

On the Ground Overseas:  
How the International Engagement of U.S. Institutions of Higher Learning  
Prepares Students for a Global Future

*Internationalization of U.S. Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:  
The Future of International and Foreign Language Studies*

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This paper examines a broad spectrum of overseas engagements by U.S. institutions and organizations of higher education in pursuit of three questions. What role can such on-the-ground, face-to-face institutional endeavors play in international education and language learning for U.S. students today? What factors can enhance this role? What practices and policies can insure that such factors are put in place? While the overseas operations considered here generally have multiple purposes, this paper focuses quite specifically on their impact on student learning. Its ultimate conclusion is that such operations, when shaped in the ways discussed here, are vital to creating the bi-(or multi-)national connections that are increasingly important, perhaps even essential, for international learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The overseas engagement of U.S. colleges, universities, and academic organizations is not a new phenomenon; it has been underway in one form or another for well over a century. The 21<sup>st</sup> century's increasingly globalized networks of higher education and knowledge production, however, are spurring a dramatic increase in such activity. Not only do such on-the-ground overseas undertakings remain important for many of the reasons that spurred their

establishment in the first place, they have taken on expanded purpose from the much greater role that international collaboration, experience, and engagement now play in U.S. understandings of what constitutes effective international teaching and learning. What follows is an exploration of what recent research on such overseas operations, a range of exemplary cases of institutional practice, and the literature on several closely related topics reveal concerning the significance of international centers and relationships for student learning, as well as the practices and policies that enhance their impact.

Several cross-cutting themes emerge from this exploration and thread themselves through the rest of this paper. One is that the student audience and learning goals of international education have been expanding. Another is increasing recognition of the importance of direct experience and cross-cultural dialogue for the kind of global learning required by the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Yet another is increasing recognition of the value of international collaboration for all disciplines and professions, not only for teaching but for the research and practice that shapes their core concepts and theories. In this light, the overseas centers, branches, operations, and partnerships discussed in this paper serve as vital and necessary connecting points that can bring together classroom and experiential learning, experts and newcomers, disciplines that have long been engaged internationally and those that are new to such activities, and U.S. faculty and students with their counterparts in other nations.

Such entities and relationships can model what U.S. colleges and universities want students to learn, while expanding institutional capacity for international education, not only abroad but also at home. They do this by invoking a philosophy of international engagement, dialogue, and collaboration as the heart of the kind of internationalized international education that must characterize the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The virtual international connections now possible

through the internet have enhanced but not replaced the ones that derive from face-to-face interaction. When guided by principles of embeddedness, collaboration, commitment, and the value of juxtaposing different perspectives, the multiple ways in which U.S. institutions are now present and engaged overseas can be the source of mutual learning that transforms knowledge and benefits all involved. In terms of the themes of this conference, these overseas endeavors play a distinctive role in building a globally competent citizenry, strengthening our ability to solve global problems, and producing much-needed international expertise, precisely because they enter U.S. institutions and their students into the international conversations, collaborations, and experiences that are essential to achieving these goals.

#### *The Many Forms of On-the-Ground Overseas Engagement*

The direct engagement of U.S. higher education overseas takes many forms, each with its own mission and characteristics. Such endeavors began well over a century ago with the foundation of entities like the American University of Beirut in 1866, the American Academy in Rome in 1894, the Delaware Plan for Foreign Study in 1923, and the Harvard-Yenching Institute in Beijing in 1928, to name only a few. In recent years, the number and diversity of forms has grown dramatically, including but not limited to:

- Branch campuses of U.S. colleges and universities, sometimes free-standing, sometimes part of multi-institutional educational hubs sponsored by the host nation (e.g., New York University in Abu Dhabi, part of NYU's re-conceptualization as a "global network university" with multiple, co-equal campuses; the multi-institutional Songdo Global University in South Korea, the tenant institutions of which include the State University of New York, University of Utah, and George Mason University)

- Free-standing, independent institutions of higher education, sponsored or guided by U.S. educational philosophies, standards, and governing boards (e.g., the American University in Cairo, founded in 1919 and serving both U.S. study abroad and Egyptian students; the much more recent American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan, founded in 1998)
- Units of local universities that have been developed in collaboration with U.S. institutions in order to combine local and U.S. approaches (e.g., Yale-National University of Singapore, a new liberal arts entity on the NUS campus, staffed by faculty from both institutions and giving its own degree; the SUNY Empire State College program at Anadolu University in Turkey, in which ESC faculty teach students in Turkey who then receive degrees from both institutions)
- U.S.-developed multi-institutional academic centers that serve as bases for U.S. faculty and students while in a particular nation or region (e.g., the institutes federated under the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, located in 27 different nations; the 65+ programs administered by the American Councils for International Education that facilitate advanced language study and institutional capacity building around the world)
- Study abroad outposts run by particular U.S. colleges and universities, with housing, classrooms, and/or other facilities used by their own students and often those from other U.S. institutions as well (e.g., Clemson University's Center for Building Research and Urban Studies in a 19<sup>th</sup> century villa in Genoa, Italy; the ten overseas facilities run by Stanford University's Bing Overseas Study Program, located in South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe)
- Overseas offices that facilitate the mobility of U.S. faculty, students, grants, and equipment to locations abroad (e.g., The Ohio State University's Global Gateways in

