

Comprehensive Internationalization and International Branch Campuses: The Case for More

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Abstract

Institutions across the United States have made a push towards globalization and international education. More recently there has been a push towards comprehensive internationalization, which makes the commitment of ensuring internationalization occurs through all areas of an institution. As the global competition of higher education has risen, U.S. institutions should incorporate comprehensive internationalization and establish international branch campuses in order to remain competitive, increase international student enrollment, diversify the student population, and enhance global and multicultural learning.

Keywords

Internationalization, international branch campuses, globalization, international education

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Introduction

Institutions across the U.S. have made a push towards globalization and international education in recent decades. New terms such as internationalization, intercultural awareness, interconnected world, and global society are now commonly seen in university strategic plans, mission statements, and vision statements. More recent is the emphasis of comprehensive internationalization, a term popularized by the American Council on Education (ACE) (Hudzik, 2011). This new approach brings a holistic look at internationalization and incorporates cross-sector and interdisciplinary units to serve all students. When implemented well, comprehensive internationalization encompasses nearly all areas of an institution and becomes an integral component of an institution. Comprehensive internationalization forces institutions to move beyond simply recruiting and admitting international students. It requires incorporating students, staff, faculty, and administration on the move towards comprehensive internationalization because it must affect all areas of an institution: from student affairs to academic affairs, from the textbooks and classroom to the curricula, and from policies to practices. The ACE has divided it into six interconnect parts: 1) articulated institutional commitment, 2) administrative leadership, structure, and staffing, 3) curriculum, co-curriculum, and learning outcomes, 4) faculty policies and practices, 5) student mobility, and 6) collaboration and partnerships (ACE, n.d.).

Though some may believe that comprehensive internationalization is only about increasing international student enrollment, comprehensive internationalization is much more than that. It is important to note, however, that comprehensive internationalization does not comprise of just one model. There are many approaches to internationalization, and institutions should implement comprehensive internationalization as best as they can. In order not to limit the scope of comprehensive internationalization nor mischaracterize its intention, it is important for institutions and stakeholders to understand the scope of the definition of comprehensive internationalization:

Comprehensive internationalization is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility.

Comprehensive internationalization not only impacts all of campus life but the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. The global reconfiguration of economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalization and the motivations and purposes driving it. (Hudzik, 2011, p. 6)

For many institutions, internationalization has meant a focus on the recruitment, admission, and enrollment of international students. In fact, the pool of international students willing to pay tuition at U.S. institutions expanded remarkably in the last two decades (Bound et al., 2016). The increase in international student enrollment was not only a result of internationalization, however. It was also a result of the decreasing state appropriations provided to institutions. States have reduced state appropriations for several years not only in its share of total budgets for institutions but also in the total state dollars. In the 2007/08 academic year, it was approximately \$89.7 billion but had declined to \$74.8 billion by 2011/12, though there has been a slight increase in recent years (State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, 2019). Bound et al. (2016) argued that between 1996 and 2012 there was a 10% reduction in state appropriations, which resulted in an increase in international enrollment of 12% at public research universities, and approximately 17% at "the more restrictive AAU and Flagship classifications" (p. 16). They argued that many public research institutions could have been severely impacted by the cuts in state

appropriations had it not been for international students who often pay full tuition, partially offsetting the loss in appropriations.

This article includes arguments in favor of comprehensive internationalization and, more specifically, of the enrollment of international students. Furthermore, it makes the argument that investing in international education and international students is investing in all students. The second section in this article focuses on the need for U.S. institutions to be globally competitive in a time where global competition in higher education is becoming tougher. Higher education is already extremely competitive, and institutions are also competing on a global scale for students, faculty, administrators, funding, and grants. The third section discusses the practice of international student enrollment cross-subsidies to avoid the crowding out of domestic students. This section provides a counterargument to the argument that international students take away the enrollment of a domestic student. This article ends with a discussion on how international branch campuses can facilitate comprehensive internationalization and provide U.S. institutions a competitive edge.

Global Competition

For decades, students and scholars around the world viewed the U.S. as the heart of scholarly work and higher education (Alberts, 2007; Freeman, 2010). International students from around the world have sought high-quality academic work from U.S. institutions for many years, but this view has lost prominence in recent decades. In 2001, the U.S. enrolled 28% of the 2.1 million globally mobile students in higher education (Institute of International Education (IIE), 2018a). By 2017, the number of globally mobile students had doubled to 4.6 million, but the U.S. only enrolled 24% of those students. When looking at total enrollment and shares of worldwide enrollments in higher education, the shares of world enrollment does not look as promising for the U.S.

