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Internationalization? You Gotta Be Serious!

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Increasingly, universities find themselves placing 'internationalization' in their missions and vision statements. Examples abound of statements relating to the global citizen, international status and ranking, international research, partnerships and so on. For many, however, internationalization is more often related to attracting international students in order to increase revenue flows.

However, internationalization is more than increasing numbers of students. As the 'market' for education and research is becoming globalized, the trend is now towards the establishment and development of international partnerships that work at enabling both teaching and research in the higher educational context. Partnerships are increasingly important because of the sheer number of potential opportunities when considering a global marketplace. There are millions of higher education providers who all purport at some level to teach high-quality courses and to conduct knowledge generating research. How to choose from among them?

While the number of potential opportunities is myriad, an important base point is 'Why bother with internationalization at all?' Internationalization is expensive in terms of the time, effort, and money spent and has few clearly identifiable benefits at a local level—most benefits accrue to the host country at a national level. Further, international collaboration, be it student mobility or research collaboration is likely to be challenging as one wades through the complexities of national and international government policies and procedures. Finding your way through international bureaucracy is not a task for the faint hearted or ill-informed!

So, why should internationalization be pursued? A primary reason is that in a global marketplace, no one wants to be seen as 'second class'—reputation is paramount in the educational market when there are so few tangibles to sell. Reputation can be established through advocacy and ambassadorship. These come about through having international 'others' aware of your reputation. Unless you have massive advertising budgets, the way they become aware is either through international journals (assuming they are reading the same ones that you write in), or through international relationships and alliances. In the latter case, the attachment to your 'brand' is likely to be more emotional and persuasive as the familiarity is increased by being personalized.

In a global marketplace, a successful 'brand' requires global brand equity. This can be gradually built up over time by establishing relationships with other global players with similar 'brand attributes' and thus leveraging off each others brands in different geographic markets. Brand equity is important to business schools because prospective students, alumni donors, research funding partners, and faculty (both prospective and existing) all require reassurance that the investment they are making is a sound one.

Beyond brand equity building, an investment in internationalization also benefits staff and students through knowledge transfer, the development of an internationally enabled workforce, increased trade opportunities, increased international networks and relationships, among other outcomes. Further benefits of internationalization are a greater capacity to compete in the global arena,



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enhanced opportunities for research collaboration, a more cosmopolitan faculty and student profile, and an ability for graduates to take their place on the world stage—after all, many students will end up working for multinational corporations. International collegial relations enhance reputation and research opportunities.

An ambitious goal as an outcome of internationalization is ‘world peace,’ which may be generated as a result of greater understanding of different cultures and the challenges faced by others in a rapidly globalizing world.

However, world peace may be a little way off as there are many barriers to internationalization for universities and business schools. One of the major barriers to internationalization was referred to above. The complexity and scope of opportunities is often beyond the capacity of a regional community college to resource and manage. Another barrier is that of the time it takes to establish and manage an international program of any kind. Not the least of which is deciding what it means to be ‘international’ at all. For example, will internationalization incorporate teaching and research or simply teaching? Will it involve international experiences for students and staff or simply students?

A further barrier is that of ‘it is not my job.’ Who should be responsible for the production of global citizens? Should this be a university at all? Should not the governments of the day (who are, after all, the major beneficiaries) be the entity that legislates, resources, and manages the production of global citizens? The costs involved are often of such a large scale that it is preferable to devolve them to someone else. The entity which is the last in line of this devolution of costs may be the least able to support the expense of internationalization.

Yet another barrier is that in most English-speaking regions, internationalization is seen as an optional extra. Business students do not need to develop language skills as the language of ‘business’ is most often English. This limits the motivation for both staff and students to invest any time in learning about in-

ternational issues. While there may be some token efforts to embrace diversity and intercultural competencies, these are most often positioned within an intranational, not international framework. A quick review of international marketing textbooks will find that international sometimes means the next country not the next continent. If staff are writing in such limited contexts in support of their teaching, what hope is there for their international research efforts?

Despite the barriers to internationalization, it remains a key priority for a university (or business school) wanting to take their place on the world stage. It is no longer an optional extra to be decided when and if resources become available. The world of education is globalizing. From this perspective, only globally relevant brands will be the leaders of the future. So, how to ensure that you are one of the global brands?

Firstly, internationalization should be a key component of any strategic planning or goal-setting process. The plan should be fully integrated with any other plans that exist within the organization and should be appropriately resourced. Importantly, someone senior within the organization should be responsible for the implementation of any activities resulting from the plan. Ideally, the university will be completely on board with the most senior officers of the university able to clearly articulate the value of internationalization. However, at the very least, the dean of the business school should undertake to champion internationalization.

The business school should have its own internationalization plan that is properly resourced. The costs of internationalization should be clearly recognized and a strategic decision made as to its value within the organization. The value is not always going to equate to a tangible ‘return on investment’ in any economic sense. Hence, there is a need to ensure that internationalization activities are adequately resourced even when times are tough. Annual budget cycles being what they are, internationalization can often be left off the agenda; simply because people do not understand the

long-term strategic value. Once again, someone senior in the business school must be accountable for internationalization activities.

