

**CONFERENCE AT DUKE UNIVERSITY  
GLOBAL CHALLENGES & U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION**

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***Higher Education and the New International Imperative***

My role in speaking today is to set a broad context for the conference. As a long-term professor of geography, a medium-term chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and still a short-term president of the American Council of Education, I bring three quite distinct perspectives to my task. If I have been able to accomplish anything in Washington over the last 15 months, it is because the staff of ACE have made me look good. Several other higher education associations collaborate with ACE and also contribute to our effectiveness possible. It really is federalism at work.

I thought I would begin by saying three things about myself because, in setting a context for my remarks, I think you need to know whether I have a bias or something in my past that explains my point of view. First, I was educated as a geographer. I was taught geography from the age of five and all of my degrees are in geography. As an undergraduate, almost all my courses were in geography, but when I arrived at Wisconsin to earn my graduate degree, I was virtually prohibited from taking any geography because of the great commitment in the United States to general education. My graduate education exposed me to sociology, statistics, anthropology, and history, so my multidisciplinary commitments are actually of American origin. When the Under-Secretary last night said that people don't know where Afghanistan is located, I realized that I first learned where Afghanistan was at the age of seven. Geography was never taught out of context; Afghanistan was an example of a buffer state, a state with very few resources but that had an important geo-political role, because it represented the boundary at that time between British and Russian imperialism. The geography I was taught was very contextual—places were not simply names on a map. It was how you applied your knowledge of those places that

constituted geography. Unfortunately, I think that in the United States, geography is degraded to “place names” because those who teach geography are rarely trained in geography. And, of course, after World War II, there was a remarkable negativism toward the value and depth of geography, which gave it a relatively low profile within our elite universities. In fact, two things in world culture have never successfully spread through the United States but flourish elsewhere: soccer and geography! Therefore, I come at the issues of international studies as somebody for whom area studies and global interdependency have been part of my conceptual structure since I was five years old. When I see people reinventing the subject I love, I am sometimes a little chagrined because their efforts are usually innocent of a rich and long geographic tradition.

Second, I was a university chancellor during a period in which the disciplinary basis of academic programs was the subject of debate. It was distinct from the more usual view of the university as an aggregation of specialized excellence. I still remember in my early days as chancellor reflecting that two excellent departments really ought to collaborate with each other, but instead maintained a Darwinian approach to sharing resources. I argued that civil wars of excellence are just as degrading as civil wars of democracy. A university needed to connect points of excellence not only naturally in the form of faculty collaboration, but also as part of the strategic character of university operations. That was one of the happy events of my tenure in the 1990s at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. We did not create international studies or new areas of biology; rather, we took existing strengths and connected them into something that made more sense for the institution’s future.

Third, my new role at ACE, which began four days after 9/11, immediately challenged me to lead higher education’s response to that absolutely catastrophic political dilemma, which was also a terrible human catastrophe. What also struck me was the sense in which my background as a former immigrant and now a citizen affected my own responses. I remember that in one of the congressional hearings, it was clear how difficult it was going to be to attract the attention of those at the hearing. I announced that I would like to declare a conflict of interest because I had come to the United States on a foreign student visa. At that point, I captured everyone’s attention.

## OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES SINCE 1945

Let me move on to today's agenda. Permit me very briefly to tell you some things you already know. Since World War II, we have had a fluctuating but overall very good experience receiving federal support for several key areas of research and teaching. Science and medicine received fairly consistent federal support, but international education was less fortunate. Another key area receiving support was the Fulbright program, of which I was a beneficiary. The Fulbright program was a remarkable part of the apparatus of international exchange in the 1960s and '70s. Today, it is difficult to receive a Fulbright and we have to rethink how to increase support for that program.

