**The Global University:**

**Is It Transformation or a Branding Strategy?**

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Internationalization in higher education is not new. In reviewing the history of internationalization, many scholars have noted that universities have been international institutions since their medieval European origins, attracting students and faculty from countries all over the world. In the United States, many institutions of higher education have been involved in international activities since their founding. For example, two years after its founding in 1880, the University of Southern California accepted its first international students from Japan. There are numerous other examples of how U.S. colleges and universities have attracted students from overseas, developed programs in foreign counties and even built and operated campuses “offshore.” However, there is considerable debate about the educational and institutional impact of these efforts: Are U.S. colleges and universities truly international in their scope and education or are they still place based but with extensions in various countries? Have institutional missions and values been transformed or are international activities simply branding strategies to increase enrollments and revenues? My remarks today will address the influence of globalization efforts in U.S. higher education institutions by looking at three selected case studies. Based on these studies, I will then answer the question posed in the title of my speech: Is the global university a real transformation of the traditional university or merely a branding strategy?

**Internationalization and Globalization**

First, let me explain what I mean by the terms “internationalization” and “globalization.” As U.S. colleges and universities have extended their outreach overseas, these terms are often used interchangeably. Recently, scholars have begun to differentiate between these two concepts and to see them as leading to quite different outcomes. Although internationalization and globalization are often used interchangeably, they are quite different and in many ways opposed. One school of thought, championed by Peter Scott, argues that internationalization reflects a world-order determined by nation states and “Great Power rivalry,” and that the recruitment of international students, staff exchanges, and partnerships between universities in different countries are all conditioned to a significant extent by this geopolitical context. On the other hand, globalization reflects both the global competitiveness between great blocks of nations as well as the intensified collaboration through a global division of labor.

Another comparison between these two concepts defines globalization as the economic, political and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education systems toward greater international involvement, while internationalization is seen as a set of activities that involve how an institution becomes global.

Yet a third school of thought, with Armstrong as its major proponent, looks to corporations and compares their global corporate practices to the efforts of U.S. colleges and universities to become involved in international activities. Globalization, as used in the corporate world, most often describes a process in which modularization of production from conception through sales is joined with state-of-the-art technology and decreasing national trade barriers to enable a global optimization of production and distribution. This powerful approach, in which different parts of the product cycle can be carried out in different locations using the best providers to be found globally, has fundamentally changed much of the business world.

By this reasoning, then, much of what is happening today in U.S. higher education does not fit this globalization model and is much more akin to the older “hub-and-spoke” model of industrial internationalization; that is, an industrial model that focuses on home-country manufacturing often with international supply of raw materials and with international distribution. Similarly, most of the traditional cross-border activities of institutions of higher education involve a home institution that sits at the center of activities in which students and faculty are sent out to foreign partner organizations to briefly study or do research, but then return to the home institution. Individuals are changed, but the institution, its practices and student outcomes are not.

Whatever school of thought is subscribed to, to be truly competitive in today’s economic and educational environment, U.S. colleges and universities need to move beyond international models to more globalized models. In the U.S. today, a relatively small number of higher education institutions have moved beyond the hub-and-spoke model to what might be called the multi-national mode by setting up offshore degree granting branches and programs, often in partnership with some local university. For example, a recent study by the American Council on Education noted that ten major U.S. research institutions including Carnegie Mellon, Cornell, Duke, and Johns Hopkins University, all have postsecondary ventures in Singapore. Eight major U.S. institutions have postsecondary ventures in Hong Kong, nine U.S. institutions are in China, four are in India and five in Qatar.

True globalization takes place when *modularization* happens – the ability to find partners somewhere in the world who can provide needed modules at the desired price and quality. In U.S. research universities, there is the increasingly popular and effective notion of outsourcing parts of large, complex research problems in such areas as physics as well as the recent phenomenon in U.S. land grant universities of twinning or offshoring the first one or two years of the typical undergraduate education program to a foreign partner. These are examples of globalization in higher education, as opposed to international activities like study abroad.

