

OTHERS' OPEN DOORS

How Other Nations Attract International Students

Implications for U.S. Educational Exchange

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Executive Summary

Demands around the world for higher education will rise in the next two decades along with economic growth and increasing global population, especially the 18-24 age cohort. More students are likely to seek to study in other nations as well, also continuing a 20-year increase. Many more and different opportunities will exist for young people to travel and study outside their own nations. This growth poses challenges and opportunities for U.S. higher education and U.S. Government agencies supporting higher education.¹

In a future of rapidly expanding demand for higher and specialized education, the U.S. is not involved in a zero-sum "competition" with other nations. We are not contesting for a declining resource. The numbers of international students and the potential for student mobility over the next several decades will likely be huge.

The United States has important educational, economic and social-cultural interests in maintaining, and even increasing, current international student enrollment in our institutions of higher education. Broad foreign policy and strategic national interests will also benefit.

Other nations have moved from an "aid" to a "trade" rationale in the past decade, and are considering an even broader "internationalization" orientation that involves a mix of long- and short-term study by international students on-campus, satellite campuses and joint programs abroad, and use of Distance Education. If current directions and interests continue, in the next 25 years higher education will transition from today's competition for numbers toward increased future collaboration.

Other nations, notably Australia, Great Britain, and Canada have recognized the benefits of international students attending their higher educational centers, and have developed clear national priorities and comprehensive strategies to attract a larger number of

international students.

Similarly, countries in which English is not a primary language, especially Germany, Japan, and France, are establishing special programs, including some in English, to attract international students.

Nevertheless, the Fulbright Exchange Program has no rivals. While other "receiving" nations have made great strides in attracting international students, there isn't a single national program that exceeds the combination of prestige, name recognition, historic impact and broad opportunity of the Fulbright program.² As the capstone exchange program of the U.S. government, the Fulbright Program, with its network of alumni associations around the world and participating non-governmental organizations, has the capacity to innovate and set creative examples for others in the realm of international education.

Each of the other players in the global educational arena have developed special programs and improved and expanded outreach activities, while also beginning to simplify procedures, streamline administration, and enhance governmental - educational cooperation. Each has initiatives worthy of emulation, including:

- The UK has made a formal national commitment -- from Tony Blair on down -- to increase market share, and has made a comprehensive analysis of the market, of national capacities and interests, and developed a public-private cooperative program. The 1999 Brand Report to shape a national higher/further education "identity" and to market that identity is a model.
- The British have established clear goals for major increases in international students in both higher and further education. Australian educators have framed a distinct set

¹ "Higher" education as used here and below includes "further" education, which includes community colleges, technical and professional training institutes or centers, as well as varied four-year degree granting colleges and universities.

² The British Rhodes Fellowships certainly "compete" in history and prestige; "Marshall" Fellows have similarly gained recognition, and the Chevening fellowships approximate Fulbright in numbers. Other nations proffer prestigious or numerous fellowships but not with the same appeal as Fulbrights.

of international educational benchmarks by which to assess progress. France and Japan have also set ambitious numerical goals.

- Australia, Canada, and the UK have initiated top-down national level coordination of government efforts and active cooperation with educational institutions and educational associations, enlisting a much wider set of stakeholders beyond the implementing entities and government agencies.
- Drawing on strengths in selected fields, Germany is developing a tailored set of international degree or certificate programs in science/technology and business fields, taught in English, with transferable credits and equivalence to other systems in order to attract international students.
- In late 1998, France announced a new initiative, EduFrance, with a target of attracting 500,000 students overall. With a budget of 100 million French francs for four years, the program will focus especially on students from Asia and Latin America. In addition, 500 new scholarships at the undergraduate level will be created, bringing the total to 20,000. (According to UNESCO in 1995-96 France attracted more than 138,000 international students, before the inception of EduFrance. Today approximately 140,000 foreign students attend French tertiary educational institutions.)
- Australia, Canada, France and the UK have improved their communications, particularly on the World Wide Web, and created attractive, easy-to-read and inviting sites. Australia in particular has established "one stop shopping" on the web for higher education information, application and visa procedures; web sites of involved governmental entities including the foreign affairs, immigration and educational/cultural services are mutually reinforcing and easily linked. The first image for potential applicants on the web site of Australia's DIMA (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs) is an invitation to international students to study in Australia!

- The UK and Australia have followed up their proposed outreach initiatives with additional funding. In the UK, an additional L5 million has been allocated for a three-year initiative.
- Educational institutions and associations in Australia, Canada and the UK have helped finance expanded outreach, marketing, testing and advising initiatives. The British employ both subscription and membership dues based on a formula of type of program and size of institution, and a fee structure for varied services.
- In the UK the British Council staff help train immigration officials and facilitate the issuance overseas of student visas. The British Council is mandated by the Government to help the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) speed, simplify and improve the user-friendliness of its visa procedures.
- Australia, Canada and the UK have focused on major markets and core countries in their outreach efforts. Each has a clear sense of priorities, based on the size of the potential market, proximity, historical ties, commercial, educational and foreign policy goals.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Other nations are credited with such advantages as central planning for educational outreach, more compact systems, top leadership involvement, relatively broader commitment of resources for outreach, improved coordination within governments and with the educational sector, and more aggressive marketing.

