a requirement for a degree in international business and is incorporating an international experience into its MBA program. The College of Liberal Arts has approved a new minor in international studies which is open to students from all majors.

5. The International Council has established awards for internationalizing the university. Criteria were established and a procedure for the selection of candidates was announced. The first awards were made on February 17, 1995, at a university awards ceremony led by the Provost. Five undergraduates, five graduate students, and ten faculty members were designated as finalists and recognized for their contributions to the international efforts of Penn State. Two of the faculty finalists were from the College of Agriculture. The outstanding undergraduate student had a minor in International Agriculture.

6. A sub-committee was organized to prepare a proposal for funding under the Boren Bill for funding meritorious programs to provide language instruction and area studies enacted by the U.S. Congress. The committee met throughout the 1993-94 academic year until a proposal was ready for submission.

7. Each department at Penn State has been directed to "benchmark" its efforts to internationalize its programs based on different institutions identified by the department as "best-in-class." The University Office of International Programs has identified five institutions, University of California at Berkeley, Michigan State, and the universities of Indiana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin for comparison. This office has also determined six criteria for benchmarking.

8. A University Advisory Committee on Internationalizing the Curriculum was appointed by the International Council to recommend ways to implement the University-Wide Strategic Plan for International Education. Its first report after a year of deliberations was submitted on May 12, 1995. It included (a) suggestions for increasing language competence of students and
faculty, (b) a recommendation to couple foreign language majors with discipline-based minors or majors, (c) a suggestion that college deans promote international studies and foreign language courses and that they consider making foreign language a requirement for graduation, (d) specific ideas for adding an international dimension to current courses, (e) a request for mini grants for international course development, (f) a recommendation for freshmen seminars centering on international topics, and (g) ideas to provide annual competitive fellowships to aid undergraduate students who wish to participate in the education abroad program (Salper, 1995).

Other steps necessary for implementing the subcommittees' recommendations are also under way. These include (a) enlisting Penn State alumni from geographically underrepresented areas to assist in recruitment, (b) increasing housing on campus for married international students, (c) enhancing English language support services including additional instructors and staff, (d) increasing financial aid for tuition grants, and scholarship funds, and (e) increasing sustained interaction between international students and their U.S. counterparts (Strategic Plan, pp. 115-116).

Conclusions

Actions recommended for internationalizing Penn State are relevant for all land-grant universities as well as other colleges in the United States and abroad. The choice of priorities and the manner of implementation of the recommendations will vary among institutions. The list of recommendations, however, provides a checklist of actions to consider and can also serve as an evaluation tool for other universities to assess their current state as an "internationalized university." Penn State's experience can thus save other institutions valuable time needed to generate a completely new set of recommendations.

The Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) would be an appropriate forum for the discussion of the various recommendations. Information on similar efforts to internationalize other universities is not generally available. AIAEE could help individuals from these universities to identify specific implementation steps and to share successes and failures in their implementation.

The steps outlined in this paper are needed to address many of the shortcomings of U.S. higher education identified by Simon (1980). These include the distressing statistics that (a) 40% of American scholars cannot conduct research abroad in the language of their host country, (b) only five percent of our college graduates reach a meaningful proficiency in a second language, despite the fact that many come from bilingual homes, (c) the United States continues to be one of the few nations in the world that permits its students to graduate from both high school and college without having studied a foreign language, (d) the United States is the only major power with no language requirements for those entering its foreign services, and (e) no more than five percent of school teachers in the United States have taken a course with significant international content or have had professional contact with another culture for the equivalent of an academic semester. These shortcomings are corroborated by the author's personal experience in that the land grant university has been labeled a "weak partner" for international development projects over the past two decades by U.S. government agencies.

The case for internationalizing education is aptly advocated by Tannaz Rahman and W. LaMarr Kopp (1992) in the following description of world interdependence:

We are more aware today than ever before that we live in a global community, in an interdependent world. Forces that directly affect our lives and determine our decisions are shaped by persons and events far away from us in places we have never seen or visited, places that just a short while ago seemed as distant and remote as Timbuktu.
Yet we have come to realize that the problems we face, the challenges we meet, the solutions we seek, cannot be determined by us and by our nation acting unilaterally. The gravest issues we face are essentially all international issues requiring, demanding, global cooperation, centrally-focused initiatives, and a worldwide commitment.

References