To move from an international approach to a global approach represents significant opportunities but also significant risks for all colleges and universities. Global opportunities and challenges will multiply in the future and those institutions that have thought seriously about their missions in a global context will be able to respond effectively. However, to meet the intense challenges of globalization and to match the volatility of current economic, political and cultural factors, institutions of higher education worldwide will have to develop a new capacity not simply to build alliances with other institutions, largely on their own terms, but to re-invent and reengineer themselves; to compromise their own institutional traditions in order to allow a new configuration of “knowledge” institutions to develop.

**Institutional Attempts at Globalization**

As I stated earlier, institutions of higher education in the United States as well as in almost every other country have been involved in internationalization or some globalization for many years with varying results. However, in the past 20 years, internationalization initiatives have ballooned, moving beyond being mostly about the movement students across borders to activities that include the movement of teachers and whole institutions into overseas markets, joint degree programs offered by institutions in different economies, and distance learning programs.

This rush by American colleges and universities to internationalize or globalize is similar to the rush by many of the same institutions of higher education to develop distance learning programs in the 1990’s. For example, Columbia University created Fathom.com in 2001 which offered digital content from Columbia and 13 other academic and cultural institutions. Its aim was to become the main street for knowledge and education, serving a worldwide audience of business and individual users. However, after losing millions of dollars and failing to develop and execute a viable business plan, Columbia University closed the portal.

Columbia’s experience is similar to that of other major research and comprehensive universities as they moved into distance learning without a well defined business plan or agreed upon objectives. The announcement last spring that George Mason University, one of the first U.S. institutions of higher education to open a branch campus in the United Arab Emirates, was closing its campus there without ever having graduated a single student is an example of how what appeared to be a good idea at the time can quickly turn sour. In announcing the decision to close the campus, George Mason’s Provost, Peter N. Stearns, noted that their partners in the UAE changed their policy with regard to the amount of subsidy they were willing to provide. It’s fair to say this was about the souring economy. Other universities, such as Carnegie Mellon, Texas A&M University and New York University, have also quickly moved to open branch campuses abroad and are now facing similar challenges. The failure to develop feasible academic and financial plans upon which to build solid academic programs threatens to slow the development of truly global universities. This failure has become especially acute in the current world-wide financial crisis.

It has become painfully clear to many U.S. institutions that the Arab Gulf region where money was thought to be no object is now having trouble sustaining its investments in higher education. While globalization efforts with Asian institutions have moved more slowly, financial considerations remain the biggest barrier to overcome. In Latin America, lack of governmental spending and low levels of foreign language proficiency throughout the region remain major challenges to greater international or global activities at the university level.

**Three Case Studies of Recent Attempts at Globalization**

So what has occurred within U.S. institutions of higher education to become global? For the next few minutes I will detail the efforts of three institutions of higher learning – one community college, one large public land grant research institution and one private elite research university to develop programs that are meant to be more global than international in nature. These three cases offer different examples of senior college and university leaders implementing strategic global initiatives, but they are not necessarily representative of all global efforts. However, there are few systematic studies asking the question, “So what difference do such global programs make?”

Case Study #1: Integrating Globalization into Institutional Mission

The first case reports on the efforts of an elite research institution which is part of a large state system of higher education to become a global university. It examined the senior leadership at a land-grant research university in the United States whose efforts went into integrating globalization into its institutional mission, developing a global partnership and engaging in various overseas programs. This case study is important because it focuses on the opportunities and challenges many large public land grant institutions face as they try to globalize their university in what has become a difficult and turbulent economic and political environment, both nationally and internationally.

University of Waterside or UW, which is a pseudonym, is a land-grant research institution where the president incorporated globalization into the institutional mission, aspiring to be a global research institution. In 2005, UW’s senior leaders created a global initiative that called for the development of partnerships with Chinese universities. As a result UW established an overseas graduate program in Beijing, China, where students and faculty from UW and University of Agriculture, China or UAC, also a pseudonym, would collaborate on scientific advancements in agricultural research. The main overseas research partnership and center between UW and University of Agriculture was called the International Center for Ecology and Sustainability.