Since 1950, we also have seen an era of expanded area studies programs, which are so well represented here. Multidisciplinary expertise within the humanities and the social sciences has been applied to those areas of the world that are of strategic national importance. A few institutions provided very good coverage of several areas; perhaps too few universities developed too many centers and the diffusion of the scholarship from those area centers was perhaps not extensive enough. I think that this high level of concentration has begun to change but we clearly need more institutions that have either in-depth or comprehensive foreign area expertise. I think the race to emphasize the number of centers that an institution has deflects attention from the need to build broader national capacity.

Language training, as you know, had its heyday in the '50s and '60s, particularly during the Cold War. We are now facing a new crisis, because a greater number of less commonly taught languages are currently in demand. In the past, we were able to pool our resources and successfully teach key languages at the graduate level. Despite the dedication of key faculty at certain institutions, the undergraduate curriculum and the degree to which it fed back into the high school curriculum was decidedly modest.

Finally, I would argue that the period from 1950 to 1999 was one of disciplinary consolidation rather than of programmatic integration. Our institutions are organized vertically, as separate disciplines and professions. It was much easier to create a new unit than to merge old ones. Most activities and most funded projects created new units and rarely made possible the integration of

existing programs. In many respects, the growth of area studies, while integrating disciplinary approaches, created new units that were often isolated from one another and from mainstream programs.

## RECENT TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

Let me discuss a few trends that we have witnessed over the past decade. First, many of our professional schools extended their teaching and research programs overseas. Specifically, business, engineering, and medicine not only educated many foreign students in the United States, but also explored and established a variety of academic programs abroad. The international agenda of most institutions was campus-wide and, in some respects, area studies became somewhat marginalized. Many new players in international studies and programs abroad were often ignorant of area studies faculty or, for that matter, the critical role of Title VI. Many distinguished and long-established area studies programs were not visible or influential at the campus level and, perhaps as increasingly specialized activities, they had developed some of the intellectual narrowness that we associate with the discipline-specific approach they had been designed to avoid. Clearly, the international focus of campus strategies had shifted from support of area studies research and programs to often self-supporting educational ventures that did not usually include deep exposure to or knowledge of local cultures and languages.

A second development was the rise of internationally mixed research teams in many of our science departments. Particularly in several branches of engineering, information science, and several life sciences, almost all research teams included foreign faculty, visiting scholars, and students. The graduate and postdoctoral activities of most large research universities became nodal points within a global system of faculty and student recruitment. As a result, the balance of foreign student and faculty exchange between the United States and the rest of the world became very asymmetrical. The numbers of Americans going abroad — either scholars or students — remained steady, whereas the number of foreign scholars coming to the United States grew dramatically. Many came for lengthy periods of time and often completed advanced degrees. Some stayed on either as guests or as immigrants and eventually citizens. This growth of the foreign student and faculty proportions of our academic communities also changed the focus of internationalization away from area studies.

A third development was, in many respects, an outgrowth of the role of the United States as the predominant destination for international scholars. English became the dominant language for scholarly communications. Before 1960, English, French, and, to some degree, Russian were key languages. Consequently, second-language acquisition became less necessary for native speakers of English and, for the rest of the world, English became the “lingua franca.” Consequently, intercultural communication and understanding has tended to occur in only one direction. Despite a new and growing role for international initiatives within institutional strategies, the critical role of area studies was often obscure and our diminished scholarly capacity in several critical regions of the world became all too apparent in the aftermath of 9/11.

#### SOME IMPLICATIONS OF 9/11 FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

A more immediate reaction to 9/11 was, however, an anxiety about foreign students and the potential security threat that they might present. Investigations into the foreign student visa system became a focus of congressional attention when, in fact, the focus should more appropriately have been on visas in general. As you probably know, less than 2 percent of all visas are issued to students, and most of those are issued for much longer periods than visitor visas. The higher education associations were able to broaden the discussion and Congress now has a clear sense that there are management limitations at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) as well as interdepartmental limitations to how the U.S. Department of State and the INS collaborate.

