

Education Without Borders: Internationalizing American Universities

Global Connections Seminar Keynote Address

Hotchkiss School

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Good morning. I want to begin by thanking Skip Mattoon and John Thornton for asking me to deliver the keynote address at the tenth Global Connections Seminar, especially at a time when we, at Princeton, are devoting a great deal of thought to the international dimensions of our educational mission. It is also good to be at Hotchkiss, whose longstanding commitment to international education is reflected in its choice of a global citizen like Malcolm McKenzie as its 12th head of school.

Now, I am not the first president of Princeton to travel to Lakeville, nor, I hope, the last. In 1908 Woodrow Wilson, Princeton's 13th president and himself a strong internationalist, discussed the meaning of a college education with the "young gentlemen" of Hotchkiss. Although Wilson's topic was different from ours today, I am quite sure he would have applauded the underlying philosophy of this seminar – to encourage school leaders worldwide to develop global consciousness and to promote international cooperation among their schools.

Instilling a global perspective in our students, exposing them to the histories, languages, religious traditions and cultures of countries other than their own, and building academic bridges between schools and colleges and their respective faculties around the world is today a scholarly *imperative*, rather than a luxury that educational institutions can dispense with at no cost to themselves or others. The long-term costs of complacency in this arena are very high indeed. Why? Because the subjects our students study, with whom they study, and where they study, as well as the opportunities that we provide for them to encounter what is unfamiliar both here and abroad, will color their vision of the world and shape their interactions with its peoples for the rest of their lives.

Let me tell you just two short stories that reveal the importance of being exposed to ideas and experiences of another culture within a university setting. In the wake of September 11, 2001 I had a German freshman come to my weekly office hours at Princeton, clearly unsettled by what he was living through. I fully expected that our conversation would run along the lines of dozens I had had in those terrible weeks following the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington – students yearning to understand what had just happened and most importantly why, fearing for their own safety and the safety of their families and friends. But this student from Munich was disturbed by something quite different from his American classmates. He was profoundly concerned about the outpouring of patriotism – the rhetoric of U.S. leaders and the ubiquity of the U.S. flag. For this student, who had grown up in a country where overt and emotional displays of patriotism are universally discouraged, the aftermath of 9/11 was being observed through a completely different prism. Just as it was important for that student to comprehend the American reaction to 9/11, it was equally important that American students recognize that the U.S. response was not universally embraced.

My other illustration comes from Professor Gary Bass, a political scientist in Princeton's Department of Politics and the Woodrow Wilson School, who has taught a class on human rights and war crimes tribunals for a number of years. This has always been a class that engaged the students' interest, but the depth of the discussion changed dramatically the year that a student from Bosnia was enrolled in it. With someone who

could bear witness to the questions raised by Professor Bass, the abstract became tangible and the theories encountered reality. Here was a case where one student with a different world view could change the discourse for an entire class.

Today is not a time when any of us, let alone the leaders of tomorrow, can afford to view our neighbors through a purely domestic lens; to see the world in the form of Saul Steinberg's famous New Yorker cartoon, in which everything beyond the Hudson River is reduced to insignificance. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, our world has never been so small or, as Thomas Friedman would put it, so flat, thanks to technologies that have altered our relationship with time and space in ways that would startle even Albert Einstein. What the telephone was to the early 20th century, the Internet is to the early 21st, eroding or obliterating political, social, and economic borders as fast as they are drawn. A member of my staff, who began her secretarial career in the era of switchboards and typewriters, was recently astonished when a problem with her home computer was fixed by a technician in the Philippines who remotely took control of her cursor and resolved her difficulties. From outsourcing to file sharing to videoconferencing, the lives of men and women thousands of miles away are becoming intertwined with ours with a greater immediacy than ever before. Places like Shenzhen in China or Bangalore in India may be largely unknown to most Americans, which is itself a problem, but these dynamic cities are transforming the international economy and, with it, that of the United States. Increasingly, decisions taken, products made, and ideas developed in other countries will affect our own prosperity, which means that we need to know as much about our international trading partners as possible and be prepared to work constructively with their industries and universities.