China, India, and Brazil, which provide operational support for faculty engagement, international partnerships, study abroad, student recruitment, academic programming, executive training, alumni gatherings, and Ohio-based companies; the on-the-ground facilities of the Indiana University-Kenya partnership, a complex of six buildings that serves as the base for multiple units of IU to engage with the myriad of health, educational, legal, and other projects it carries out in collaboration with Moi University)

- Partnerships and consortia in which U.S. colleges and universities develop formal collaborations with institutions of higher learning and other organizations overseas, resulting in joint projects and considerable travel back and forth (e.g., the Chile-University of California-Davis partnership, a comprehensive collaboration aimed at developing human capital in both nations, with particular focus on biotechnology and viticulture; Bard College's partnerships with Al-Quds University in Jerusalem and Smolny College of St. Petersburg State University in Russia, which pursue an internationally collaborative approach to teaching in the liberal arts, see Gillespie 2003)

Viewed in their totality, these different ways in which U.S. institutions are increasingly engaged on-the-ground overseas are weaving a very dense fabric of global connectivity. The ivory tower has been replaced by networks of outreach and collaboration. Some of these forms of engagement are more prominent than others. Despite the great attention that has been shown toward the development of branch campuses, for example, they are actually a very minor player. The extensive research by Lane and Kinser (2011) has revealed only about 100 such entities operated by U.S. institutions. The other forms of overseas institutional engagement are much more common (Kinser and Lane 2012), with the most frequent being the last one listed above: collaborative partnerships or coalitions. There is scarcely a college or university in the U.S.

without at least one such linkage, and many have dozens, some even hundreds. The 300 formal affiliations overseen by the Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs at Rutgers University outnumber the total number of all U.S. branch campuses overseas several times over.

Many such partnerships are being asked to do more than they have in the past, to engage in institutional capacity building and transformation as well as the transactional exchange of students (Sutton and Obst 2011; Sutton, Egginton, and Favela 2012). Conversations about how to maximize, organize, and support such international affiliations are sweeping U.S. campuses. The most recent *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* survey by the American Council of Education reported that 92% of doctoral, 83% of master's, 69% of baccalaureate, and 59% of associate institutions had substantially increased their international partnership activity over the last five years (ACE 2012).

Because of their prominence in general, international partnerships and coalitions occupy a prominent place in the research consulted and the conclusions reached in this paper. Much that has been learned about such linkages easily transfers, however, to the other forms of on-the-ground international engagement. Furthermore such affiliations are often intertwined and supported by these other forms, as, for example, when Temple University's relationship with Tsinghua University evolved into the offering of a Temple LL.M. degree in Beijing, or as the advanced research and language centers under CAORC or ACIE provide guidance and support to U.S. university initiatives in the nations where they are located.

Whatever form it takes, such international engagement by U.S. colleges and universities reflects profound changes in the landscape of higher education. What happens outside the U.S. is now as relevant to U.S. colleges and universities as what happens inside. The academy has been as globalized as the rest of our lives, and institutions now operate on an international

playing field. It is not only our students who must learn to navigate the broader world, but our colleges and universities as well (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumley 2009; Egron-Polak 2012; Egron-Polak and Hudson 2010; Knight 2008). There is confusion and conflict in this situation, intensified by new forms of student mobility, the as-yet-unknown impact of on-line learning, a growing commodification of education in general, competition over market share, the threat of cultural imperialism, and the rise of monolithic schemes of global ranking. There is optimism and new purpose as well: the great leaps in science and scholarship that are resulting from international collaboration, rethinking institutional mission in terms of global as well as national impact, the ability to address global problems in a global manner, the dramatic increase in students pursuing higher education worldwide, the spread of high quality institutions of higher learning to all continents, and the possibility of creating a global system of higher education that works for all.

The on-the-ground international engagement of U.S. institutions and organizations reflects all these forces, nested under the even more general ones of worldwide political, economic, and cultural relations. This multiplicity of currents and countercurrents accounts for the many forms that such engagement takes. Several themes are, however, consistently voiced by those who do this work. U.S. colleges and universities want to prepare all their students for globalized lives. They also want to join in what is the increasingly internationally collaborative enterprise of scholarship and innovation, to rethink their mission and purpose in a global as well as national context, and to offer their strengths to colleagues and students beyond their own borders. Some of this can be done at home, but some of it cannot. Of equal importance, very little of this can be done without sustained international collaboration and relationship-building,

and this provides the framework by which this paper examines overseas operations and their impact on student learning.

*Why Such Institutional Engagement Overseas Is Important for U.S. Students, Especially Now*

The goals of the institutional engagements listed above range across the missions of teaching, research, advancing professional practice, tackling global problems, providing international assistance, and demonstrating public diplomacy. This paper focuses on those that cluster under the first of these - student learning – and this section focuses on why international partnerships, branches, outposts, and gateways are gaining expanded significance for international education and language learning in the U.S. Such operations have long been critical to advancing U.S. knowledge concerning particular parts of the world and educating students who will become experts on these regions and fluent in their languages. This function remains vital, and the expanding number of U.S. operations overseas has amplified the volume and location of centers that do this. As international education becomes increasingly important for all students, even those who will not become area specialists, however, U.S. overseas bases and operations are taking on additional meaning and importance.