The UW-UAC Center is different from the typical study abroad program such as a summer exchange program because UW has physically set-up a facility offshore with China on the UAC campus, creating more permanency than a typical exchange/study aboard program. This arrangement allows UW and UAC faculty and students to collaborate at a designated center on the UAC campus, away from UW’s home campus in the U.S., and to develop new knowledge and research advancements in the area of agriculture, particularly in biological sciences and biotechnology for the betterment of both cultures.

As is the case with many large public educational institutions, there are many international programs and activities at UW, most of them isolated from one another and lacking an integrated theme. This case study demonstrates how many challenges face institutions as they attempt to become truly global. These challenges include 1) lack of institutional focus, 2) minimal senior administrative support, 3) little coordination and communication, 4) lack of international curriculum, 5) limited funding and staffing, and 6) minimal exploitation of international partnerships across campus. These factors were further complicated by the change in presidential leadership during the critical time period when the global initiatives were getting off the drawing board.

It is instructive to consider this case because of the senior leadership’s goal to create a global research university by making specific changes in its mission and by developing specific global initiatives such as the overseas graduate program in Beijing, China. However, while specific programs were identified and initiated, the university has not been successful in becoming a global research university. In effect, it changed the wording of its mission but has not been able to re-invent or reengineer itself or to free itself from its traditions in order to allow a new configuration to emerge. The university also failed to effectively communicate this initiative to either internal constituents or external stakeholders, so it failed as both a transformational initiative and as a branding strategy.

Case Study #2: Global Executive MBA

In the second case study, a highly ranked business school was studied. U.S. business schools have been leaders in developing joint and collaborative programs with their non-U.S. counterparts throughout Europe and the Pacific Rim. Business schools have also taken the initiative in building campuses outside the U.S. For example, the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business was the first U.S. business school to establish permanent campuses on three continents: Asia, Europe and North America. Thus, business schools have a longer track record than other professional schools in the international arena and thus provide a good backdrop to examine the effectiveness of various types of globalization efforts.

This second case study looked at how leadership at one elite private university’s business school responded to globalization and implemented a strategic initiative aimed at the internationalization of teaching and research programs, called a collaborative Global Executive MBA (GEMBA, a pseudonym) program with a Chinese university.

The move to develop and implement this collaborative GEMBA program was consistent with and supported by the larger university’s strategic goal to be a truly *global university.* Nonetheless, the decision was also defensive in nature – that is - the need to keep up with other top business schools. The school’s leadership felt that an increasingly turbulent, rapidly shifting environment requires contemporary organizations to learn better and faster just to survive. As the school looked at the reputation it had already established through developing international activities and the increasing activity of other major business schools in this area, the school’s senior leadership believed it needed to move quickly to partner with what was becoming a limited number of available but prestigious Chinese graduate business programs. For example, in the past the school had been considered a leader in developing an integrated program focused on short-term educational tours to the Pacific Rim. However, over the decade, this program was imitated and leapfrogged by other business schools, thus forcing the school to move to the next level of international programming, without clearly articulating program goals and objectives.

As a defensive move, the program had a bit of a *learn by doing* flavor to it. As one faculty member stated, “I didn’t know what global companies were doing and neither did my colleagues. The only way to learn about this was to go abroad and see what they do. Why not take a group of students and educate them on what is happening in other parts of the world.” Further, the program in this case study, as well as similar programs at other institutions, were started in an era of economic growth and prosperity where major international corporations were willing to fund the cost for their employees to participate in these executive MBA programs. Often, little thought was given in advance to an exit strategy if the flow of well funded potential students evaporated, as has happened in the last 12 months.