Using the ‘if you don’t measure it, it doesn’t get done’ axiom, the internationalization plan should have measurable performance indicators. These are likely to be output or input measures rather than outcome measures. Outcomes are potentially at too great a distance to be measured in the traditional sense of the word. However, some measures should be developed which will be suitable proxies for the outcomes you seek. Internationalization performance should be recognized and rewarded. Rewards in this context do not have to be monetary. Rewards can be as simple as allowing the activity to occur as part of someone’s normal duties. Much internationalization zeal is lost in the need to constantly find ‘spare’ time and energy to participate. Recognition can be as simple as an award for internationalization (a certificate to hang on the wall costs very little).

If you are starting from the beginning, ‘appropriate resourcing’ is relative to your capacity to invest. In this sense, you might consider conducting a self-assessed audit of your internationalization activities. There are many online survey tools that will even do basic analyses of the data collected. The fact of asking the questions is as important as having the answers. By asking the question, staff are made aware that the issue is something they are personally responsible for and they make changes to their behaviors so that they can answer more positively the next time. Of course, if the activity is beyond the scope of an individual, there needs to be more investment by the business school or university.

The number and type of partnerships entered into should be closely monitored for ‘span of control’ elements. Credit transfer agreements are readily available but are they really strategic? Will they be able to be leveraged for access to markets and research opportunities? Are they targeted or simply opportunistic? A proactive approach is required in addition to ensuring that any relationships which are established can be managed

appropriately. Partnerships should be assigned 'champions' to ensure that the relationship is managed and maintained over time. Too often, relationships are started by enthusiastic individuals who then leave the organization, and the relationship is left to flounder. This in turn decreases the reputation of the university as the partnership dissolves, at best amicably and at worst acrimoniously. Relationship succession planning with international partners is very important. Keeping the relationship records up to date is equally important—knowing that you already divorced that partner for non-performance is very useful information for the next enthusiastic seeker of new horizons! Accepting that not all partnerships work in your best interests is also an important step in negotiating apposite relationships. However, you do need to develop criteria for assessment of relationships and performance indicators that are transparent to all. Once again, monitoring of performance is necessary.

A multiplicity of factors will need to be considered—each of these factors may be unique to the partner and the outcomes you seek.

Because enthusiastic individuals are required for internationalization to 'work,' mechanisms need to be established that enhance opportunities. For example, short-term staff exchanges, small research grants, rewarding international collaboration, and so on. Motivating the individual to contribute to the internationalization agenda is important to successful outcomes for the business school or university. Internationalization does not 'just happen.' Those universities with global reputations have 'invested' much time and effort, usually over many years, to get where they are today. It all starts with small steps, but you have to be very serious about which steps you take in which direction. ■

Bonini, from page 5

research to be promoted and get tenured. So early in one's career, it probably should get first priority.

Concluding Remarks

It was a great honor for me to have an opportunity to interview with Professor Charles P. Bonini, a renowned scholar in the field of operations research. I particularly appreciated his comments on the development of decision analysis from a historical point of view, as well as its future potential. It is encouraging that the research on decision-sciences-related fields has been growing in a promising direction and the Institute continues to provide a vehicle for business faculty from a variety of areas to communicate and share their research. As a faculty member in an institution known for its engineering traditions, I am heartened by the potential for collaboration among engineering and business faculty. ■

Letter to the Editor

March 20, 2009

Thanks for publishing "Web-Based Instruction Improves Teaching" (*Decision Line*, Jan. 2009, pp. 4-6). Many of us have been following the web-based homework debate with interest, and I am grateful to Jay Heizer and Barry Render for providing an advanced copy of the article and a demo of the Prentice Hall Grade Assist (PHGA) for my adoption in 2008. That said, after one semester with PHGA, I reverted to writing and grading my own homework questions out of a concern that I was trading richness of student thinking for personal convenience. Despite the many advantages, I don't see a way to immerse students in an environment of open-ended homework and activities using a web-based system.

Why open-ended? There's a mathematics education literature spanning the

last 20 years on the value of open-ended questions in homework and assessment. Elizabeth Badger and Brenda Thomas wrote in 1992, "Open-ended questions are not multiple-choice questions without options. They are not questions that demand a single correct response. Nor are they questions where any response is acceptable. Rather, open-ended questions address the essential concepts, processes, and skills that go beyond the specifics of instruction to define a subject area. In general, they require complex thinking and yield multiple solutions" (Badger & Thomas, 1992).

Researchers found that open-ended problems encourage deeper student learning, instill more student confidence, and give more conceptual (less mechanical, procedural) understanding that is more readily applied in unfamiliar situations. Much of this research applies to quantitative college subjects, like Operations Management.

When the benefits of web-based homework are measured by exam performance—that is, a metric based on similar "closed" questions—it is not surprising that automating the practice of such problems results in improvement. The question is this: how deeply do the students retain the material, say, five years from now? It's an open question.

I invite anyone interested in this literature (and examples of open-ended questions) to browse a survey essay at

<http://blsciblogs.baruch.cuny.edu/millhiser/teaching>.

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Reference

Badger, E., & Thomas, B. (1992). Open-ended questions in reading. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation*, 3(4), <http://pareonline.net> ■