U.S. colleges and universities are increasingly interested in what a five-year, 26-institution study of the American Council of Education dubbed “global learning for all”: the movement to spread international education across all disciplines and professions, based on the belief that all students now need to develop international knowledge, sensitivities, and skills (Olson, Green, and Hill 2006). The ACE *Mapping* survey gives evidence that this view is now widely shared. Responses from over 1,000 institutions indicate that 90% of those that grant bachelor degrees or higher list “improving student preparedness for a global era” as their primary

reason for internationalizing, while 70% of associate-degree institutions do (ACE 2012:2). Roughly 50% of the first type of institution also require all students to take at least one international course, although only 15% of the second type do (ACE 2012:8). Whether or not such a dedicated international course is required, faculty in disciplines that previously offered little international learning are now attempting to weave it into their curricula, and many institutions are considering what international learning might mean for engineers as well as anthropologists, nurses as well as French literature specialists. New international learning goals have emerged, alongside older ones, and the term “global learning” is sometimes offered as an alternative to “international learning” in so far as it more explicitly includes all nations (including the U.S.) in what is being examined (Musil 2006).

Browsing across the work that has been done by ACE, AAC&U (the Association of American Colleges and Universities), NAFSA (the Association of International Educators), and other groups concerned with the goals of international learning yields the following frequently-mentioned learning goals to be added to the long-standing ones of developing area expertise, understanding global dynamics, and gaining language competence (ACE 2013; AAC&U 2013; Green 2013; Olson, Green, and Hill 2006; Musil 2006; Stearns 2006):

- Building intercultural competence in interacting with individuals from other nations
- Reflecting on the global impact of one’s actions and developing a sense of international responsibility
- Exploring the international dimensions of the profession or discipline that one is pursuing
- Developing an awareness of one’s own nation and its place in global systems
- Developing the ability to apply one’s knowledge and skills in international contexts

- Valuing how bringing together different perspectives can yield heightened knowledge and understanding
- Actively seeking to develop international networks and relationships

The overseas operations examined in this paper are particularly well-suited to meeting these additional goals for what students should obtain from international education as well as the more long-standing ones. What follows is an analysis of why U.S. on-the-ground overseas operations can advance both the older and newer learning objectives while also bringing them together.

This analysis borrows substantially from the work of international business economist Rosabeth Moss Kanter (and her followers) on why international partnerships give U.S. businesses what she calls a “collaborative advantage” in conducting business overseas (Dyer and Singh 1998, Fischer and Reynolds 2010, Kanter 1994).

This section (and the one that follows) pairs such insights from international business with the growing body of research and practitioner reflection on international academic partnerships. As mentioned above, such linkages are the most common form of U.S. academic engagement overseas. Much has recently been learned about why these affiliations are important and how they can be enhanced. And much of what has been learned is relevant to the other forms of on-the-ground overseas engagement covered by this paper as well. The points that follow in this section and the next are collectively derived from the following sources, each of which is worth reading in its own right: Chan (2004), de Wit (2004), Duval (2009), Edlestein and Douglass (2013), Evers and Lokhoff (2012), Hamrita (2012), Hartle (2008), Hodson and Harold (2001), Kinser and Green (2009), Olcott (2008), Olson (2012), Sakamoto and Chapman (2012), Spencer-Oatey (2012), Stockley and de Wit (2010), Sutton and Obst (2011), Sutton, Egginton,

and Favela (2012), Teffera (2010), U.S. AID (2011), Van de Water et al. (2008), Wiley (2006), and Zuala (2012).

Combining the insights from these various scholars establishes that such on-the-ground overseas endeavors are important not only because they have the potential to provide students – of all backgrounds – with a learning laboratory on site, but also because they have the potential to enable U.S. colleges and universities to enhance their capacity to deliver international education back at their home campuses. The reasons why such operations are able to do such things fall under seven main headings.

*1) They bring together newcomers and experts.* The expanded set of objectives for international learning is sometimes seen as creating conflict between older and newer goals for international education, something exacerbated by the decline in language learning across U.S. institutions of higher learning (e.g., the *ACE Mapping* survey revealed that only 37% of U.S. colleges and universities have a language requirement, and only 12% have it for all students, rather than just certain groups 2012:6). This raises a number of questions. How can students maximize their study abroad experiences without knowing the local language? On the other hand, how can we increase the number of U.S. students who go abroad if we demand that they already know a language (and so few do)? How can students develop an appreciation for other perspectives if they do not know the political, economic, and cultural forces that shape these other viewpoints? How can they reflect on the role of the U.S., if they do not understand international relations? Simply taking students overseas does not necessarily result in the kind of education advanced by either the old or new learning goals (see Bolen 2001, Cunningham 2010, Dolby 2007, Hulstrand 2006, Jenkins and Skelly 2004, Montrose 2002, Vande Berg et al. 2009,

Williams 2005, for further discussion of this point). Their experiences abroad require framing and guidance for such learning to occur.

If shaped in certain ways, U.S. on-the-ground overseas operations can offer a way out of this dilemma, by bringing together experts and novices, area specialists and members of professional schools who have never before done international work. The result can be an exchange of insights that enhances all sides. There is much that local colleagues and area specialists can do to enable the newcomers to understand their disciplines in the local setting. There is much that the newcomers can do to enable area specialists to understand how their expert knowledge might be applied in the contexts of business, law, medicine, engineering, and similar pursuits. The expertise and wisdom of those who have historically done such work can (and must) inform what the newcomers are doing. At the same time, the theoretical and disciplinary perspectives brought by the newcomers, and their tendency to engage in projects of application and collaboration can inform the work of the old-timers.

