

Conference on Global Challenges and U.S. Higher Education: National Needs and Policy
Implications

January 23-25, 2003, Duke University

Breakout Session: Recruitment and Training in International Education in the
Professional Schools

Paper: Gilles Bousquet, University of Wisconsin-Madison “Back to the Future:
Internationalization in Professional Schools”

Presiding: Donald L. Stevens, University of Colorado at Denver

Rapporteur: Wolfgang Schlör, University of Pittsburgh

The discussion began with a note on methodological issues: Due to the lack of other empirical data, a number of studies presented at the conference relying on web sites to draw conclusions about the internationalization of programs and institutional missions. However, these kinds of sources do not tell us about the “trajectory” of internationalization. Also, we are often not aware of the context in which these statements are posted on the web – do we know enough about how the rhetoric of internationalization is used in benchmarking and in positioning for institutional resources?

Another thread of the discussion focused on the diversity of professional schools which limits the extent to which we can make generalized recommendations. Among the commonalities, most professional schools share a tight curriculum with little freedom for non-core activities, and most professional students are relatively much more focused in their educational pursuit than non-professional students. However, the type of knowledge offered differs widely among the professions and with it the kinds of international relationships and activities that are part of internationalization efforts. Moreover, each profession has a distinct constituency with its own demands. Therefore, it is not practical to use just one internationalization approach for all professional schools.

Related to the above, it was pointed out that both the breakout session paper and the related plenary paper looked at a limited sample of professions (engineering, business and medicine in the case of the breakout session paper). Agriculture was not included in either paper, nor was there a participant representing a school of agriculture in the breakout session. Journalism, another profession with high international relevance, was not included, either.

The discussion presented three models of internationalization of professional schools. One model is represented by the CIBER approach: Internationalization is promoted through investments in programs at selected outstanding schools. This approach generally tends to preserve the segregation of disciplines. A second model is based on collaboration between area and international studies programs and the professional schools. This approach maximizes the interdisciplinary benefits and can create exciting dialogues about global and international issues within and across professions and disciplines. A third model aims to have an impact on the majority of schools that are without CIBER-type programs or National Resource Centers. Participants pointed to the successful outreach work done by NRCs, as well as the regional consortia led by CIBERs.

Discussions about collaboration between professional schools and area/international studies programs often focus on the service role of the latter, for example in providing customized, “professional” language programs. While important for the internationalization of professional schools, participants cautioned about the ramifications of placing too much of an emphasis on this service component. For

example, a priority on service might justify a shift towards adjunct faculty at the expense of tenured/tenure stream faculty lines.

A number of discussion contributions focused on the conditions that enable change towards internationalization. For example, demand for curricular change from outside constituencies is an important factor. At the same time, there is often a considerable lag between demand manifestation and actual change: According to anecdotal evidence presented by one participant, engineering firms have been looking for more internationally trained engineers, yet most engineering schools have been slow to adapt their curricula. Many medical students are seeking international experiences as part of their training, yet they are forced to arrange for those without help from their medical schools. Nevertheless, the existence of this demand is ultimately expected to lead to change.

The availability of champions for internationalization is another important condition, especially in those cases where individual faculty or administrators embark on internationalization efforts. Champions can be found among board members, alumni, or in other parts of the institution. Examples were given of a university board requesting information on internationalization progress from certain professional schools, in turn boosting a faculty member's already existing efforts. Another example described how a CIBER provided financial assistance and advice to a faculty member in the architecture school, ultimately leading to the creation of a new international program in that school despite lack of internal support.

It was pointed out that there are diverging trends in the internationalization of professional schools. While specialized international professional programs are

developing ever longer study and internship abroad programs to provide deep international knowledge for their students, mainstream professional programs insist on customized, short-duration foreign study tours as well as abbreviated language courses.

It was also noted that collaborations between area and international studies programs and professional schools are most successful when the initiative to integrate broader cultural issues and global concerns into the curriculum comes from the professional schools.

In times of budget cuts, those programs that are relatively more institutionalized – such as joint degree programs – are more likely to survive, because they have established constituencies, and they have become part of the institution’s revenue stream.

Ironically, the large number of foreign students in some professional schools is sometimes used as a reason – or excuse – for not addressing the internationalization of the curriculum. However, more should be done to utilize these foreign students, for example, to help in the internationalization of domestic students, or to help US businesses trying to enter foreign markets. More generally, foreign students should be included in an expanded definition of US international education policy.

One participant pointed out that, because citizens of other countries tend to know much about the US than US citizens know about other countries, the US in general and US businesses in particular are at a serious disadvantage in negotiations and other interactions. US students and citizens are not used to thinking bi-culturally, despite – or because of – the strong internal diversity of the US. This disadvantage puts the US at risk, a fact that should be used in making the case for internationalizing the professions.

The discussion also turned on the issue of an international public service role for some professional schools such as engineering, public health, and law. An enhanced role for the public service mission of these professions could build a new bridge between professional schools and international/area studies.

The group agreed on the following recommendations:

1. Provide more resources for professional school undergraduates to acquire foreign languages, in particular Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL). This could be achieved, for example, by setting aside a certain percentage of existing grant programs for this purpose. It was argued that the focus of current programs facilitating LCTL acquisition focuses on graduate students, often too late in an individual's career to find the time to acquire the necessary language skills.
2. Create new incentives for collaboration between area studies programs and professional schools. Again, this could be achieved quite easily by setting priorities to that effect in existing programs benefiting area and international studies programs.
3. Provide opportunities for foreign students in the professional schools to take coursework alongside US students in political science, history, and other non-professional courses, including on globalization. This would provide foreign professional students with a better understanding of US society, politics, and culture, but also with insights into US perspectives on globalization. Moreover, it could help create a truly diverse debate on globalization on US campuses.
4. Encourage more empirical research on the usefulness of study abroad and other international experiences in the professional schools. The data gained from such

research not only would aid in developing assessment strategies for such programs, but assist faculty and administrators in their efforts to convince professional schools' leaders to internationalize curricula.