The quality of higher education around the world is improving, and other countries are increasingly more competitive in the global academic arena during a time students and scholars view the U.S. as less competitive than in prior decades (Freeman, 2010). In fact, Freeman (2010) argued that the U.S. will continue to lose its competitive edge, including in the fields of science and engineering, which have been an area of focus in U.S. higher education. In the 2017/18 academic year, international student enrollment at U.S. institutions saw its smallest increase in over 10 years, an increase of only 1.5% from the year before (IIE, 2018b). Since 2014/15 the annual percentage change has been smaller each year, and it is expected to continue. The United Kingdom has a different story. Between 1994/95 and 2011/12, the total number of international students studying in the UK quadrupled (Machin & Murphy, 2017). The UK is one country among many that has been far more active than the U.S. in seeking international students (Freeman, 2010).

IIE (2018a) reported that Canada, Germany, Japan, and China have all initiated policies that recruit international students and aim to retain them in the labor workforce upon graduation. Canada aims to enroll 450,000 international students by 2022; Japan, 300,000; Germany, 350,000; and China, 500,000. Over time, universities around the world will continue to improve their institutions of higher education and seek to retain their in-country students. All these efforts are making it more difficult for U.S. institutions to recruit the best and brightest international students from around the world. Ultimately, U.S. institutions are being challenged to maintain the status as the world leader in quality higher education, despite increasingly competitive institutions outside the U.S.

Why International Student Enrollment?

Many institutions throughout the U.S. have increased their international student

enrollment. The reasons for this are likely quite varied, and discussing all of them is beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to discuss a few reasons. First, comprehensive internationalization has become integral for many institutions because of the very nature of the globalized world in which we live. We are living in times where we can easily access the “global market of products, services, and ideas” (Hudzik, 2011, p. 8). In fact, many countries and economic sectors exist with a reliance on what exists beyond national borders.

Regarding higher education, it has become an obligation to prepare students for this global world. Our future leaders and workforce must be globally minded and ready for the globalized world and the global workforce, and comprehensive internationalization is a response to the impact of globalization (Knight, 1999). Many universities have acknowledged the importance of intercultural and global understanding such that they have become embedded in strategic plans and curricula. In this global world, it is imperative that students engage in crucial intercultural and global understanding, discussion, and collaboration. Therefore, it is necessary for institutions of higher education to facilitate this engagement and transformative learning. Comprehensive internationalization integrates aspects of student engagement and transformative learning perfectly.

Institutions already have international elements in their curricula, and an increase of international students in classrooms makes the topics being discussed more meaningful to all students. A diverse student body expands cross-cultural knowledge and understanding (Hudzik, 2011) and raises awareness of new or different ways of perceiving and living in a world full of diversity. This is a start, but U.S. institutions must incorporate comprehensive internationalization into their strategic planning and missions.

Institutions can further implement comprehensive internationalization into their curricula in several ways, and ACE has provided a framework for institutions (ACE, n.d.). First, institutions can continue to offer courses that they have identified as fulfilling internationalization efforts as requirements. This may include regional, global, or topic issues or studies. Many institutions require three to six credit hours of a foreign language. Other institutions may require students to enroll in a course or courses that focus on global or regional issues. Secondly, institutions can create or increase the offerings of courses that have a global or international focus within each academic discipline. This not only responds to the impact of globalization on higher education, but it also provides students the necessary and relevant academic knowledge for the ever-globalizing world in which we live. Third, curricula and co-curricular efforts are integral aspects for institutions. These recommendations by ACE, along with the others, can provide institutions a starting point to integrate comprehensive internationalization into their academic goals, objectives, and outcomes of curricula. Overall, the academic benefit is just one means towards comprehensive internationalization.

Internationalization: Outcome or Means?

Those who do not fully understand internationalization or those who do not fully buy the concept of internationalization likely see it as an outcome. They might consider the goals of internationalization to have been met when the study abroad participation has reached a certain percentage, or when the number of international students surpassed the target goal. As Hudzik (2011) said, though, internationalization “is not an end but a means to many ends” (p. 8). One of those ends is a very important one for U.S. institutions: recruiting the best faculty to enhance the university in order to enhance the prestige of the university.

This is an important topic because high-quality faculty members are highly sought and valued, and quality academic and scholarly work from faculty and researchers not only contribute to new knowledge and scholarship but also make U.S. universities more competitive to domestic students,

international students, and even international scholars. Due to an increase in the quality of higher education throughout the world, researchers and professors have an expanding number of options outside the U.S. where they may seek employment, making it increasingly difficult for U.S. institutions to compete (Freeman, 2010). The best professors and researchers are not only sought after by universities, though. They are also sought after by students. International students, like many domestic students, may pay close attention to university rankings, which often incorporate faculty publications as a metric in their ranking. An increase in undergraduate student enrollment may increase the international student enrollment in graduate education. Thus, international undergraduate students may be more likely to contribute to the U.S. demand for graduate education by remaining in the U.S. and possibly remaining in the country to work (Freeman, 2010). Where international students decide to enroll is also an important economic issue.

