

## **Bringing the World to a Rural Campus**

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*In July 2021 the United States Department of State and United States Department of Education released a joint statement on the need for higher education to be global. At rural universities across our nation this can be a challenge. One method to globalize the curriculum and experience of students is to utilize the international students studying on your campus. In the fall 2019 this method was used for a cultural mentoring project pairing international MBA students with undergraduate students in an introductory course. This led to student sharing their experiences and cultural exchanges increasing the global and intercultural competence of all the students involved.*

*Keywords: global competence, intercultural competence, internationalization, cultural competence, rural universities, cultural mentoring*

### **INTRODUCTION**

With the continued globalization of the workforce today it is becoming increasingly important for today's workers to be globally competent. For workers to be globally competent they must begin to gain the necessary skills while completing their college education. To gain these global competencies, institutions of higher education need to provide students with formal and informal experience and education in global settings.

In a joint statement (2021) from the US Department of State and the US Department of education, they say "The robust exchange of students, researchers, scholars, and educators, along with broader international education efforts between the United States and other countries, strengthens relationships between current and future leaders. These relationships must address shared challenges, enhance American prosperity, and contribute to global peace and security." (pg. 1)

Global and intercultural competence has to be acquired through specific formal and informal experience for students to have the greatest gains during their college experience.

These experiences begin before college and continue to develop further during their time in college. Universities should provide opportunities for all students to be exposed to intercultural and global events in the curriculum and in extracurricular activities. This exposure provides students the opportunity to gain global and intercultural competency skills.

Higher education has put in place many initiatives and educational opportunities to assist students in gaining higher intercultural competence upon graduation. One effort used throughout higher education has been the internationalization of the curriculum and experience while attending school. The university curriculum has long been an environment of internationalization; over the past two of decades, renewed efforts have brought attention back to internationalized courses and college experiences. The American

Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) is one of numerous organizations leading this renewed attention on internationalization efforts. The AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) a national initiative of advocacy and action has been working towards all students having a twenty-first century education emphasizing global and intercultural competence and knowledge, civic-mindedness, and connections between the human, physical and natural worlds.

While not all graduates seek positions in global firms, all graduates need to be good global citizens to succeed in the workplace. Global citizenship includes, values and ethics, social responsibility, awareness, connectivity, and engagement with other people, cultures, the environment, and oneself. With the ever-increasing globalized workforce, all higher education graduates should be good global citizens to be productive in today's workforce and in the future. To cultivate the needed intercultural and global competencies for graduates, higher education has to utilize multifaceted approaches to internationalizing the curriculum and college experiences for students.

One popular approach to globalize the curriculum has been the increase of participation in study abroad. Universities are not only trying to increase the number of students they send overseas to study abroad, they are attempting to increase the number of international students attending their campuses.

Internationalization has been one of the most powerful forces and biggest movements in higher education over the past two decades in American universities, especially following the unfortunate events of September 11th 2001. With a renewed interest in the internationalization of the curriculum since the turn of the last century, many efforts have been made to increase the international, global and intercultural competence of the university experience. In the past decade major initiatives and efforts from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), and American Council on Education (ACE) have been undertaken to renew the internationalized curriculum of American higher education. These efforts have included intercultural/multicultural centers on campuses, increased participation in study abroad, and an increase in bringing international students to university campuses in the United States. While these initiatives have been put in place, they have not been as effective or met the expected results (Salisbury, 2015; Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013; Kelly, 2010).

Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) state "higher education can't opt out of the global environment since its effects are unavoidable" (p. 7). Internationalization is not a national effort but rather a global effort. News about internationalization in higher education moves quickly across borders and the Internet and other forms of communication allow this to happen instantly. Internationalization efforts at one institution is often examined, considered or implemented by other institutions in other regions of the world (Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisburg, 2012). This implementation of internationalization of the curriculum can lead to undesired results if the initiative was not properly assessed before being copied elsewhere.

Rumbley, Altbach, and Reisburg (2012) provide a summary list of central themes of major key aspects of internationalization in higher education. While not an exhaustive list, it highlights the multifaceted nature of internationalization and its effect on individuals, institutions, and national and regional higher education systems. The list includes:

- The increasing number of internationally mobile students and scholars, moving to and from ever more diverse locations
- The rapid growth in cross-border educational provision
- The push to achieve world-class status
- The interest in producing globally competent graduates capable of understanding and functioning in a complex and interconnected world
- The increasing prevalence of the English language for teaching and research
- The significant emphasis on cooperative networking among higher education institutions and national higher education systems
- The overt efforts by individual institutions and national higher education systems to compete internationally
- The dramatic increase in the commercialization of international education, particularly in terms of the growing opportunities available to for-profit enterprises.

