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ABSTRACT

This document, developed by the Commission on International Education of the American Council on Education, stresses the importance of students developing the competence to function effectively in a global environment and the need for state and local governments and the private sector to support higher education's efforts toward this goal. Following an introductory section, the goals and benefits of international education are identified. Most of the booklet lists and explains the following 10 ground rules for internationalizing institutions: (1) require that all graduates demonstrate competence in at least one foreign language; (2) encourage understanding of at least one other culture; (3) increase understanding of global systems; (4) revamp curricula to reflect the need for international understanding; (5) expand study abroad and internship opportunities for all students; (6) focus on faculty development and rewards; (7) examine the organizational needs of international education; (8) build consortia to enhance capabilities; (9) cooperate with institutions in other countries; and (10) work with local schools and communities. An attachment lists Commission members. (DB)

Educating Americans for a World in Flux

Ten Ground Rules for Internationalizing Higher Education

American Council on Education

"We are a country ill-equipped for new priorities.

Educating Americans

Our institutions creak with anachronisms. Many leaders

for a World in Flux

proclaim change but act as if nothing has changed.

Ten Ground Rules for Internationalizing

And we are not preparing the next generation of Americans

Higher Education

to understand, much less lead, in a transformed world."[1]

American Council on Education

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Preface

The Commission on International Education of the American Council on Education is a group of more than 40 college and university presidents and heads of other major associations. The Commission advises ACE on the development of policies and programs in the international field and issues its own policy statements on important issues.

This document is the result of extended conversations among members of the commission and with other individuals and groups. It calls for major changes in how colleges and universities educate their students about the rest of the world. It recognizes that without international competence, the nation's standard of living is threatened and its competitive difficulties will increase. It argues that unless today's students develop the competence to function effectively in a global environment, they are unlikely to succeed in the 21st century. It suggests that state and local governments and the private sector should support higher education as it reorients itself to these new global realities.

Unless today's students develop the competence to function effectively in a global environment, they are unlikely to succeed in the 21st century.

The document is addressed to multiple audiences, beginning with presidents, chancellors, and trustees. It is intended for every institution of higher education, two-year and four-year, and for all students, traditional and nontraditional. The Commission hopes the statement will prove useful to higher education leaders as they guide their institutions toward the changes needed to prepare students to live in the interdependent world of the 21st century. It presents ten "ground rules," or recommendations, to frame a plan of action for creating international programs and campuses.

The Commission also hopes the document can serve as the foundation for further discussions about the need to internationalize higher education among academic leaders; officials in government at the federal, state, and local levels; and corporate and philanthropic leaders. From the Commission's point of view, this important discussion cannot begin too soon.

The Changing Context: A World in Flux

The world in which most adult Americans grew to maturity no longer exists. The cold war is over. The domestic economy is global. The "melting pot" is boiling over. Our world is in flux. The approach of the 21st century foreshadows not simply a new millennium, but a completely new and different globe. Perhaps for the first time since the end of World War II, Americans have a chance to recreate their society and their relationships with the rest of the world.

The United States is a paradox. Drawing people from the four corners of the world, it has created a truly global popular culture. Yet despite its influence on every other region, ethnic group, and race, its domestic culture is insular, provincial, and parochial. Long after the concept was abandoned as a pillar of foreign policy, many Americans, including many college graduates, cling to their own Splendid Isolation.

When the cold war ended, many Americans expected that they could turn away from the drama of foreign affairs to address the challenges here at home—budget deficits, loss of jobs, environmental decay, health care, improving manufacturing processes and product and service quality, and the nation's problems with its public schools. The real world rudely intervened. Superpower confrontation has been replaced by regional instability. Jobs lost at home reappear abroad. Industrial accidents spread pollution across borders. Public health problems vault oceans. Goods and services flow freely across borders and among great trading blocs. American graduates must compete with their peers from overseas.

Long after the concept was abandoned as a pillar of foreign policy, many Americans, including many college graduates, cling to their own Splendid Isolation.

In truth, the line separating "foreign" from "domestic" is much harder to define today than it was yesterday, and much of our domestic success depends on events taking place elsewhere. Issues such as the environment, exchange rates and economic competition, public health, national security, poverty, population control, and human rights affect the

United States domestically as well as internationally. And ease of international travel combined with emerging new technologies—fiber optics, digital telecommunications, and powerful compact computers—accelerate the speed of these developments and multiply the links between and among all sectors and regions.

