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# Recent Developments in International Education at WMU

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## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AT WMU

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Western Michigan University has a long and proud history of engagement in global in international education and programs. Beginning with the establishment of our first Institute for International and Area Studies in 1960 under the auspices of a Ford Foundation grant, the university has always had some sort of administrative structure devoted to the pursuit of international goals. Presently the university has two offices specifically devoted to this purpose: the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for International and Area Studies (focusing on academic programs and Study Abroad), and the Office of International Affairs (primarily involved in international student recruitment and retention).<sup>1</sup> Both offices have been active in establishing international partnerships. The full spectrum of our university's official relationships abroad includes more than one hundred institutions as listed on our international website.

For many years international education in the United States has been composed of several elements. Easily the most visible of these has been the mobility of students and faculty across international borders. In the 2001-2002 academic year more than two thousand international students from more than one hundred countries enrolled at WMU. Although the numbers have declined since the fall of 2001—the result of increased security measures imposed by the federal government—we continue energetically to recruit and retain a thriving international community increasingly reflected by our graduate programs. Some five hundred WMU students also study each year outside the United States through more than sixty programs. Faculty exchanges and visiting professorships are increasing in number.

Another element of international education—international and area studies majors and minors—lay largely dormant for many years following the closure of our original institute in 1980 due to state budget reductions. Their revival was one of the principal reasons for establishment of the Haenicke Institute in 1999. In 2003 the university introduced a new undergraduate major and minor in global and international studies, strongly comparative and cross-cultural in nature, to accompany our venerable area studies programs on Asia, Latin America, and Europe. Africana Studies, developed in 2001, merged the programs in African studies and Black American Studies to reflect a curricular model increasingly popular at major research institutions.

The Haenicke Institute also administers the International Faculty Hiring Initiative, a salary pool set aside by President Haenicke in 1993 to encourage colleges and departments to broaden and deepen their faculty expertise in international and area studies, specifically by adding faculty whose research agenda involves a language other than English and who are vested in the process of mentoring students to develop foreign study and research experiences as part of the degree programs. Through the end of the 2003-2004 academic year WMU has added more than thirty new faculty lines as a result of this effort.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's footnote: This paper is based on information from 2004. Changes in the two offices may have occurred after publication.

Notwithstanding these achievements, WMU and other research institutions stand on the edge of a revolution in international education that will add challenging new dimensions to what we do. The challenge comes from new studies and position papers by major educational associations, most notably the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Commission on International Programs (CIP) of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC). WMU has joined the ACE Internationalization Collaborative, a consortium of some fifty institutions across the United States determined to learn from one another and share best practices in international education. I have been privileged to be a member of the CIP group for several years and to watch the new debates on international education unfold.

The new question before is simply this: **what makes a globally competent graduate of Western Michigan University?** It derives from the realization that, for all the importance we justifiably attach to international student recruitment, study abroad, and faculty mobility around the world for research, in most institutions the great majority of students are untouched by the results. The United States is rapidly becoming part of a vast, global society. Most of our students, and many of our faculty, devote little time and attention to this process, unless it is to assume that globalization simply means an extension of American values and priorities to the rest of the world. How do we find ways to bring the unprecedented changes wrought by globalization to the attention of students and into the mainstream of the curriculum and academic conversation at the university?

These are questions that go to the very root of liberal education. Global and international studies can no longer confine itself to the politics of international relations, or to the presentation of traditional societies as alternative models. Ecological issues are becoming so pressing that they invade the conversation at every turn. Demographic issues—the population of the world will increase by a number roughly equal to the student body at WMU during our meetings this morning, and by a number comparable to the population of Kalamazoo County by tomorrow morning—threaten to overwhelm every other consideration.

NASULGC, in particular recently has sought to characterize global competence for universities and their students. Some of the main points, for institutions as a whole are as follows:

- Internationalization as an integral part of the mission and strategic plan of the institution
- There is a strong dimension of international education in every facet of the curriculum
- The institution is committed to strengthening and expanding foreign language instruction, and to introducing and supporting new models of achieving a multilingual academic environment
- The institution is supportive of international faculty development with the majority of the faculty having had international research experience
- There is active and ongoing collaboration with institutions in other countries, and with other institutions in the United States through consortia devoted to international education
- The tenure and promotion system encourages and rewards international activity by faculty
- The campus culture promotes and values global and international education, and actively works to achieve synergies between these efforts and the determination to create a more diverse, multicultural, and inclusive institution