The rationale for internationalization has changed over time and has multiple players involved in the rationale. Four categories of rationale were present in 1999, Academic, Economic, Political and Social. By 2008 there were two levels identified, institutional and national. Surveys conducted by the International Association of Universities (IAU) in 2005 and 2009 found a major rationale for internationalizing in higher education was for preparing students to be interculturally competent (Knight, 2012).

A development in internationalizing higher education has been the division of “internationalization at home” and “cross-border education”. Internationalization at home includes campus-based strategies and initiatives that include international and intercultural dimensions to teaching/learning, curriculum, research, extracurricular activities, and relationships with ethnic and cultural groups. Additionally, the “at home” concept includes integrating foreign students and scholars into campus activities (Knight, 2012). Cross-border education is the mobility and movement of people, programs, providers, policies, knowledge, ideas, services and projects across national boundaries (Knight, 2012).

The efforts to internationalize the curriculum in the United States the past two decades has been fueled by political action. To achieve international and global citizenry the bi-partisan Lincoln Commission Report (2005) to congress stated that a massive increase in the global literacy and awareness of the college graduate is required (Stoner, et al., 2014). The American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAA&S, 2013) states that graduates need to be prepared to participate in the global economy and understand diverse cultures and be able to work with people from around the world. The AAA&S focuses on language learning, expanding education in international affairs and transnational studies and supporting study abroad and student exchange programs (Stoner, et al., 2014). The National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) published a report identifying global and local civic knowledge and engagement and intercultural knowledge and competence as essential learning outcomes for university graduates (Stoner, et al., 2014). For college graduates to be competitive for employment opportunities, they must be able to operate in an expanding global economy. Universities should be obligated to provide these skills by creating and expanding robust curricula and other initiatives on campus that help foster these needed skills (Stoner, et al., 2014).

The Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AAC&U) Greater Expectations report identified that colleges and universities should create settings that foster students understanding of their connectedness to local and global issues and their responsibility to act as global citizens. Additionally, students should be able to learn about human imagination, expression, and the products of many cultures and those interrelations within global and cross-cultural communities (Nair, Norman, Tucker, & Burkert, 2012). One of the biggest efforts to provide this opportunity has been the AAC&U’s Liberal Education and America’s Promise a national advocacy and action initiative working towards all students having a twenty first century education that emphasizes global and intercultural competence and knowledge, civic-mindedness and connections between the human, physical and natural worlds.

### **Liberal Education and America’s Promise**

In response to the need to have a greater emphasis on the intercultural, global and internationalized curriculum in higher education, the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AAC&U) launched their Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative. From this initiative many actions and advocacy efforts have been put in place at higher education institutions across America. One of the core outcomes of this initiative is greater intercultural and global knowledge and competencies. This research was conducted at a LEAP institution that has in place high-impact educational practices towards intercultural and global competence.

Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) is a national advocacy, campus action, and research initiative promoting twenty-first-century liberal education for student success and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015). This initiative aims to make excellence inclusive by providing essential learning outcomes, high-impact educational practices (HIPs), and authentic assessments.

Through the AAC&U, the LEAP initiative provides national, state, and institutional leadership; campus-based reform and funded campus and state system initiatives; research and resources on

documenting student success; research on the economic value of liberal education outcomes. The LEAP National Leadership Council is comprised of education, business, community and policy leaders who advocate nationally for liberal education. The Campus Action Network (CAN) supports LEAP efforts at the institutional level ensuring students achieve Essential Learning Outcomes. The LEAP States Initiative brings together state system leaders, institutional administrators, and faculty from two- and four-year schools across states to improve inclusion and success for all students. LEAP states are formally collaborative and organized at the state or system level, currently, there are 13 LEAP states (Watson, 2018).

The LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes include knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; intellectual and practical skills; personal and social responsibility, integrative and applied learning. Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world is developed through study in the sciences, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages and the arts. Intellectual and practical skills include: inquiry and analysis; critical and creative writing; written and oral communication, quantitative and information literacy; and teamwork and problem-solving. Personal and social responsibility includes: civic knowledge and engagement – local and global; intercultural knowledge and competence; ethical reasoning and action; foundation and skills for lifelong learning anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges. Integrative and applied learning, including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies, is demonstrated through applying knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.

Intercultural competence and global competence are needed for graduates that aspire to global leadership positions. While not every graduate has the aspiration to lead in their future, all graduates need to be aware of the globalized world they are entering. Having intercultural and global knowledge is an essential skill in the diverse and globalized workforce at all levels of employment following graduation. Additional efforts have been made to create more global citizens within higher education to meet this need.