Under these circumstances, attending to domestic needs requires understanding their international context. An increasingly multicultural United States requires citizens who understand other peoples and their heritage—and who can communicate across national, cultural, and socio-economic boundaries.

The global village is coming of age. As American business leaders have learned, international ignorance is a luxury they can no longer afford. Nor can our nation or its citizens afford it. Young people who do not possess the skills and competencies required to function effectively in the new global village will be economically disenfranchised—unable to find or hold challenging employment and the financial rewards attending such work. The nation's standard of living is likely to be threatened, its ability to compete in the global economy weakened.

In short, if our nation and its people are to prosper in the new environment of the 21st century, our colleges and universities must truly become institutions without boundaries. Their leaders must rethink what is taught, how it is taught, where it is taught, and who teaches it.

Goals and Benefits: An Agenda for Change in International Education

In many ways, international education in the United States has been driven by the imperatives of the cold war. The nation's leaders needed to know who its potential allies and opponents were—how they thought, what they produced, when they might act, and what might provoke them to do so. "They" was a very convenient organizing principle, not only for foreign policy but also for the international dimensions of higher education. The end of the cold war undermined that principle, leaving in its place a vacuum in policy thinking for foreign affairs and international education alike.

Emerging national needs require American higher education to organize itself to educate students for competence and success in an interdependent world. The nation must commit itself now to providing all students with the kinds of knowledge it once provided to only a few—a powerful, deep-rooted understanding of other languages, diverse cultures, and global issues. This kind of competence needs to be provided not as something extra in the curriculum, but as an integral part of the educational experience.

As a practical matter, what this means is that all of the nation's two- and four-year institutions of higher education must orient themselves around new goals for internationalizing education.

The nation must commit itself now to providing all students with the kinds of knowledge it once provided to only a few—a powerful, deep-rooted understanding of other languages, diverse cultures, and global issues.

First, the educational experience must be infused with some degree of *intercultural competence*, including language competence. Professional or disciplinary skills alone are no longer sufficient. Today's graduate requires knowledge and understanding of how particular countries and geographic regions interact with the larger world—and how local culture

shapes and affects this interaction. It may once have been possible to claim to be a well-educated college graduate with little or no knowledge of inter-regional differences, similarities, and conflicts and mechanisms for resolving them. That time is long past.

Next, graduates need an understanding of *global systems*. Once, only experts needed to understand the dynamics of the international economy—or the interactions among environmental and economic systems and, for example, public health. Today, however, these relationships are too important to be left to experts alone. Every day, these global systems affect the quality of the nation's life as exchange rates raise and lower the price of goods and as pollution and public health problems transcend national boundaries. The citizen of the global village must understand how these international systems interact with one another to shape our world.

Surely an American campus in the 21st century should offer a richer and more diverse curriculum than was available a century ago when the world was a different place.

Third, in addition to offering programs based on traditional academic disciplines, higher education must develop *problem-focused programs of study* that are more practical than theoretical and that are oriented around problems in the real world. These new lines of inquiry should explicitly encourage faculty and students to explore issues from a variety of disciplinary and cultural perspectives. The Commission's point in advancing this new goal is not to deny the importance of disciplines, but to further their development, add new dimensions to their applications, and produce graduates who are capable of thinking about a problem from many different points of view.

Fourth, we need to *make international education more democratic and universal*. For too long, international programs have been the province of specialized language and area studies programs in graduate schools and specialized institutes, or of the fortunate few undergraduates able to afford the luxury of study abroad. As

important as each of these activities is, even in combination they are not sufficient to meet emerging needs. *All* undergraduates need exposure to other peoples, languages, and cultures. This is as true for community college students as it is for those enrolled in liberal arts institutions or state colleges and universities. Parochial and provincial outlooks are not options for today's undergraduates.

Fifth, education must become *truly international, not simply European.* To judge by the total number of undergraduate degrees awarded in such languages as Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic, these ancient, powerful civilizations are perceived as unimportant. Our institutions confer ten times as many degrees in German as in Chinese, graduate 18 times as many French speakers as Japanese speakers, and count nearly 500 graduates fluent in Spanish for every one fluent in Arabic. Relatively few institutions devote significant resources to programs on Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East. Surely an American campus in the 21st century should offer a richer and more diverse curriculum than was available a century ago when the world was a different place.