Scientific and technological expertise is no longer the preserve of North America and Europe, and we cannot assume that faculty and student talent will always flow in our direction. Whether the measure is patents issued or papers published, the United States is losing intellectual "market share" to other nations, not because of a diminution in the vitality of the U.S. scientific enterprise so much as to the fact that the rest of the world is beginning to catch up. Universities in China and India are furiously expanding their capacities for educating students and conducting scientific and engineering research, using the U.S. higher education system as the model. In Friedman's *The World is Flat*, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates states that his company's research center in Beijing, established in 1998, is its most productive "in terms of the quality of the ideas that they are turning out," which may help to explain why Microsoft has established no fewer than nine joint laboratories with Chinese universities.

The changing character of international education and commerce is not the only reason to think globally today. At long last, we are coming to realize that environmental practices in one nation or region can have a profound effect on others – just visit Africa's Sahel or the far north of my own country, Canada – and that we must come to an international political agreement on reducing manmade greenhouse gas emissions to match the scientific consensus that has emerged. In this context, as in many others, we really are our brother's – and sister's – keeper. And then there is the military and ideological conflict that is beamed into our homes around the clock from the streets of Bagdad, Madrid, London and Glasgow, and the mountains of Afghanistan. We need to cultivate a far deeper understanding of the Muslim world in this country if we are to play a positive role in securing a better future for the Middle East and make common cause against the forces of extremism. As The Washington Post declared in an editorial last year, "Americans are horrifically deficient in knowledge about those parts of the world that now most threaten us, as well as about those that may pose important security challenges in the future." The editors noted with dismay that "only 15 public schools in this country teach Arabic at the moment." And what is true of the Muslim world is true of all cultures. As technology binds us ever more closely together, we must develop the intellectual tools to match this new proximity; to understand what makes others tick and, just as importantly, to understand how we are seen by others.

And so, whether we are preparing students for careers in business that require unprecedented mobility and adaptability, developing solutions to global environmental challenges, preparing scientists and engineers who will collaborate globally, or training the leaders who will influence the course of international affairs, schools and colleges must open their campuses to the world, creating learning and teaching opportunities that will

result in a respect for differences, as well as a recognition of commonalities. To be effective in the 21st century, educational institutions will have to become truly cosmopolitan, a concept best articulated by Princeton philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, whose own multicultural upbringing in the U.K. and Ghana nurtured his belief – and here I quote his newest book – that “no local loyalty can ever justify forgetting that each human being has responsibilities to every other.” His hope, which should also be our own, is to make “it harder to think of the world as divided between the West and the Rest; between locals and moderns; between a bloodless ethic of profit and a bloody ethic of identity; between ‘us’ and ‘them.’” To paraphrase another Princeton scholar, Cornel West, we need to train a generation to imagine themselves in another’s skin.

I do not have to convince a group like yours of the importance of cosmopolitanism, but how to create a climate in which this spirit can flourish on our campuses may not be as obvious. Across the United States, schools and colleges are taking steps – some tentative; some far-reaching – to internationalize themselves while maintaining their national identities, a balance that must be carefully struck if cosmopolitanism, with its dual appreciation of the universal and the particular, is to take root. As you reflect on your own experience, I thought it might be useful to give you a flavor of what Princeton and a number of other American universities are doing or contemplating in the field of international education. Approaches vary, as you would expect in a higher education system where colleges and universities have the freedom to construct their individual educational programs without government oversight.