### **Global Citizenship**

Globalization is not a new paradigm; rather it has been happening throughout history. As technology has accelerated globalization, connectivity, and communication, becoming global citizens is now more important than before. Global citizenship can be traced back to the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations (Dower & Williams, 2002). Carter (2016) states the universal values and moral obligations that comprise global citizenship can be traced back thousands of years in a variety of Eastern and Western Religious traditions and through the evolution of legal and political thought deriving from classical Greece and Rome (Carter, 2016). The ideologies behind global citizenship are not new, rather can be found throughout history in various contexts. However, today as the world has become more connected through travel and technology, being a global citizen is more necessary than ever before.

Global citizenship is not well defined into one discipline, rather it is multidisciplinary as an idea and in its definition, and the concept of global citizenship has been theorized across disciplines including politics, theology, education, psychology, geography, developmental, and management (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013). In addition to the multidisciplinary discussion of the term, alternative terms are used, though have similar, if not identical meanings. The list of alternative terms includes world citizenship, cosmopolitan citizenship and globally oriented citizenship (Byram & Parmenter, 2015). Others have theorized that “global citizens” are concerned about social justice, while “world citizens” are concerned with trade and mobility, and “earth citizens” are concerned with the environment (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013, p. 859). While many theories and perspectives are given, this research will focus on how high education institutions have accepted the challenge to educate students to be better global citizens, with a working definition that has been accepted by academics and found within the literature.

With the ever-increasing role of globalization in education, more and more institutions have increased their focus on internationalizing or globalizing their curriculum. Efforts have been supported by political initiatives, economic factors and educational institutions alike (Abraham Lincoln Commission, 2005; AAC&U, 2007; Perry, Stoner and Tarrant, 2012).

Through these efforts, many worldwide higher education institutions worldwide have implemented international and global education elements into their curriculum, campus events, university mission statements and outcomes, and other initiatives to improve students' global awareness and global citizenship.

Global Citizenship has been defined as (1) global awareness (understanding and appreciation of one's self in the world and of world issues), (2) social responsibility (concern for others, for society at large, and for the environment), and (3) civic engagement (active engagement with local, regional, national and global community issues) (Stoner, Perry, Wadsworth, Stoner, & Tarrant, 2014). Additionally, global citizenship has been defined as a "meritorious viewpoint that suggests that global forms of belonging, responsibility, and political action counter the intolerance and ignorance that more provincial and parochial forms of citizenship encourage" (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2012, p. 361).

Furthermore, Backhouse (2005) states that global citizens understand the interdependency of the world and its inhabitants, and the connective links that exist between all living things (Backhouse, 2005). While a singular definition has not been developed, most would agree that global citizenship includes, values and ethics, social responsibility, awareness, connectivity, and engagement to other people, cultures, the environment, and oneself.

Education towards global citizenship has primarily been based on social justice themes, including a civic engagement, structural and historical-cultural analysis (Stoner, et al., 2014). With directives from political and academic organizations colleges and universities have begun to internationalize their curriculum and programs to include elements that develop global citizenship and awareness to better prepare student for the globalized workforce (Stoner, et al., 2014). Efforts towards international education have included the addition to international, global and intercultural courses, events and student organization on campuses around the United States. To prepare students for a global workforce, many institutions and programs have made efforts to increase study abroad participation and the number of international students on American campuses.

### **Globalizing the Classroom**

Students from a rural, public, regional university participated in weekly intercultural mentoring sessions with international MBA students from various countries. The sample included a class of 21 students, separated into five groups of approximately four each. Each participant, including the cultural mentors, was assessed with a pretest and posttest of intercultural competence and a demographic questionnaire, included with the pretest, to capture data on precollege characteristics and college experiences.

The students spent one class period a week over ten weeks, 50 minutes each, in groups discussing various cultural topics. The conversations were two way in that each group member was sharing their experiences. The cultural mentor led the group conversations and they were given topic ideas to start the conversation each week. These topics ranged from what holiday celebrations are like, what clothes and food they wear and eat, to what are social injustices in your country, to name a few. The students were rotated into new groups about four times over the ten weeks to have experience and conversations with multiple mentors.

This intercultural mentoring project shows one example of a high impact formalized program to help improve students' global and intercultural competence. If university graduates then leave with improved global and intercultural competencies, they will be better prepared to enter today's globalized workforce. Bringing the world to rural campuses with programs like this one, helps to meet the needed global and intercultural competencies for today and tomorrow's workforce.

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