Lower cost (particularly with a strong dollar) is cited as a major advantage for some competing nations, as are proximity, historic ties, and greater focus. Our "competitors" are also credited with less cumbersome visa and college/university application procedures and speedier processing. They *may* benefit also from greater transferability of undergraduate courses, but at the graduate level, the U.S. degrees in general have equal or higher standing.

Our huge, diverse and complex educational system, widely recognized for its scope and creativity, is the number one advantage of the U.S. Even without a major national campaign by government, the higher education community and others, the U.S. continues to attract the lion's share of international students. U.S. graduate and professional education are world leaders, and plentiful research resources, excellent facilities and growing opportunities attract international students (especially graduates) and scholars. Thus the U.S., without an especially concerted national effort, has dominated the market for international students.

The U.S. also has an established network of some 450 advising centers worldwide, a small coterie of highly professional REACs (Regional Educational Advising Coordinators), field posts with experienced staffs in some 100 nations, and extensive government-higher education-NGO cooperation through cooperative arrangements for administration and implementation of State/ECA exchange programs, including IIE/CIES, IREX, ACTR, LASPAU, AED, AMIDEAST, and others.

Experts who have analyzed the U.S. and other nations' efforts tend to credit the more determined efforts by other countries for their rapid increase in market share. Many observers call for greater focus and leadership from the federal government and greater involvement by the national higher educational organizations.

Additionally, professionals in international education and exchange cite a number of obstacles to attracting more international students to U.S. colleges and universities, including complex and costly visa and testing requirements, overburdened and negative relations with consular offices abroad, policies that prejudice the application process or militate against families joining scholars, high costs, underfunded outreach programs and staffs, and poor public relations approaches to foreign students by some U.S. agencies.

Until recent years, the larger educational community did not fully recognize the competition abroad for student exchanges or fully mobilize public support, the Congress was indifferent and the Executive Branch was distracted by budget cuts and "higher" priorities. U.S. educational institutions individually have become more active in the 90s and major associations have spoken out in support of internationalization and exchange.

However, the U.S. has aptly been described as the "sleeping giant" in international student exchange.³

Conclusions

The President's April 19, 2000, executive memo asserts a national policy priority for international education, and, importantly, internationalizing education.⁴ This has created the mandate for the U.S. Government, in cooperation with higher education and other institutions, more systematically to attract international students and to develop other vital elements of a truly internationalized higher education. This is perfect timing; the educational and exchange communities are engaging more in the broad current of globalization affecting our economy and national life.

The next Administration should: (a) elevate international higher education exchange goals; (b) strengthen inter-agency cooperation; (c) seek innovation and leadership from the Fulbright Program and its worldwide network of U.S. and foreign agencies, NGOs, and 200,000 alumni, and (d) engage the higher education community, business and the professions in a sustained public-private endeavor. A wide ranging national effort is needed to identify interests, set goals and priorities, enlist support, and carry out a multi-faceted educational outreach program here and abroad.

It is important to approach the future of exchanges in the broader context of internationalizing higher education in the United States across the board. The number of foreign students in the U.S. is important, as is the number of American students going abroad for study and immersion in others' language and culture. Yet, educators, with government assistance, should better integrate these worthy goals into a broader strategy to build the capacity of U.S. colleges and universities to educate Americans, together with international students, for the new global realities of this century. Such a strategy will best advance domestic and international interests of the United States.

³ John Wells, "USA - Is the Sleeping Giant Stirring? A look at international education in North America," paper presented at a meeting of IDP Education Australia, an independent company promoting education in Australia, November 1999, in Freemantle.

⁴ Following the President's April 19 Memorandum on International Education Policy, on November 13, he issued a proclamation establishing November 13-20, 2000 as International Education Week.

A broader strategy based on public-private U.S. partnerships and long-term cooperation with other receiving and sending nations would:

- increase *sustained* study abroad by U.S. students,
- strengthen international studies curricula,
- renew and better finance foreign area and language programs,
- internationalize various disciplines and special fields,
- broaden international educational cooperation and distance education.

A successful U.S. global outreach strategy is likely to draw on all the elements of international education -- Fulbright-Hays Title VI *and* exchanges, more serious study abroad by American young people *as well* as more foreign students here, enhanced international education and internationalization of *all aspects* of U.S. higher education. The new communications technologies -- which this report can only touch on -- will enhance an integrated mix of approaches.

Recommendations

(1) Set a Near -Term Goal of Restoring to Forty Percent the U.S. Share of Global International Student Mobility (60 Percent among the four Anglophone nations.)

As international student numbers rise in coming decades, expand distance learning and offshore programs in cooperation with other receiving and sending nations (See Recommendations 7 and 8, below.)

Through intensified competitiveness, other receiving nations have begun to increase their numbers and share of the global student market. The U.S. percentage has slipped to approximately 32 percent from 40 percent a decade ago. With greater support in a few areas, streamlined procedures and some changes in regulations and process, recommended below, the U.S. ought to be able to increase its percentages.