Thus it is, for example, that students of Northern Virginia Community College benefit from NOVA's relationship with the Instituto Federal de Educacao Ciencia e Tecnologia in Brazil, precisely because the latter's faculty assist NOVA faculty in embedding their short-term study programs more deeply in the Brazilian context.

Such collaborations between experts and newcomers, and between U.S. visitors and their counterparts overseas also have the potential to provoke an appreciation and hunger for greater knowledge of those settings and the languages their inhabitants speak. My own in-country experience in teaching English-speaking U.S. students about contemporary Greece in collaboration with a local municipality has repeatedly yielded increased enrollments in Modern Greek language courses once the students returned to the U.S. (Sutton 2010).

Overseas centers and collaborations often promote the interdisciplinarity needed to understand the complexity of other nations and international relationships as well. It is common for faculty and students from different academic disciplines and professional fields to assemble under their umbrella, yielding conversations that enhance the learning of both. Political scientists converse with doctors, geographers with agricultural specialists. International learning is inherently interdisciplinary, and overseas operations offer the incubator for cross-field exchanges to occur.

2) *They deploy the power of internationally-collaborative scholarship and learning.* Such international partnerships, branches, and centers provide both a base for U.S. colleges and universities overseas and a point of connection to communities, colleagues, and institutions in the nation where they are located. In so doing, they have the capacity to institutionally model some of the most important things colleges and universities want students to learn. If shaped in certain ways, they give testimony to a philosophy of constructing knowledge through international collaboration that must stand as the underpinning of both academic research and student learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Post-colonial understandings that bring all voices to the table, the growth of high quality colleges and universities everywhere, and the proven value of joint international research projects have led to increasingly internationally collaborative forms of scholarship, learning, and discovery for U.S. institutions. It is no surprise that of the last 15 Nobel Prizes across Chemistry, Physics, and Physiology & Medicine, all but two have gone to international research teams (Nature 2010, Royal Society 2012, UNESCO 2011). In such light, the just-signed (April 2, 2014) agreement between Kazan Federal University in Tatarstan, Russia and Pennsylvania State University, brokered by the American Councils for International Education, reflects this growing

realization and is aimed at mutually-enriching collaborations concerning hydrocarbon field modeling, hydraulic fracturing, distance learning courses, and joint business education programs.

Whether a student is a language scholar or budding lawyer, conversations with faculty and students in other countries greatly enhance their learning by opening their minds to other perspectives and revealing the power of internationally-constructed knowledge. For example, an unlikely but fortuitous partnership between Bryn Mawr College and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore has demonstrated precisely this through an innovative summer program in which students represent three different nations, and collectively take courses co-taught by faculty from at least two of these nations in an effort to see what new insights might result.

The distinctive Joint Degree Program between the College of William & Mary and St. Andrews University in Scotland takes such collaborations one step further. One of the very few undergraduate international joint degree programs, its graduates receive a single diploma containing the insignia of both institutions. Majoring in history, international relations, English, or economics, students can start at either St. Andrews or William & Mary, but must spend two years at each, thereby creating a truly bi-national community of learning.

The overseas engagements by U.S. institutions and organizations also open the door for such collaborative learning experiences to occur even at a distance. The connections they establish can be translated into various forms of networked collaborative teaching, as has been amply demonstrated by the Collaborative On-line International Learning program of the SUNY system, which pairs various of SUNY's 64 campuses with overseas partner universities for courses across all subjects from public administration co-taught between the Buffalo campus and Babes Boylai University in Romania to the psychology of terrorism co-taught between the

Purchase campus and Dublin City University. Neither of these courses would have occurred without the development of the international partnerships that preceded them.

*3) They lead to an ever-deepening understanding of the host nation.* When based on long-term, sustained engagement in a particular nation, such on-the-ground overseas engagements build a cumulative and complex understanding of the nation where they are located. While particular students and faculty may come and go, these centers, partnerships, and campuses become repositories for a growing body of knowledge and perception. For example, the literally ground-level explorations carried out by U.S. colleges and universities connected to the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (another entity I know well), were a key player in U.S. archaeologists broadening their understanding of the Greek past far beyond the classical period in both directions, ultimately including a focus on contemporary Greece as well (Davis and Vogeikoff-Brogan 2013).

The ever-deepening knowledge that derives from long-term experience in a particular nation is passed down in multiple formats (e.g., conversations, courses, publications, and archives), increasingly captured in electronic ways that make it accessible far beyond the overseas outposts themselves. Each of the eight Title VI National Resource Centers gathered together under the International Institute at the University of Wisconsin, for example, has a detailed website providing resources on the areas they represent.

Collaborative overseas operations also enable such knowledge to reflect local perspectives as well as U.S. ones, leading students - both on site and back at the home campus - to understand the nations under consideration through multiple perspectives. The IU-Kenya partnership mentioned earlier in this paper, for example, developed a project whereby faculty colleagues at Moi University prepared learning modules on 32 different aspects of Kenya life,

modules that are now housed on the partnership website for students and faculty across many different disciplines to access.