Tuition and Financial Implications During and After University

The reduction in state appropriations has forced institutions to seek other sources of revenue. Most international students pay full tuition, which is often nearly three times the amount of in-state tuition (Borjas, 2004; Bound et al., 2016; Shen, 2016; Shih, 2017). In fact, international students contributed nearly \$40 billion to the U.S. economy, supporting or creating over 455,000 jobs in the 2017/18 academic year (NAFSA, 2018). In California alone, international students contributed \$6.6 billion. A decrease in international students will lead to Americans losing jobs and impact the U.S. economy at macro and micro levels. It is crucial this source of revenue continue to rise because a decrease in international student enrollment may have compounding effects across the U.S. On the topic of finances, many international students, however, are increasingly attending universities outside the U.S., notably due to the more economical costs of these institutions. U.S. higher education is one of the costliest in the world (Martin, 2017).

Furthermore, it is not necessarily true that international students are getting an American education in order to return to their home countries to then compete against the U.S. and American companies. Over half of the international students who received a doctorate in the U.S. in the 1990s stayed in the U.S. (Finn, 2010). Freeman (2010) argued that students recruited for undergraduate education and even high school education are more likely to remain at U.S. institutions and even remain in the country for work, continuing their contribution to the U.S. economy. For the most part, international students receive less financial aid, if any, when compared to domestic students (Shen, 2016). In fact, Shen (2016) cited that nearly 75% of international students fund their education through their family funds or funds from their home country.

Additionally, the enrollment of international students improves the quality of U.S. higher education. According to Shen (2016), the influx of international student enrollment “has increased U.S. admission standards, measured by SAT scores” (p. 2). This increase in the number of students in the applicant pool heightens the admission standards for universities, allowing them to select higher quality students. This does not address a contentious issue when discussing international student enrollment, however. Many of those not in favor of international student enrollment argue that international students take the spots of domestic students or “crowd-out” American students. This next section addresses this contentious issue.

Crowding Out or Cross-Subsidizing?

As the number of international student enrollment has increased across the nation, several researchers have looked into the question of whether international students crowd out domestic students (Borjas, 2004; Machin & Murphy 2017; Regets, 2007; Shen, 2016; Shih, 2017). Shih’s (2017) analysis

reported that each observed “study contains at least one estimate suggesting that international students actually increase the enrollment of some domestic students” (p. 171). Of course, it is important not to assume this is the case for all types of institutions across all parts of the U.S.. Borjas (2004), however, found the same conclusion that on aggregate there is no evidence of any crowding-out of domestic students. On the contrary, Shen (2016) found that there exists a crowding out of domestic students at higher-ranked research universities, but the results were not found to be statistically significant.

Shen (2016), however, did find evidence that favors international student enrollment. For example, Shen found that international student enrollment increased the amount of non-discounted tuition since international students are more likely to pay full tuition. The revenue generated from international students also allows universities to provide additional grant aid for domestic students, which Shen stated may have a positive impact on domestic students’ academic and post-graduation outcomes.

Shih (2017) made an even more compelling case in favor of international student enrollment. Not only does Shih rule out the idea of international students taking the seat of a domestic student, but Shih also found evidence that international students increase domestic enrollment. The primary findings indicated that “10 additional international students increase domestic enrollment by roughly eight” (Shih, 2017, p. 172). Regets (2007) found similar results: “an increase of 1.0 foreign students is associated with an enrollment increase of 0.33 for white U.S. students, an increase of 0.02 for U.S. underrepresented minority students, and a decrease of 0.07 for U.S. Asian students” (p. 11). It is important to note, though, that Borjas (2004) and Shih (2016) did find some negative correlations between international students and white domestic students.

This overall positive impact, Shih (2017) argued, is a result of international students completing master’s degrees. They noted, though, that these positive impacts are most noticeable at public universities, “which prioritiz[e] enrolling domestic students, pric[e] tuition below costs for state residents, while also charging foreign students tuition rates between two and three times higher” (p. 172). From a broader perspective, Shih (2017) argued that “during the boom, inflows of international students raised domestic enrollment” and that “[d]uring the bust, declines in foreign students lowered domestic enrollment” (p. 177).

All-in-all, there is significant evidence that international students do not crowd-out domestic students and in fact cross-subsidize domestic student enrollment. What has not been discussed, however, is the contribution international students make to the campus, the classrooms, and the campus communities, most of which cannot be quantified as easily as tuition dollars. International students bring to U.S. institutions new languages, cultures, viewpoints, rituals, traditions, beliefs, religions, ideas, values, and more. International students provide domestic and international students’ exposure to international, comparative, and global content to the personal lives of all students, more so than any textbook might. Cross-cultural conversations, discussions, and collaborative and scholarly work beyond a homogenous or typical setting can exist. They provide domestic students who are unable to study abroad opportunities to experience something new and interact with students from various parts of the world and from all walks of life. The benefits far exceed what can be written in this section and go beyond the scope of this article. This last section discusses additional revenue for institutions that are devoted to comprehensive internationalization.

