

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Office of Academic Affairs

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UW's Participation in the ACE Internationalization Laboratory

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UW has accepted an invitation by the American Council on Education to participate in ACE's Internationalization Laboratory. In this program, a small cohort of institutions of higher education conduct in-depth assessments of their activities in this arena. The project involves an institutional self-study, site visits, some travel to seminars hosted by ACE, and, I hope, a set of ideas that we can pursue to elevate the university's already substantial programs in international education.

The following people have agreed to serve on the leadership team for this project:

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Key tasks of the leadership team during the coming year include the following:

1. Develop a set of global learning goals and an assessment plan.
2. Review UW's current international activities, to sharpen the learning goals and determine whether students have adequate opportunities to achieve them. Analyze the review's findings.
3. Develop a strategic action plan based on the learning goals. Identify measures to achieve them.
4. Host a site visit by ACE
5. Participate in three one-day meetings in Washington, DC. Only a subset of the team is required for these meetings. Logistics and attendance for the first, scheduled for 25 August, are settled.
6. Host a three-member peer review team for a two-day visit.
7. Maintain regular contact with ACE officials and provide adequate staff support.

The Office of Academic Affairs and the International Programs Office have identified the funding needed to carry out this project and will collaborate in managing its budget.

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FIRST THOUGHTS ON UW'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ACE INTERNATIONALIZATION LABORATORY August 2011

With this short memo I'd like to take a first step at framing issues that UW should address as part of our participation in the American Council for Education Internationalization Laboratory. I'll stop short of proposing new goals or action items. Instead, I'll propose a three-part framework based on ideas already embedded in UW's strategic plans. Many people have contributed to these plans over many years. In particular, the International Education Steering Committee, the International Programs Office, the International Studies Program, the International Students and Scholars Office, and scores of faculty members have advanced UW's international curriculum and student experiences through their personal dedication to the concept.

*University Plan 3*¹ discusses internationalization in terms of a three-legged stool:

- 1. Cultivate an environment that attracts international scholars and students**
- 2. Enhance UW students' international awareness through the curriculum**
- 3. Expand the opportunities for UW students to study abroad.**

These three mandates provide an initial framework for thinking about international education. I think they can help inform a more fully articulated strategic plan in this arena.

1. Attracting international scholars and students. UW has come a long way from the era in which some students, staff, and academic leaders openly bemoaned the admission of international graduate students (there were very few international undergraduates) and the hiring of any faculty member whose native language wasn't English. Today, most academic departments fill open faculty positions through international searches, and most are delighted to bring international students and faculty members into their programs. As a result of these culture changes, spanning at least two decades, UW now looks and feels like a university whose appeal, aspirations, and scholarly reach are truly international in scope.

Still, at least three areas for improvement remain if we are to achieve prominence in attracting international scholars and students. First, UW must further its efforts to compensate for its midcontinent, small-town setting. Second, we can do a better job of providing international students and scholars with amenities important to their success, such as institution-sponsored instruction in English as a Second Language. Third, we can enhance the sheer number of international students who are members of the

¹"The Creation of the Future: University Plan 3," retrieved 28 July 2011 at <http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/files/docs/up3.pdf>; see page 12.

UW community. More aggressive, better targeted recruitment would help create a more cosmopolitan and welcoming — and more intellectually enriching — learning environment university-wide.

2. International awareness through the curriculum. UW offers many courses that promote students' awareness of other cultures and help instill global perspectives in students' thinking habits. The core curriculum for the baccalaureate — USP — requires that students pass a faculty-approved Global Awareness (G) course. The rubric for the G requirement is compelling:

Because the human world is increasingly interconnected and interdependent, graduates of the University of Wyoming should have acquired knowledge of the global organization and interdependence of human societies.²

Compelling prose notwithstanding, our implementation of this requirement discounts what is arguably the single most effective vehicle for expanding students' international literacy: basic foreign language study. In virtually every other nation, educated citizens study languages other than their native tongues. This training constitutes the fundamental tool through which our overseas counterparts participate in the “international systems of commerce, art, science, technology, politics, communication, belief, and justice” cited in UW's rationale for the G requirement.

As part of the current re-examination of the University Studies Program, I propose that UW recognize foreign language study — whether at the most basic levels or at more advanced levels that build upon the state's Hathaway Success Curriculum — as an effective pathway to the learning outcomes associated with internationalization.

3. Study abroad. Through successful efforts of UW's International Programs Office and many dedicated faculty members and staff, UW enjoys substantial ties and cooperative agreements with universities in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Europe. Complementing these assets, the generosity of donors has helped remove many of the financial barriers that would otherwise make study abroad difficult for UW students. As a method for exposing students to “behaviors and practices based on beliefs, conditions, and assumptions different from their own” (to borrow again from USP's G rubric), nothing competes with living in another country. UW should seek to expand students' access to these programs, both through more well developed connections and through increased financial aid for study abroad.

Beyond these straightforward efforts, we need to connect the dots. Because study abroad can be such an efficient path to foreign language fluency, UW should seek to coordinate study abroad with foreign language study in every program where this combination makes sense. In addition, we should give serious consideration to the proposition that study abroad *per se* — whether or not it is subject to content review by a UW faculty committee — satisfies learning objectives associated with internationalization. Finally, faculty members play a key role in students' international experiences, at home and abroad. UW should explore fiscal mechanisms and professional development measures to facilitate international teaching, scholarly work, and other faculty contributions to its international programs.

These ideas hardly span the range of thinking that should underpin a true strategic plan for internationalization. They simply build on initiatives that are currently in place. However, using the three-legged stool as a framework may help organize our thinking about the learning goals that we associate with international education and the more ambitious concrete measures that we undertake to achieve them.

²See <http://www.uwyo.edu/unst/components/G.asp>, retrieved 28 July 2011.