In short, overseas operations provide the platforms needed for understanding particular nations and regions in depth, platforms that pre-exist but inform the rush to understand such places when crises suddenly shine a spotlight on them, platforms that keep information and news flowing even in these times of difficulty, platforms that can spread learning about the nation broadly across the curriculum, even at the home campus in the U.S. because so many on that campus have come to understand that nation well over a sustained period of time.

*4) They become incubators of new projects.* When shaped as recommended later in this paper, such overseas engagements are long-term relationships rather than one-off programs. Many begin with narrowly specified activities but are intended to set in motion a process of learning and discovery that will lead to other projects, each building on the last and also upon the ever-deepening understanding of the host nation. The result is an increasingly rich and innovative educational environment for the students served by these partnerships and centers.

The collaboration between New Mexico State University and the Autonomous University of the State of Chihuahua in Mexico is exemplar here. It began with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 1975 that facilitated the travel of UACH faculty to NMSU for graduate work and professional development. Over the years, the relationship blossomed, successively adding joint conferences, research projects, cultural exchanges, a dual undergraduate degree in aerospace engineering and a joint Ph.D. in civil engineering. Ultimately, NMSU opened an office in Chihuahua City to coordinate all that was happening. Dozens of external grants were received, and extensive connections made to local, including

indigenous, communities in both locations. Students have gone back and forth with great frequency.

*5) They contribute to the building of institutional capacity both at home as well as abroad.* Outposts, partnerships, and centers can greatly ease the process of engaging with colleagues, organizations, and communities abroad for U.S. colleges and universities. Such entities cut transaction costs because they establish regular and effective processes for travel and exchange. They also provide a known (and knowledgeable) base in an unknown environment, a base that can immediately be translated into on-site student learning but that can also be used to develop institutional capacity for international education more generally.

As already mentioned, such overseas operations are very effective in enabling faculty who have not previously done much international work to begin to do so with expert guidance, interdisciplinary cross-fertilization, and local collaboration, thereby enhancing their ability to incorporate international material into their teaching – whether at home or abroad. The importance of such operations for faculty and curricular development also holds true for experts as well as newcomers, who gain increased understanding with each visit. The result for both is the development of new curricular materials, reworked courses, and an openness to experimenting with on-line collaborative teaching once they return to the U.S. Since 1989, for example, the University of Richmond has used its international partnerships and connections to run a Faculty Seminar program, in which interdisciplinary groups travel to selected nations with the goals of creating new courses, adding modules to existing ones, expanding assignments and references to be more international, developing first-hand experience of the cultures that produced many of the texts studied in UR's first-year seminars, and promoting further student and faculty exchange.

Institutional partnerships can also be constructed to build instructional capacity for all sides. Partners, both U.S. and their counterparts overseas, can match themselves to enhance mutual strengths, fill complementary gaps each in each other's offerings, and/or engage in various forms of mutually beneficial curricular collaboration. They can pursue projects that neither side could do on its own, sharing costs, risks, and resources to do so. They can develop curricular materials that are tailored to each other's particular institutional needs. And they can insure that international voices enter each other's classrooms.

*6) They are laboratories for student engagement, application, and experiential learning.*

The on-the-ground nature of these overseas operations has always made them powerful instruments for international education. Learning a language is easiest and most effective when done in a community of native speakers. Understanding a particular nation or part of the world grows from the experience of living in it, talking to its inhabitants, and responding to its environment, both human-made and natural. Very little can replace what anthropologists call "the lived experience" as a mode of learning – for students and faculty alike (Cunningham 2010, Sutton 2010). The intensity of dialogue that comes from continual and often unplanned contact; daily news framed by conversation with those whose lives it shapes; the opening of all one's senses as modes of learning; living one's daily life within the structures and processes of the country; engaging with sites, museums, libraries, performances, exhibitions, lectures, community events, and scholarly presentations that enhance understanding; all this, and much more, greatly extend what is learned in the classroom.

This is why students who would be expert in a language or region have long valued the time abroad facilitated by overseas centers and partnerships. This same power can also be fit to the expanded audience and goals of international learning that exist today. At least four of the

new learning objectives listed earlier in this paper require the kind of experiential learning that overseas operations are well suited to provide. Building intercultural competence in interacting with individuals from other nations is enhanced by engaging in such interaction directly. In like manner, developing the ability to apply one's knowledge and skills in international contexts can benefit from direct practice in doing so. Exploring the international dimensions of the profession or discipline that one is pursuing can be advanced by visiting or interning with members of that profession in other nations. And actively seeking to develop international networks and relationships can begin by learning how transformative such relationships are from the friendships formed while overseas as a student.

In short, on-the-ground overseas operations provide a base for diving into various forms of experiential learning: internships, home stays, service projects, research studies, and the simple fact of living immersed in another place. In this light, Cornell University, a long-time leader in experiential learning abroad, is about to launch its newest program: a partnership with the Keystone Foundation and a local learning center in rural India, which will bring students from four of Cornell's schools together with local residents to learn best practices in environmental sustainability and develop projects to address specific problems in the region.