This case study is a good example of the forces that drive the development of educational programs and some of the pitfalls in moving from less risky programs like taking students on short-term study tours, to more risky programs that demand increased financial and personnel resources. It is also clear that this GEMBA initiative has not influenced other academic programs within the business school. There is little if any interaction between the students in GEMBA program in China and students in other Executive MBA programs in this same school. There is little evidence of a global curriculum or that other graduate programs have changed as a result of the collaborative effort with the Chinese university. In fact, the faculty members in this program are all from the U.S. institution who fly to China to deliver the program. The Chinese university is little more than a site for the program and its faculty members have little input into the curriculum and not many teaching responsibilities. As with the first case study, there is little evidence that this professional school has developed any new capacity but has simply built an alliance with another institution, and largely on its own terms. So this international program is not global by either Scott’s or Armstrong’s definitions.

Case Study #3: The Global Citizenship Initiative

The first two case studies focused on a four year institution and a graduate program within a four year institution. The third case study sought to understand how leadership at one community college had responded to globalization by implementing an initiative aimed at “Global Citizenship” as a student outcome. Specifically, the global outcomes identified were 1) the influence of globalization institution-wide, 2) student attitudes towards civic engagement and citizenship, 3) changes in university structures and missions, and 4) approaches to organizational change. Within the first year of his arrival on campus, the president of this community college recognized the importance of both Armstrong and Scott’s imperative that the missions of higher education institutions must be refocused and that they must lead to the re-invention and reengineering of themselves and to compromise their own traditional ways of doing business in order to allow a new configuration of “knowledge” institutions to develop. Thus, as a newly installed leader, the president of PCC (a pseudonym) quickly moved to revise the college’s mission by adding a serious international dimension. Like the first case study, this global effort was begun at the presidential level and the president understood the need to change the words of the institution’s mission statement.

The revised mission of the college demonstrated the changes taking place in the community college sector, such as a move away from a commitment to the local community and demonstration of a commitment to a larger global community. Coupled with PCC related changes to its faculty development programs, its curriculum and extra-curricular activities, the change in mission represents a significant transformation for a well-established community college. This president recognized something that the leadership of UW did not – there must be more than a change in the wording of a mission statement to support the movement toward creating a globally focused institution.

The global citizenship initiative is now in its third year and it is currently facing some of the same challenges faced by many higher education institutions as they try to become truly global – financial constraints and lack of capacity. Financial constraints have become the greatest challenge facing leaders in an attempt to embed global citizenship into the culture of the college. As might be expected in a tough financial environment for public community colleges, some faculty members at PCC are now questioning the rationale of spending money on what is still considered the president’s special project.

Building capacity within the college, that is, creation of infrastructure, processes, curriculum, and faculty skills and abilities, is also a challenge when financial resources are limited. Most importantly, building capacity within the institution is critical to getting broad based faculty buy-in. As one of the college’s key faculty involved in this initiative stated, “One of the challenges is having everybody see that global means them. It’s not everybody else; it means that everyone has a stake in this change too. Even if they’re teaching math or computer science, it’s stretching to see how to include this perspective.”

**Summary and Conclusion**

These three case studies are instructive examples about the challenges of transforming traditional colleges and universities to be global. My remarks reported on the attempts of three different types of institutions of higher education to become more global. While three single case studies cannot be representative of all the internationalization and globalization efforts undertaken by institutions of higher education, they are illustrative of significant types of global programs. Scholars and educational leaders recognize that the old view of internationalization is giving way to a new and broader focus on the processes of globalization. The cases I have just described show the difficulties involved in making that transition. Changing the words in a mission statement, developing overseas research institutes and implementing collaborative degree programs by themselves do not change the basic local nature of an institution. Only when these words, activities and programs force all institutional players to re-invent and reengineer themselves and to act seriously about their mission in a global context will real globalization take place. Perhaps the question of transformation or branding should be re-phrased as a statement. The global university requires all constituents to examine how students should be educated in the 21st century.

Thank you.