Most U.S. universities are beginning to ask whether they consider themselves American universities with global perspectives, or global universities that happen to be based in the U.S. The difference between those perspectives is subtle, to be sure, but I would argue quite real. The first metric to use to answer that question is whether the campus itself is composed of people from around the world. According to a recent survey of the eight Ivy League universities, together with Stanford, the University of Chicago and MIT, the percentages of international students at those institutions range from 11% to 25.5%. Not unexpectedly the percentage of graduate students is significantly higher than for undergraduates. For example, almost 40% of graduate students at Princeton come from outside the U.S., while 11% of our entering undergraduate freshman class are international students. This is a significant increase from five years ago, and can be attributed in large part to our need-based financial aid policy, which was extended to all international students in 2001. Quite simply put, our aim is to attract the very best students in the world. However, I am sometimes asked whether I could imagine a day in which international students comprise the majority of our student body. I am not prepared to answer that question today, but it is one that must be considered as universities position themselves to be part of a global education network. It has been true for some time that our faculties are highly international, and that we compete globally for the best scholars, scientists and engineers. I had not realized until I began to write this address, however, that fully 39% of our faculty are foreign-born – myself included.

Another way to assess whether a university is looking outward or inward is to ask whether its students are encountering the world outside the United States as an integral part of their education. Some universities, like Princeton, have historically required that undergraduates study a foreign language, but increasingly students are fulfilling that requirement with languages like Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Arabic and Swahili, instead of the traditional European romance languages and German. While we do not explicitly require that students take one or more courses whose content would expose them to the world outside the U.S., it would be the truly perverse student who could navigate our stringent academic requirements without doing so. However, there are some colleges that have made this the central feature of their curriculum. Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, for example, encourages every student to study outside the country, and at their commencement, students march with a flag of the country or countries in which they have studied. Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, on the other hand, makes a convincing argument that there is nothing inherently better about studying a subject like chemistry abroad rather than at Bard, and their foreign programs are tailored to the fields of study where residence abroad contributes to the educational mission. They are less persuaded that simply living in a different country has a compelling educational value. My own position in this debate is “It depends.” Unfortunately, there are too

many study abroad programs that are little more than “fun in the sun,” with students living and studying in relative isolation with other American students, taught by the same American faculty they would have had at home. I prefer the kind of exchange program we have developed with Oxford University, where our students are registered as Oxford students, live in the colleges, work with a tutor, and take Oxford classes. We have been developing such exchanges all over the world, which have the added benefit that each year we welcome international exchange students at Princeton in return for the ones we send abroad. This is truly a win-win proposition. Another successful model for rigorous study abroad is the one we have developed in Panama with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, where our students spend a semester studying ecology and pre-Columbian history and culture with Panamanian students and faculty, as well as Princeton faculty. That kind of immersion into the study of the natural resources of a country is invaluable to a budding field biologist. A third model that we have used to promote internationalization is exemplified by our program with the Royal College of Music in London. In this joint degree program, talented and ambitious musicians who do not want to forgo the benefits of a broad liberal arts education can now spend one semester in their junior year and a fifth year at the Royal College, and receive degrees from both institutions. By the judicious use of such programs we are trying to craft a menu of opportunities for students that are academically rigorous and allow them to become fully immersed into the country where they will study.

There is no doubt in my mind that while university administrators have been leisurely pondering how they might instill an international perspective within their colleges and universities, our faculty have gotten the jump on us, and are fully engaged with international collaborations. In fact, this is precisely how it should be – for universities tend to work best when ideas are allowed to percolate up through the faculty in a “bottom-up” fashion, rather than having a “top-down” approach imposed on them. This spring, an advisory committee composed of faculty from all divisions of the University surveyed the campus in an attempt to identify all the things that faculty are doing on the international stage. The volume of the response was overwhelming, and it revealed the fact that no single person was aware of all that was happening. For some initiatives that required formal university agreements, such as the NSF-funded multi-institutional Southern Cosmological Survey, where our astrophysicists collaborate with others around the world on large telescopes in Chile and South Africa, there was, of necessity, administrative input and oversight. Other collaborations, such as the Global Network on Inequality, led by Professor Katherine Newman, required almost no central university sponsorship. It involves 17 institutes and university departments across Western Europe, Japan, Brazil, India and South Africa, that encourages collaborative research and facilitates the placement of doctoral students with interests in questions of inequality in overseas institutes. For those kinds of international initiatives, the most important thing an administration can do is to get out of the way, reduce bureaucratic barriers when they exist for no good purpose, and to provide seed funding when appropriate. In other words, the university must reduce the energy barriers to faculty investment of their time and energy, and the walls of the university should be highly porous for international interchange at all levels.