The institutional challenges implied by these criteria are formidable: WMU has achieved a great deal in many of these areas but has a long way to go in others. For students, the NASULGC criteria raise even more issues. Once defined in terms of social sciences or some humanities training, frequently with an overlay of foreign language study, global competence now covers every discipline. Here are at least a few of the consequences:

- Students should know how their fields, the majors, function globally. Who drives the paradigm changes, what are the best practices around the world—and so as not to re-invent square wheels, what practices don't work and have been shown not to work. In sum, each discipline must become intellectually diverse.
- We need to create as many opportunities as possible for study abroad that are discipline-specific: internships, practica, field research and field experiences. At present this need presents the greatest challenge for our study abroad programs, with more students going in smaller numbers to more places, demanding faculty supervision, raising accreditation and other issues.
- In general education and liberal education we need to find new ways to focus the balance of passion and critical judgment, of conviction and systematic doubt, that is so important to higher education and life success in general. We need to produce students sufficiently familiar with the major facets of globalization so that they are not only capable of critical decision-making but also convinced that they can work successfully for change.

In order to move forward with these new agendas, all the while maintaining the strength and vitality of our traditional areas of international activity, we need to do two things: restructure our administrative operations in international education, and engage the campus community in the conversation about global and international change.

By the end of 2005 the university will complete a process of administrative integration of its major components of international education and programs: The Haenicke Institute, Office of Study Abroad, Office of International Affairs, Office of International Student and Scholar Services, and the Career English Language Center for International Students (CELCIS).<sup>2</sup> We are doing so in part because we cannot continue in our current fiscal climate to replicate overlapping services and activities in these offices, but even more because we need to allocate personnel and resources to new objectives. This new entity, yet to be identified with an official name, will continue our established international activities but also devote attention to several new areas:

- Integration and vitality of our international partnerships by seeking to build not just as series of dyadic relationships but a community and network of collaborative institutions for research, faculty and student exchange, and international projects
- Advancement and development, including significant increases in grant proposal submission, solicitation of support, public relations and alumni relations

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<sup>2</sup> At the date of publication, the integration process has been completed: the following units have been consolidated into the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education:

Office of International Student and Scholar Services  
Office of Study Abroad  
Career English Language Center for International Students (CELCIS)  
Twinning Programs  
Office of International Affairs  
Diether H. Haenicke Institute for International and Area Studies.

- Communication, including a complete restructuring and expansion of our international website as an interactive resource tool, closer liaison among international education committees operating in our colleges, public affirmation of the international accomplishments of our university and its people, and enhancement of the level of dialogue about globalization at WMU
- Enrollment management, integrating international student recruitment with enhanced resources for counseling and advising, curricular intervention, and participation of international students in the ongoing life of the university
- An immigration unit to pull together the efforts of several offices to attend to the increasingly complex problems and processes associated with faculty and student mobility, including clear policies for international travel and travel safety for those going abroad under the aegis of the university
- New programs in faculty development, including a faculty associate program for curriculum development and enhanced input of critical disciplines, such as foreign languages, into the strategic planning of international education
- Build synergies between internationalization and the WMU Diversity Initiative established by President Bailey in 2003

We hope that these administrative developments will also help to catalyze the discussion about globalization in our university. I want to conclude with some early observations about where that discussion seems to be going.

When Provost Timothy Light approached me in 1999 about taking on the directorship of the Haenicke Institute he gave me a characteristically succinct charge: "Globalize and internationalize the academic environment of Western Michigan University." When I asked what that was supposed to mean, he replied: "You'll know if it's working." I have taken that charge as an opportunity to facilitate as many conversations as possible with faculty, faculty groups, staff and students, and to encourage initiatives as they emerge. What is emerging is a dialogue about how individuals, families, small groups, communities, and regions encounter and negotiate the forces of globalization, in a manner that continues the social and cultural integrity of these individuals and units. This is a dialogue about how people seek meaningful lives in the face of the kinds of change that most often threaten anonymity, and how people in all walks of life can cultivate in themselves a sense that globalization is empowering as well as threatening. It offers new ways to preserve and invigorate the wealth of cultural and other diversity as well as opening societies to a wealth of new ideas and alternatives. If that sounds anything like the venerable goals of liberal education, it should. It really suggests not only what globalization is all about, but also what we need to do in providing the wherewithal for global competence for our own students.