*7) They proclaim an institutional philosophy of international connectedness and responsibility.* As with several of the other points just mentioned, the sheer effort devoted to developing and sustaining partnerships, centers, and other overseas operations serves to institutionally model some of what U.S. colleges and universities now want their students to learn. When developed in the manner discussed in the next section of this paper, these overseas engagements demonstrate a philosophy of working collaboratively with counterparts overseas, honoring commitments, assessing the impact of institutional actions upon others, sharing

resources, and building mutual capacity (see also Dolby 2007, Gillespie 2003, Jenkins and Skelly 2004, Kiely 2005, Sutton 2013).

Such institutional modeling connects directly to the international learning goal of understanding the impact of one's actions globally and is likely to spark considerable reflection that leads to another of the goals mentioned above: developing an awareness of one's own nation and its place in global systems. Juniata College, for example, has built much of its international programming around a carefully selected, long-term set of exchange partners in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America, partners whom Juniata students and faculty have come to know very well over the years, to whom they are committed for the long run, and from whom the Juniata campus receives exchange students every semester. This stance on international connectedness and responsibility is further proclaimed in Juniata's one-sentence mission statement, declaring that the campus is dedicated: "to provide an engaging personalized educational experience empowering our students to develop the skills, knowledge and values that lead to a fulfilling life of service and ethical leadership in the global community."

#### *What We Have Learned About What Can Make Such Overseas Operations Successful*

Not all on-the-ground overseas operations achieve the results just mentioned in terms of advancing student learning. There are as many unsuccessful partnerships as successful ones, study abroad centers where students rarely encounter the local community, branch campuses that have closed after only a few years of operation, and programs that focus on classroom learning to the exclusion of experiential. The marked expansion of such overseas endeavors in recent years has, however, also led to increased research on what makes some successful. Combining what has been learned from the work on international partnerships, branch campuses, experiential

learning, and study abroad yields some strong suggestions on how best to construct such international operations, here grouped under five main headings.

*1) Local embeddedness, knowledge, and respect.*

- Commitment to building a deep and continually growing knowledge of the local context
- Shaping the program by understanding and responding to local needs, goals, and aspirations
- Defining goals and making decisions collaboratively in partnership contexts
- Employing and engaging the local population in the enterprise
- Genuine appreciation for the value of local institutions, colleagues, and knowledge
- Weighing intangible assets as well as financial ones in measuring contributions to partnerships
- Navigating differences in customs, policies, and processes with openness and respect
- Insuring that the faculty, staff, and students engaged in the program are required and supported in learning about the host nation
- Providing language training for all who participate, both before and during their time abroad

Many a branch campus has foundered on not paying enough attention to local educational needs, and many an international partnership has faded because one or both sides did not engage fully in learning about each other's context (Altbach; Coclanis and Strauss 2010; Green, Kinser, and Eckel 2008; Hawawini 2011; Lane and Kinser 2011; Mills 2009; Redden 2014; Reisberg

2013; Sabri 2014; Wilkins and Balakrishnan 2012). On-the-ground overseas operations succeed best when they become a valued member of the local setting, and they do this best when they understand that setting. If they accomplish these goals, they are what Kris Olds calls “grounded,” because they have a “commercial, legal, material, and discursive presence” in the host nation and are “entangled in the regulatory, sociocultural, physical, political, and institutional landscape” (Olds 2012). Webster University, for example, has successfully operated branch campuses overseas for several decades in large part because they develop them in full conversation with local constituencies, and they staff them with individuals from both the host country and the U.S. Such operations, in turn, provide deeply embedded experiences for the U.S. students from Webster’s St. Louis campus who attend these branches on various study abroad options. The American Research Center in Egypt, founded in 1948 and another CAORC member, has become a vital part of the Egyptian academic community by providing multiple programs and points of connectivity with Egyptian archaeologists and other scholars. In so doing, it has also created a vibrant and embedded atmosphere for U.S. students who go there.

2) *Viewing the relationship as equally important as any particular project.*

- Spending the time to develop mutual understandings, processes, and goals before starting the operation/partnership
- Making sure that the partnership is a good match for all sides, and that all parties have the resources to see it through
- Basing activities on principles of shared decision-making, transparent problem-solving, mutual benefit, honoring commitments, and equal engagement
- Making frequent, regular, and meaningful communication a priority

- Developing processes viewed as legitimate in dealing with crises and disagreements, including a good faith effort to attempt to resolve them before walking away
- Keeping low-cost, base-line activities going, alongside more dramatic special projects
- Having a frequent, or even constant, on-the-ground presence or representative

The overall conclusion from Kanter's research concerning the advantages of U.S. businesses working closely with their counterparts in other countries reads as follows. "...intercompany relationships ... work best when they are familylike...obligations are diffuse, the scope for collaboration is open, understanding grows between specific individuals... and the interpersonal context is rich. Only relationships with full commitment on all sides endure long enough to create value for the partners" (Kanter 1994:100). In a parallel vein, the literature on service learning makes clear that such efforts stand on their ability to develop long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between institutions of higher learning and community organizations (Bringle, Hatcher, and Jones 2010; Enos and Morton 2003).

Thus it was that the University of Arizona found ways to keep its long-standing partnership with the Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior in Mexico still active in sending students back and forth, even after all of northern Mexico fell under a U.S. Department of State Travel Warning. Rice University, by way of another example, very intentionally employs theoretical principles of cross-cultural communication in insuring that its conversations with its international partners are mutually meaningful and productive (Baker 2011).