International Branch Campuses

International branch campuses (IBCs) are campuses in a host country managed by an institution in another country. U.S. institutions have always been competitive at a national level,

but now more than ever U.S. institutions must remain competitive internationally. The U.S. is trailing behind other countries, particularly in comparison to the UK and Australia, in the number of IBCs around the world (Freeman, 2010). Case in point, British universities have more IBCs in other countries than American universities, notably in Commonwealth countries (Freeman, 2010).

The creation of an IBC is an innovative and aggressive strategy that not only works to support the institution's comprehensive internationalization efforts but also works to continue growing an institution's global brand. This is extremely important for large research-intensive and flagship institutions. A global presence goes beyond marketing. It also increases the visibility of the institution to researchers and faculty members around the world. This is an important tactic in recruiting the best researchers worldwide while enhancing the quality and prestige of the institution. Similarly, IBCs generate and foster growth and collaboration among institutions and governments. They counter the silo-ing of the nation that currently exists and create an environment for the sharing of experiences, resources, techniques, knowledge, and cutting-edge scholarly work.

As IBCs generate additional collaboration, they also promote diversification of faculty, staff, and the student body. As mentioned earlier, this is extremely important for domestic students in their preparation for a global workforce. What IBCs also bring to domestic students are unique opportunities to study abroad. A primary reason students do not study abroad is because of financial reasons. Partnerships from IBCs may provide economic opportunities for students to gain educational opportunities abroad. Additionally, this can allow for easy credit-transfer for students since it will be institutional credits and curricula.

Continuing the discussion on students, IBCs create an international student pipeline to the U.S. institution, and they reduce the costs of international recruitment and travel. Institutions have a range of options on how to attract international students to their home campus. Options range from 2+2s (two years on the IBC and two years on the main U.S. campus), 1+3s, conditional admissions, exchanges, distance learning, language, certificate, dual, or online programs, among others. Giving international students the opportunity to study at an IBC can make the experience more economical for them, while providing them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the American university system. This may even bring down the costs of some of the services provided for international students since they will be more acclimated to and knowledgeable on the expectations of American higher education.

Opening an IBC is not very costly and offers a good return on investment. Many countries want, invite, and encourage U.S. institutions to open IBCs in their countries. In fact, many current IBCs currently receive external funding from host countries. For example, Qatar has invested in facilities for IBCs to host U.S. institutions. China has even offered land and a \$100 million loan for a U.S. institution to open an IBC there (Dessoff, 2007). U.S. institutions should seek similar opportunities that will enhance the institution's presence abroad, particularly when countries may be eager for the presence of U.S. higher education institutions in their countries.

Furthermore, host countries also benefit. IBCs may hire local citizens for employment at the IBC, they may provide students additional or even new and unseen opportunities to study at a college or university, and as Shams and Husman (2012) argued, students might be encouraged to obtain an international degree from the IBC while living and contributing to the host country's local economy. The creation of an IBC is not only about a focus on the U.S. institution's presence and gain. It is a collaboration that requires cooperation and participation of stakeholders at the host and home countries of the IBCs. These collaborative efforts greatly benefit many stakeholders. Without a doubt, IBCs not only dramatically increase an institution's presence, but they also make U.S. institutions more competitive at

the global level. This is integral to supporting the institution's comprehensive internationalization efforts and growth for the institution's global brand and presence.

Conclusion

During a time in which the U.S. is losing its competitive edge and international student enrollment is decelerating (Alberts, 2007; Freeman, 2010; IIE, 2018a/b), it is imperative that U.S. institutions seek ways to remain competitive nationally and globally. IBCs can aid in internationalization efforts, enhance global and multicultural learning, and increase international student enrollment. More importantly, though, IBCs foster transnational and global collaboration that can ultimately lead to new knowledge and scholarship. Furthermore, IBCs may open doors in ways that go beyond education. The recruitment and enrollment of international students directly benefits domestic students (Regets, 2007; Shih, 2017) and the academic quality of U.S. institutions (Shen, 2016). International student tuition directly benefits domestic students and raises aid money available for domestic students (Shen, 2016). This then benefits the institution and makes it even more competitive. Institutions, though, are always seeking new ways to remain competitive, and as the world becomes more interconnected and interdependent, students, families, and American citizens will be expecting institutions to foster comprehensive internationalization. By educating some of the best students in the world, U.S. institutions will graduate great students and contribute to national economic gains, ensuring that U.S. higher education and the country as a whole remain competitive in a global world (Freeman, 2010).

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