I do want to stress, however, that most nations have more elaborate reporting requirements than the United States does, and that genuine security issues do exist. Indeed, during the height of the Cold War, procedures were quite strict. I myself came to the United States on an exchange visitor visa in 1960. I was interviewed at the U.S. Embassy in London and it was perfectly clear that they wanted to know a great deal about me. Of particular concern were matters of health and politics. When I arrived in the United States, along with 350 other Fulbright recipients, we were looked at with grace and courtesy, but it was clear that people were seriously examining our documents. And during my three-year stay in Madison, I was required to report my current address the INS every January 1. None of these procedures bothered me. And when I had

completed my Ph.D., the University of Wisconsin presumably reported that the terms of my visa had been fulfilled and soon thereafter I was asked to give my departure plans.

We must be sensitive to the history of immigration and visa policies as we view the problems provoked by 9/11. At the height of the Cold War, a reasonable bureaucratic protection of the national interest was broadly accepted. Over the past two decades, however, the older monitoring system collapsed under the weight of a vast expansion of international travel and exchange and the failure of Congress to fund the modernization of procedures. After the first World Trade Center bombing, there was a sense of a collapse of our capacity to control our boundaries and Congress did initiate a program to monitor student visas. The higher education community expressed concern about the deterrent effects on foreign students and about INS's competency to manage a monitoring system. After 9/11, all parties have attempted to support and influence the implementation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Despite continuing problems with SEVIS, it is probably our last best chance to resolve legitimate security interests and scholarly exchange. More serious problems continue for exchange visitors who come for a shorter time and who have less lead time to apply for a visa. Tragically, distinguished scientists and artists often experience delays in receiving permission to enter the United States, when their purpose is to come for a short visit as part of a scientific team or an artistic performance.

Another issue of great concern to the scholarly community is the development of a list of sensitive courses and programs from which foreign students and visitors are to be prohibited. Access restrictions already exist for both foreign and native-born scholars whenever research is declared "classified." If access to unclassified courses and programs is to be regulated, it would be preferable to deny the visa on the basis of security concerns related to the course of study rather than to have our institutions monitor their students.

Recent FBI requests for confidential student information also have conflicted with academic values and all too frequently this information already exists in the public domain. Another serious implication of security concerns is the development of sophisticated methods to monitor Internet traffic. Our librarians are familiar with the constitutional issues involved in obtaining the

circulation records of specific, presumably security-sensitive, works. This focus on student and scholar visa regulations has the unintended consequence of narrowing potential interception of terrorist threats that are more likely to come from other segments of society.

## SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE AND INITIATIVES

Despite the serious and occasionally antagonistic tone of these discussions of the security risks posed by foreign students, almost all interested parties agree on the value of international exchange and international expertise. In all the meetings in which I have participated, especially with members of Congress, those with strong opinions on the need to strengthen and enforce student visa requirements expressed support for international exchange programs. There was also general recognition that expertise in foreign languages and cultures, knowledge of biological and nuclear hazards, and other knowledge of value in the new geopolitical environment were heavily concentrated within higher education institutions. In a sense, universities were a latent source of critical intellectual capital with only hypothetical value before 9/11, but of enormous significance since that tragic date. Clearly, many new issues will challenge the delicate balance between national security and academic freedom.

Despite broad support for international exchange and international programs, we have relatively little data on either the magnitude of this support or the availability of appropriate curricula. ACE has conducted several surveys of the public, faculty, and students, discerning their views of international education, both before and after 9/11. (The full range of before and after data is available in your packages.) Overall, the data confirm some of the serious limitations of our international programs. Among the most definitive findings are the continuing decline in language study and second-language acquisition, and the relatively low proportion of U.S. students who study abroad for any significant period of time. I was delighted to hear my colleague, President Keohane, describe her commitment to study abroad and state that approximately one-half of Duke University undergraduates have some experience abroad. In fact, our surveys indicate approximately one-half of all students express a desire to study abroad when they enter college, but less than 5 percent actually fulfill that aim. Many programs abroad have become abbreviated and others are now conducted in English, which, I think, diminishes their educational value.