3) *Organizing the U.S. institution or organization so that it can engage in such overseas work productively and sustain it over time.*

- Investing the time and resources needed to do this work
- Developing internal policies and procedures that are viewed as inclusive and legitimate by all relevant constituencies on the home campus
- Identifying procedural obstacles to such overseas work and removing/mitigating them
- Building a culture of partnership and international engagement across the institution
- Securing buy-in for the institution's overseas commitments across the campus
- Keeping track, assessing, prioritizing overseas commitments in ways that do not over-commit the institution and enable each one to succeed
- Providing seed funds to support faculty and staff engagement in overseas endeavors
- Pursuing external funds to jump-start particular projects or relationships
- Assigning clear responsibility for keeping such operations moving forward to designated groups or individuals

As U.S. colleges and universities learn more about international partnerships, they realize that the rewards they generate only come with a certain level of institutional investment and commitment. There is a general move toward fewer but more robust and well-supported strategic partnerships. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for example, has developed a Global Partnership Fund designed to help sustain its international partnerships by making awards to faculty, staff, and students who connect with colleagues abroad, especially at UNC's strategic or emerging partners (see also Coclanis and Strauss 2010).

Many U.S. colleges and universities are also taking steps to establish units that have responsibility for managing and supporting the institution's partnership portfolio. Outstanding examples of such units that have enabled their institutions to pay more attention to the linkages they have are found at the Universities of Georgia and Illinois, as well as Colorado State University. In a similar vein, the University of Washington has developed a Global Operations office, specifically charged with clearing out procedural obstacles and guiding faculty in staff in developing projects abroad. The office serves as a clearinghouse to assist faculty and staff in dealing with budgeting, relevant institutional policies, insurance, health and safety issues, international payments and taxes, and the myriad of issues that derail an otherwise well-meaning project.

4) *Recognizing such overseas operations as a desired process of transformation for both the U.S. and overseas partners.*

- Advocating a philosophy of openness, flexibility, and mutual learning that will change institutions and generate new projects
- Intentionally pursuing the ways in which such operations change disciplinary assumptions and knowledge, professional practice, and what students learn
- Rethinking courses and curricula, often in a collaborative way
- Continually reflecting on the impact of this work, for the particular nations and institutions involved and for the emerging global network of higher education

The idea that internal change can come from external sources, especially international ones, does not necessarily come naturally to many U.S. institutions. The 1993 survey of 14 nations by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Higher Education found that U.S. faculty were the lowest in their connections to colleagues in other countries, keeping up with publications

produced abroad, or having done research abroad (Altbach 1996:386). A 2007 follow-up study showed relatively little change on these points (Huang et al. 2013:122). Much international development work on the part of U.S. institutions has also focused on how they can help others elsewhere succeed. Understanding how these others can also help U.S. institutions succeed, and that this might spur changes (albeit wanted ones) in the U.S. institutions requires a substantial cultural shift, hence substantial and continual conversation across U.S. campuses. Once again, borrowing from the field of service learning, such a conceptual shift includes viewing partnerships not just as transactional exchanges but as mutually transformational collaborations (Enos and Morton 2003; Sutton and Obst 2011; Sutton, Egginton, and Favela 2012). In this vein, Pfothenauer et al. (2012) give a detailed discussion of how M.I.T.'s partnership with several Portuguese institutions resulted in innovation and change on both sides. By way of another example, when Texas A&M University began a partnership with Brazilian universities around the topic of ruminant production schemes, it had in mind a simple exchange of knowledge. In the process of developing collaborative on-line courses on the topic, however, all institutions ended up with a substantially different curriculum and content than they had had before (Tedeschi et al 2011). Kennesaw State University's "Year of" program, spotlighting a particular nation across the campus through a year-long program of lectures, performances, and visits from partner institutions in that nation began as a fledgling effort in 2003 but has grown into one of the premier activities of the institution, engaging faculty and students across a wide range of disciplines.

5) *Intensifying the experiential nature of student learning.*

- Developing multiple platforms on which students (and faculty) from the U.S. and the host nation can engage and converse with each other

- Offering the possibility of living in a residence hall with local student or home-stays with local families
- Developing collaborative service activities with local communities
- Arranging internships with local businesses, organizations, and communities
- Providing repeated guidance, framing, and forums for students to reflect and process their experiences

When the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) surveyed the students who had gone on its programs from 1950-2000, the 3400 responses showed a clear pattern of greater gains in knowledge, connectedness, and career development for students who had lived with families or in local residence halls, taken courses with local students, and done service or internships (Dwyer and Peters 2004). The work of David Kolb (1984) on experiential learning has provided a framework whereby scholars of service learning and education abroad have increasingly stressed the importance of assisting students through the process of framing, conceptualizing, theorizing, and acting upon the knowledge they gain from experience through guided processes of analysis and reflection (Bolen 2007; Bringle, Hatcher, and Jones 2010; Cunningham 2010; Hatcher and Bringle 1999; Kiely 2005; Montrose 2002; Parker and Dautoff 2007; Sutton 2010; Vande Berg et al. 2009). In this light, Kalamazoo College provides its study abroad students with very detailed questions for structured reflection, and Gonzaga University makes a commitment to “nurture students’ reflection and on-going dialogue about [their study abroad] experiences so as to contribute to learning, lived in a community of learners” ([http://www.gonzaga.edu/Academics/International-Students/Center\\_for\\_Global\\_Engagement/default.asp](http://www.gonzaga.edu/Academics/International-Students/Center_for_Global_Engagement/default.asp)).