This is a practical and achievable goal that would improve upon the current situation. As the global population of college age young people grows in coming decades, possibly leveling off before mid-21st century, the number of internationally mobile students will grow significantly. We and other receiving nations will be challenged to develop the instructional capacity and facilities to absorb increased numbers of international students. As a result, internationalists must anticipate and deal with public concerns here about not squeezing out American applicants.

(2) Build support for the President's April 19 memo through a public-private working group that will broaden the numbers of involved stakeholders in international education and outreach.

Consultations have already begun within the USG and with NGOs, especially those directly involved in international education exchange. The British, Australian and Canadian experience suggests the value of a very inclusive set of formally involved contributors from higher education, foundations, business, and civil society.

(3) Develop a comprehensive outreach strategy.

A public-private team or working group should in the next year develop a comprehensive strategic international outreach plan, with priorities, outreach strategy, regional or country

foci for marketing U.S. higher education abroad - equivalent to the Brand Report of the UK - and follow up steps.

(4) Significantly augment international outreach through increases in U.S. funding and contributions from higher education, business and foundations.

The U.S. Government should seek ways on a short-term basis to augment the funding of our outreach effort abroad. Pending the results of a strategic plan, and concomitant planning to strengthen international higher education in the U.S., the USG should then seek Congressional support for significant increases in overseas outreach and advisory services.

These increases should encourage support from the higher education community, foundations, and business, all of which have a stake in expanded and improved U.S. international education and in providing opportunities for foreign students to attend U.S. colleges, community colleges and universities.

(5) Strengthen communications tools, especially Internet applications for outreach.

With the Inter-agency Working Group or other USG coordinating mechanism and with its NGO partners, State/ECA should reassess and re-design communications tools for outreach, including a core set of home pages for federally sponsored or co-sponsored web sites abroad, that Fulbright Commissions, U.S. Embassy educational/cultural divisions and others could adapt for local use. Prominent links to international education home pages (both suppliers and consumers) should be featured on the initial home pages of the Departments of State and Education, as well as the INS, AID, NSF and Department of Commerce.

(6) Reduce impediments or disincentives such as cumbersome visa requirements. Re-examine CIPRIS requirements and procedures.

An Administration senior inter-agency working group should conduct a comprehensive review of visa regulations and procedures for foreign students and seek ways to simplify and expedite the process, and reduce impediments, e.g., relatively high costs, slow processing, renewal fees, and the F visa presumption of intent to remain in the U.S. The

review group should examine both formal and informal procedures affecting consular responses to educational visa applications, and recommend ways in which State/ECA and overseas educational/cultural staffs can constructively contribute to expedited visa processing.

(7) Help U.S. higher education expand international education capacity through distance learning (DL) and new combinations of study in the U.S. and at campuses abroad.

A combination of federal agencies, notably the Department of Education, State/ECA, AID and the NSF should, with the higher education community, examine ways to:

- Employ DL in Fulbright program grants, both those under Title VI and Fulbright Scholar/student grants as well as University Linkages;
- Foster the use of DL by US higher education institutions and systems in concert with counterparts abroad. If not already in existence, an on-line information exchange on the international use of DL in higher education should be considered by the involved departments and agencies with representatives of major U.S. college and university associations.
- Examine ways that overseas programs, in tandem with DL and study in the U.S. can serve future unmet needs abroad for U.S. or related study and degree programs bringing together American and non-American students in common learning experiences.

(8) Move Beyond Competition to Foster International Higher Education Partnerships.

If, as projected, the number of international students increases dramatically in the next two decades, the U.S. may find it difficult to provide facilities for 40 percent of the growing market. However, through a combination of increased opportunities in the U.S., distance learning and offshore activities, the U.S. could augment its international reach and capacity. Cooperation with other nations could enhance the effort. U.S. educational institutions would build on a foundation that has been set in recent years. Binational instrumentalities such as Fulbright Commissions abroad and other organizations could serve as intermediaries. American scholars and professionals and U.S.-trained academics would work with educators from other countries in developing collaborative

learning schemes. While profits, credit and identity would be shared, so also would responsibility. Multilateral as well as bilateral curricula and syllabi would eventuate.

Renewed commitment to international higher education equal in scope and impact to the NDLF and NDEA programs of the '60s, but appropriate to the new era, are needed. The U.S. Government, led by the Department of Education and State/ECA, in consultation with the Fulbright Scholarship Board, alumni, and overseas binational Commissions, should develop ideas for promoting international higher education collaboration. The consultative mechanism or working group begun in the spring of 2000 should be ongoing. Representation of major U.S. higher education associations, foundations and business is needed on a permanent basis.

As in # 7 above, the Administration might (a) create or use existing mechanisms to inform institutions of successful practices, (b) find ways to use U.S. Government grant funds to foster increased international educational/research collaboration, including notably the several elements of the Fulbright Program. The Inter-Agency Working Group on International Education and Training should feature particularly important instances of such collaboration culled from reports of participating departments and agencies.