Our surveys also revealed a decidedly limited and often vague level of curricular commitment to international general education. Many institutions have general education requirements for international studies. But exactly what is intended by these requirements? Do we mean exposure to one major foreign area or do we mean an understanding of the world as global village, as an interacting system of trade, as a mosaic of cultures, or perhaps all of these perspectives? At what stage in undergraduate curricula should this exposure occur? Should it be more than a broad survey course during the freshman year and include deep knowledge of language and culture as an integral part of a major or minor requirement? There are, of course, some remarkable examples of exemplary international programs and we need to publicize these best practices more effectively.

Our surveys clearly document a high level of public support for international education. This support is not, however, converted to political outcomes. There is clearly a mismatch between, on the one hand, the suspicious tone of some newspaper editorials or the incendiary television shows that tend to exploit unusual circumstances and, on the other hand, broad and deep levels of public support for both international education and exchange. Public support exists, but we need more and better data and we need to make sure that this high level of public support continues to influence congressional discussions and, of course, appropriations. Despite support for international education among the public and within Congress, the fiscal outcomes have been disappointing. Total federal support amounts to about \$350 million—far less than many other programs with much less public support. This modest funding sustains, among others, the National Resource Centers, the Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships, the Language Resource Centers, and the Centers for International Business Education. The current federal budget does not present many opportunities for expanded public investment and, at the same time, 9/11 has created a demand for new and innovative programs to respond to the new geopolitical situation.

Obviously, we are all trying to help the nation determine the interplay on our campuses between what is perceived as a relatively low security threat and, at the same time, an absolutely enormous resource of expertise. Continually positing the richness of human capital that

universities provide, as well as our ability to provide security expertise, means that we actually take security seriously. It does not serve us well to argue that no security problem exists for higher education or that we should not engage in research and educational projects that are related to national and international security. We should, however, decide for ourselves the nature and degree of our academic engagement with these issues.

## INNOVATION IN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Apart from the ethical sensibilities of the relationship between federal funding and university research, including areas other than international studies, we are also faced with a growing interest in the outcomes of public investments. One approach that usually addresses this concern is to combine a “problem” with an area-based or discipline-based approach to international studies. Another approach is to emphasize our commitment to international studies at the undergraduate level and also in our outreach to K–12 and adult education.

Language acquisition is another area in which universities need to be more responsive to public and congressional concerns. We are most successful in developing second-language acquisition skills among students who already possess a natural aptitude. The rest of the world provides larger numbers of students with language competency at the high school–level and ultimately any large-scale solution would necessarily include K–12 participation. In addition, college language acquisition, which includes many of the less commonly taught languages, may need a different niche in the undergraduate curricula. Clearly, three credits of language for several semesters is less effective than immersion for up to nine credits per semester to establish some minimum threshold of competency. One possible approach is to provide incentives to students who arrive from high school with a demonstrated second-language aptitude to take less commonly taught languages as undergraduates. How are we going to increase the numbers of American students with knowledge of Chinese and Arabic? We need to make far more dramatic proposals for alternative and more effective ways to achieve outcomes than we accept today.

Another long-established and successful international initiative in need of some reform is study abroad. We need to distinguish between short exposures to foreign cultures over a few weeks from in-depth, full-year programs that consolidate language competency. There is much value in

short overseas exposure, as long as it is not considered a serious academic engagement with another culture. Unfortunately those students who do enroll in lengthier in-depth programs find themselves with serious credit transfer problems. We need stronger bilateral institutional relationships in which each university trusts the quality of the other's program. More effective perhaps would be the emulation of several regional consortia of institutions that have developed collaborative programs abroad. Whatever we do to extend and improve programs abroad, at the very least we in the academic world must insist on more clearly defined exchange agreements. Students should not have to negotiate credit transfer after they have returned to their home institution. Perhaps once we resolve the international exchange of credit, we will be able to face the equally difficult problems that students encounter when they attempt to transfer credit within the United States!