### *Policy Implications*

In sum, on-the-ground overseas operations are critical connecting points for the expanded, interdisciplinary and globally collaborative forms of international learning increasingly sought by U.S. colleges and universities. Cutting-edge research, scholarship, and professional practice are all now globally interactive; students, no matter what their majors, live their lives in the context of globalized communities and networks. In this light, international learning must now be for all. It must take advantage of the deep international and linguistic expertise that U.S. institutions already have in place, and it must wed this expertise to the distinctive interests and career paths of students from disciplines not engaged in international work until recently. International learning must also prepare students for the international interaction and collaboration that will mark their careers and advance the U.S.

The on-the-ground overseas operations of U.S. institutions and organizations are essential to meeting these needs. They bring experts and newcomers together, provoke interdisciplinary synergies, and combine experiential and classroom learning. They model the kind of collaborative international engagement that their students must now master, while providing a laboratory for students to learn how to do this. They are incubators for faculty growth and curricular developments that will benefit students on site and also those back at the home campus. And they connect U.S. institutions in meaningful, mutually beneficial, and sustained ways with their counterparts overseas, ways that produce ever-deepening knowledge and generate new and unexpected collaborations.

Such understandings yield several policy implications. There is much that U.S. agencies and foundations, as well as U.S. colleges and universities can do to foster the kind of learning described in the second section of this paper and the kind of best practices described in the third.

Some of this work asks colleges and universities to reposition their overseas engagements within their institutions, to provide more support and to connect these more clearly to international teaching and research, both at home and abroad. This repositioning and support asks institutions to think about income generation as well as internal re-allocation of human and financial resources. In light of shrinking state financing of public institutions and growing institutional costs for all, U.S. colleges and universities will nevertheless need to seek support from government agencies, educational foundations, and other external sources.

From wherever such support derives, it should be as directed toward supporting the infrastructure and long-term processes that enable such overseas operations to succeed, as toward any specific project. On-the-ground overseas operations are an emerging facet of all U.S. higher education and the infrastructure needed to support them is as important as are the scientific and language laboratories located on campus. What follows are a few suggestions along these lines of where institutions and their external supporters might direct their attention.

- facilitating the development of campus procedures, offices, and staffing dedicated to developing and managing overseas partnerships and engagements
- facilitating the long-term development and maintenance of on-the-ground centers that manage such engagements overseas
- providing support that enables local partners to contribute to the international learning for U.S. students, including support that brings U.S. and local students together for mutual learning, both face-to-face and virtual
- providing support for conferences, workshops, and other forums that enable U.S. faculty and students to converse and collaborate with students and faculty in the host country

- developing programs that encourage and support faculty and students from disciplines not previously much engaged in international work to spend time at the overseas partners and operations, and to be guided in their first steps into such work
- developing options for faculty and student participation that are short-term as well as long-term
- insuring that all who participate in these engagements have the opportunity to engage in learning about the local setting as well as the local language, in multiple format and durations
- supporting faculty in developing international knowledge, new curricular materials, and effective partnerships with their counterparts in host countries (including partnerships that might lead to curricular collaboration and co-teaching in the future)
- allocating funding for projects that are explicitly interdisciplinary in nature
- increasing the volume and types of experiential learning that students might pursue overseas, while simultaneously framing and guiding students in processing their experiences and connecting them to their majors
- insuring that dialogue with local scholars and communities is a part of all overseas operations, again through a variety of formats
- providing resources for the lengthy and important process of exploring possible partnerships before engaging in formal agreements
- provide resources for sustaining partnerships (including their human relationships) over time in addition to the resources needed for specific projects
- developing methods for supporting and continuing to work with local communities and partners when crises and difficulties arise

- provide workshops and forums in which the value and methods of collaborative, cross-national research and learning are elaborated for the faculty and students who participate in these overseas operations
- insuring that the IT infrastructure for virtual as well on-the-ground collaborations exists, and then using this to bring U.S. and partner faculty and students together
- supporting forums in which participants can pursue and reflect upon the connections between the U.S. and the partner country, as well as the impact of their own actions within the host country
- connecting to other U.S. institutions and to multi-institutional centers as a means of expanding knowledge and sharing resources

In conclusion, U.S. colleges, universities, and associations of higher education have had important overseas operations for some time. Many of us at this conference have greatly benefitted from them, as students and as faculty. These operations have also developed a body of understanding, expertise, and connectivity that is now being put to new and enhanced use as more and more U.S. colleges and universities engage internationally. Above all, what we have come to understand and what we are now in a position to enact reflects a conceptualization of such operations not just as U.S. operations but as mutually developed and mutually beneficial ones; in other words, as internationally constituted units in that can play a vital role in the internationally-collaborative forms of global learning that our students now need. Whatever form they take, the rapid growth of such overseas operations constitutes a profound change in U.S. higher education. Colleges and universities are no longer approaching international learning alone. They are finding ways to place themselves out in the world, and this changes the resources and modalities they employ in teaching their students, both at home and overseas.



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