Finally, the Commission believes there is a great deal to be said for *applying the lessons of international education within our own borders.* The United States is among the most culturally diverse societies in the history of the world. Despite the strains diversity brings to our society and our campuses, it is one of the nation's strengths, not one of its weaknesses. By fostering greater understanding of different cultures abroad, higher education can encourage greater cultural harmony at home. By encouraging the learning of foreign languages; exposing students to diverse cultures, art, and music; and explaining the roots and origins of ethnic and tribal conflict, higher education can help students make connections between their families' origins, their experiences as immigrants, and their own cultural identities.

By fostering greater understanding of different cultures abroad, higher education can encourage greater cultural harmony at home.

None of these new goals will be achieved quickly or easily, but the benefits of putting them in place will far exceed the effort required. Among the greatest benefits:

❖ The United States will be stronger because its citizens will be prepared to be informed and intelligent actors in a participatory democracy.

❖ Businesses in an increasingly competitive world will be better able to expand into new international markets.

❖ Federal agencies will be able to hire personnel with the specialized expertise needed to conduct the nation's foreign affairs.

❖ State and local agencies concerned about the international dimensions of economic development will be able to find internationally competent staff.

❖ All students, whether interested in commerce and industry, literature, the health professions, sociology, engineering, or agriculture, will find an education well suited to their needs.

❖ Faculty members and administrators will enjoy a richer intellectual life through mastery of new languages and exposure to new cultures.

❖ Foreign students studying in the United States will discover that the American campus has become much more sophisticated about international affairs.

This new agenda offers many new challenges. More important, it promises many new benefits.

The Institutional Response: An Agenda for Internationalizing Higher Education

If this national agenda for change is to develop, the Commission is convinced that every institution of higher education must commit itself to providing all of its students with in-depth knowledge and understanding of other cultures, other languages, and global issues. Ten ground rules for internationalizing institutions define the task ahead.

1 *Require that all graduates demonstrate competence in at least one foreign language.*

The National Education Goals adopted by President Bush and the nation's governors in 1989—and subsequently endorsed by President Clinton—are likely to triple or quadruple the number of high school students who have studied one or more foreign languages for a year or more. Colleges and universities can do a great deal to encourage foreign language competence, minimize the need for campus language remediation, and advance the National Education Goals in one simple step: require prospective first-year students to present evidence of having studied a foreign language.

Moreover, as the Commission on International Education and the Board of Directors of the American Council on Education have previously stressed,[2] foreign language training should be considered a normal part of the higher education of every American. At least a minimal level of functional competence should be expected for every recipient of the bachelor's degree, regardless of major.

The Commission stresses that the ability to use language and interact and work productively with people from other cultures is what institutions should focus on—not the number of courses taken or seat time. In this regard, competence should guide language requirements, and all four language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—should be emphasized.

2 *Encourage understanding of at least one other culture.*

The Commission believes the nation and all graduates would be well served if institutions set out to provide a deep understanding of at least one other culture for every student. It is not the Commission's intent to prescribe how intercultural competence should be developed. There are any number of ways this can be accomplished—intensive study on campus, study abroad, drawing on the experiences of foreign

students on our campuses, internships with trade missions in the United States, electronic bulletin boards, or telecommunications links with institutions in other countries. It is, however, the Commission's intention to insist that in the world of the 21st century, familiarity with other languages, other cultures, other customs, and other peoples will be the hallmark of the genuinely well-educated person.

3 *Increase understanding of global systems.*

As our knowledge of the world increases, so too does our understanding of the mutual interdependence of the peoples of the world. Economic, meteorological, agricultural, and other systems interact with one another in complex and subtle ways. The collapse of the Mexican peso affects not only trade and foreign assistance, but also immigration and health. The disappearance of the rain forests in Brazil would affect climate throughout the world, and could well lead to the extinction of possible new medicines. Ethnic unrest and political movements in other countries can lead to acts of cross-border terrorism that threaten the lives of civilians. If Americans are genuinely to understand the complexity and fragility of this interdependence, they must develop some minimal appreciation of how these global systems develop and relate to one another.

4 *Revamp curricula to reflect the need for international understanding.*

Curricula across the board—general education, disciplinary majors, and graduate and professional education—must be examined to make sure that cultural competence and language study infuse institutional offerings. Institutions need to (1) develop strategies to help students attain the competence required, (2) set institutional goals for developing required levels of expertise, and (3) clearly state in course catalogs how each course (including study or work abroad) meets these requirements.