The appropriate nature and level of academic executive structure for international studies also is not fully established within most of our institutions. Most institutions are able to create energetic vertical structures within their academic programs, but international studies, like other cross-cutting or interdisciplinary activities, do not easily fit into the formal administrative structure of the university. Success often depends upon a combination of faculty creativity and a deep personal commitment from the president and/or the provost. We do not necessarily need a standard executive model but we certainly need structures that cope well with interdepartmental cooperation and with inter-institutional collaboration. Connections with presidents are likely to become easier as fund raising and alumni networking increasingly take on an international component.

Alumni networks overseas are very important, as well. Alumni residing outside the United States can retain their connections with local universities and create a local support structure for programs. For example, as chancellor of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, I was able to build upon an unusually rich relationship between Wisconsin and Thailand based on alumni relationships, especially those with Wisconsin Ph.D.s who were senior faculty at major universities in Thailand. During this period, the university received a gift specifically designated for the local program abroad by providing internships in a large company owned by an alumnus. Finally, international initiatives are once again receiving the attention and interest of major

foundations. Like government funding, our success in heightening the interest of major foundations and encouraging their investment will require that we address the issue of outcomes.

#### AN AGENDA IN PROCESS

It is time for us to combine the best of past practices with the best of current innovations into a comprehensive agenda for international studies. The reauthorization of Title VI of the Higher Education Act presents an immediate opportunity to set that agenda. First, of course, we should preserve established success; to “do no harm” is a good admonition. Second, the budget situation will cramp the effectiveness of many of our congressional friends and we must therefore indicate how much is being done and can be done with other resources. The most admired best practice is self-help, because it implies a partnership among many interest groups. On issues of content we need to remind Congress that misperceptions and miscommunications between cultures is just as serious an issue as the balance of trade and the war on terrorism. The iconography and symbolism of Western culture in the Muslim world, for instance, are much greater obstacles to intercultural understanding than the free movement of people and commodities. Disputes about the balance of trade between rich nations and poor ones are often ignited by insensitivity to local cultures and a lack of respect for national cultures. For these reasons, we need to seek funding that will promote broader and deeper knowledge of foreign languages and cultures.

Continuing the highly successful enrollment of foreign students in U.S. universities is also a high priority. But apart from the difficulties associated with imposing new regulations on foreign student and exchange visitor visas, we also must avoid complacency about foreign students’ experiences at U.S. universities. There is some evidence of the ghetto-ization of foreign students and that many do not view the United States as a welcoming environment. We do need better data on the quality of the foreign student experience and, I think, we may find responses to be highly polarized, either very positive or very negative. Finally, we need to explore more completely the role of information technology in furthering international studies and, especially, in making possible synchronous international connections between classrooms. There are also some marvelous examples of changing language acquisition through the use of self-paced learning software and using the Internet to connect students with the culture of the language they

are learning. Congress may have a special interest in proposals that connect innovations in international programs and language instruction to the information technology revolution.

I hope these comments set the stage for a full discussion of an international education agenda that also will inform our proposals for funding under Title VI of the Higher Education Act. Your challenge is to frame your ideas as a strategic necessity that is responsive to congressional and public interest and support. One way to achieve that end is to divide our commitments into two parts. First, we preserve and consolidate the successful aspects of current Title VI programs as the core of our present capacity. Second, we propose a variety of new projects as pilot programs that could justify a second act in collaboration with the Department of Education. Among the issues for which we might propose pilot projects are internationalization as a lifelong learning commitment and empowering the department with the resources to promote a much broader agenda of language acquisition and international knowledge, from K–12 all the way through to adult learning. “No child left behind” is the core of the administration’s education policy. By stressing comprehensive educational needs we would empower the Department of Education to do something more ambitious than Title VI permits. Title VI supports our current capacity to develop expertise in international studies and we do not want to create a zero-sum game amongst ourselves in a difficult budget year. I hope that you will provide those of us in Washington with an agenda that will preserve and enhance Title VI and yet also stretch the imagination of those in Congress, the department, and the public to do something really ambitious about lifelong learning and internationalization.