When universities adopt strategic plans for internationalization, some have chosen to focus on specific areas of the world. Yale, for example, has clearly identified China as the primary focus of its international activities, while Cornell has placed a major bet on its future collaborations within India. Most, however, have done what Princeton has done, and that is to “let a thousand flowers bloom” wherever the interest and academic strengths of the faculty lead us. The most significant “top down” initiatives that colleges and universities have undertaken are those that involve the establishment of satellite campuses outside the U.S. To give you several examples, Cornell University established the Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar in 2004, the first American medical school to be set up overseas. Established through a partnership between Cornell and the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, it offers to students in the region the same curriculum and the same Cornell M.D. that they would receive at the Weill Cornell Medical School in New York City. This past year, MIT began offering dual graduate degrees in partnership with the National University of Singapore and China’s Nanyang Technological University in engineering and life sciences. Such collaborations, however, are not without risk. This year, the government of Singapore announced that it was closing a collaborative venture

with Johns Hopkins University that was established in 1998 to attract world-class biomedical scientists and graduate students to Singapore. Singapore has a very ambitious plan to become an international hub for biomedical research, including stem cell research, and has used government funds to encourage U.S. universities and pharmaceutical firms to co-invest with them. The reason offered for the cancellation was the failure of Hopkins to meet “performance benchmarks,” including the failure to attract the world-class scientists that they had promised. Princeton is not likely to establish a campus abroad in the near future for one primary reason. There is no asset that is of more value to us than the Princeton name. A degree from Princeton University has a particular meaning in the world today, and until we are absolutely persuaded that we could replicate the Princeton educational experience on another site, we are not inclined to lend our name to a degree. That means being able to attract the finest scholars in the world, which Johns Hopkins’ experience in Singapore suggests is not easy, as well as the most able students. Our educational philosophy involves close work between students and faculty, and our current student faculty ratio of less than 6:1 means that every student is given individual attention by at least one member of the faculty. It has taken us 261 years to create the ethos that makes Princeton so successful, and we do not underestimate the challenge of replicating it elsewhere in a few short years.

There is a larger risk that colleges and universities must confront when considering how they will enhance their global footprint, and that is maintaining the engagement of the faculty in the educational mission at home. While we pride ourselves that the Princeton faculty balances with great agility the dual demands of teaching and research, it is also the case that the scholarly demands on faculty have greatly increased over the past few decades. Whether facing the challenge of publishing books in an age when the publishing industry is losing financial ground, or writing the dozens of grants necessary to keep a research lab afloat, or simply competing for academic positions in an over-heated job market, our faculty feel under duress. One consequence is that the relationship between the university and the faculty has been diminished to some extent, and there are some who feel a far greater allegiance to their profession than to the university. As the university encourages its faculty to take on the additional challenge of working and competing in a global world, there is some risk that the ties that bind us together as an educational institution will be further loosened.

When *Newsweek* magazine ranked the top 100 global universities this year, it did not come as a complete surprise that 15 of the top 20 universities were American. If a similar survey conducted in 2107 is to have the same outcome, it will be essential for American universities to succeed in their ambitions to become truly global institutions. If you believe, as I do, that our schools and universities must continue to pursue our historic mission of educating the future leaders of the world, we have a responsibility to ensure that those leaders are truly cosmopolitan, true global citizens. They can only become so if the colleges and universities they attend are cosmopolitan as well. That is our challenge.

Thank you for the invitation to speak with you today, and for your attention.