Of particular note is the need to define new levels of international competence for the 21st century professional. What do business leaders, health care professionals, engineers, and teachers need to know about the larger world—above and beyond what every student should know and be able to do? How can our colleges and universities provide them with what they need? When should they be directed to other sources of knowledge and training?

5 *Expand study abroad and internship opportunities for all students.*

Firsthand experience with other peoples, languages, and cultures is an essential complement to formal study. The Commission is convinced that study and internship abroad are among the most valuable educational experiences any student can receive. The benefits of these experiences should be provided to many more students than is now the case—and student financial aid programs should treat study abroad programs just as they treat enrollment on the home campus; it should be possible to apply financial aid to the costs of tuition, fees, and living expenses abroad. New opportunities for experiences in other countries, or when that is not possible, in other cultures in the United States, are needed for part-time and adult students as well as for full-time students.

6 *Focus on faculty development and rewards.*

Commissions can develop statements about internationalizing education. Presidents and trustees can produce plans promising to transform statements into reality. But unless faculty members deliver in class, the statements and promises count for little. In internationalizing education, institutional leaders should not ignore the opportunity to send a signal through the faculty development and rewards process.

Among the key actions that an institution can take are the following: Encourage faculty to develop expertise in the global dimensions of their disciplines. Encourage interdisciplinary study. Give weight to international experience, skill, and foreign language competence as criteria in hiring new faculty. Provide faculty and staff with opportunities to develop their own international and language skills. Include international service or study among the criteria for tenure or promotion. Institutions have many ways to send a signal to faculty members about what is important.

7 *Examine the organizational needs of international education.*

If the transformation called for in this statement is to become a reality, existing organizational structures and processes need attention. It is highly likely that most do not provide the support required for effective inter-

national education programs. In this regard, internationalizing education requires problem- and area-oriented centers drawing on a variety of disciplines. Do existing departmental configurations support such centers, or do they need to be reorganized? Does the institution offer adequate support for international students and for its own students to study and work abroad? Are library resources adequate to support an internationalized curriculum? Is the institution making effective use of available technology to expand the resources available to students and faculty?

In short, institutions should be prepared to evaluate all existing efforts to determine how well these efforts advance international education—refining or restructuring those that do not produce desired results, adding new programs as needed, and setting goals and assessment mechanisms across the board.

8 *Build consortia to enhance capabilities.*

Institutions can encourage excellence in programs and student choice among diverse offerings by entering consortia and other cooperative efforts with neighboring institutions—or with sympathetic colleagues hundreds or thousands of miles away. By joining forces with others, institutions can build discrete centers of excellence, and encourage specialization without diminishing student opportunity. The Commission believes institutions should investigate cooperative arrangements in language study, study abroad, internships, distance learning, area studies, and library acquisitions and the use of technology. Articulation agreements with secondary schools—and between two- and four-year institutions—may prove particularly beneficial, for instance in assuring that foreign language programs at the various levels allow students to build on what they have done before.

9 *Cooperate with institutions in other countries.*

By definition, international education is a two-way street. The best programs in American colleges and universities almost inevitably will be those that establish partnerships of one kind or another with sister institutions in other countries. The Commission considers it important that American colleges and universities cooperate with their counterparts across the globe—in developed,

developing, and newly-democratized nations. These efforts should encourage faculty and student exchanges, joint research, and broad institutional linkages so that institutions on both sides of the relationship provide and receive benefits.

10 *Work with local schools and communities.*

Finally, the Commission stresses that higher education's public service role requires that institutions work with their local communities, states, and regions—and with local schools—to advance the agenda for change defined above. Elementary and secondary schools should be seen as higher education's partners in this effort—for it is never too early to start learning a second language or exploring foreign cultures. Higher education also has critical burdens to bear. Colleges and universities train the teachers employed in public schools. Teacher training programs should include international and foreign language competence as a condition for graduation and certification. In addition, colleges and universities should routinely offer seminars and forums on international issues for the community, and should work with local economic development agencies to remind community leaders and employers of the international dimensions of modern work and economic development.

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[1] *Changing Our Ways: America and the New World*, Carnegie Endowment National Commission, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 1992, p. 85.

[2] *What We Can't Say Can Hurt Us: A call for foreign language competence by the year 2000*, American Council on Education, Washington, DC, 1989.

Postscript

This statement by the Commission on International Education of the American Council on Education is an open call to action. The Commission hopes that these recommendations will prove a useful catalyst for discussion and action at American colleges and universities. We welcome comments and suggestions from our readers.

American Council on Education
Commission on International Education
1995–1997

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