

University of Kentucky

White Paper on Internationalization

Developed by the Internationalization Task Force Membership 2007-2009

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I. Vision

The University of Kentucky will expand the use of its significant resources to enhance interdisciplinary and interprofessional training and research on global issues, and to foster greater international exposure for students, faculty, staff, and the community.

II. Context for Internationalization

The University of Kentucky Strategic Plan includes within its institutional mission the goal of service to a global community. At the same time that we fulfill our land-grant mission to the Commonwealth of Kentucky and to our nation, UK is dedicated to promoting human well-being and economic development in a global context.

As a research university, UK has established a world-wide network of connections that further its missions of engaged teaching, research, and service. Our college-centered culture and administrative structures have allowed each of the sixteen colleges to invest in the areas of greatest promise and to foster initiatives in all three areas of our mission. However, this decentralized structure also can contribute to missed opportunities. Campus internationalization can promote synergies among various colleges, the seeking of multi-college grants, a more concerted approach to the recruitment of international students, and a stronger integration between our global research and our on-campus curriculum.

The American Council on Education defines internationalization as “the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution.”¹ Affirming the importance of this process, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) regards internationalization as “the critical means whereby the quality of our academic learning, discovery, and engagement can be enhanced, broadened, and enlivened.”² Through careful planning that takes into account the institution’s culture as well as the challenges faced both locally and globally, internationalization can result in greater integration among various initiatives, enhanced visibility for UK’s global work, increased funding and greater efficiency. In sum, internationalization involves building on success in the global dimensions of our curriculum and co-curriculum, faculty and student research, and global service.

¹J. Knight (1994), cited in Madeleine F. Green and Christa Olson, *Internationalizing the Campus: A User’s Guide* (Washington DC: American Council on Education, 2003), p. 3.

² *A Call to Leadership: The Presidential Role in Internationalizing the University. A Report of the NASULGC Task Force on International Education*, October 2004, p. 7.
<http://www.nasulgc.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=340>

With this goal in mind, the University of Kentucky has worked closely during 2007-2008 with the American Council on Education (ACE) Internationalization Laboratory. The UK Internationalization Task Force, appointed by the Provost in February 2007, has worked within its extended subcommittees in assessing the current opportunities and challenges in our international missions. Bolstered by ACE research, benchmark data, more than a decade of discussion and planning by UK committees,³ and other research in international education, the Task Force has compiled the “Global Kentucky” Strategic Plan, outlining a series of goals and recommendations to advance our international mission. If implemented, these recommendations will allow UK to educate globally competent citizens, and to foster research and service activities that contribute to the well-being of our interconnected local and global communities.

III. Benefits for Students

An understanding of the world stems from exposure to other countries and cultures through education abroad and contact with UK’s international community, which includes international students, faculty, and visiting scholars on campus. Students must understand the international dimensions of their fields of study; communicate effectively with individuals who speak a different language and who may be from other cultures; and exhibit respect for other cultures.

Many of the social, health, and environmental challenges that UK students address are not solely Kentucky or even U.S. challenges, but world challenges. Access to the world through education abroad, or through campus contact with global leaders and international scholars and students, allows students to learn how their perceptions and theories must be informed by an understanding of other cultural and geographic environments. Research is intrinsically international and global, involving transnational collaborations that require graduates to be cognizant of cross-cultural differences and similarities.

When our students cannot go abroad, they need to be exposed to international students from around the world. Bringing more international students to Lexington is key to internationalizing the campus and the Commonwealth. Many UK students will learn about the world through interaction on campus with international students. These students, who present diverse perspectives, help bring the world to Lexington through their participation in class discussions, in the planning of the co-curriculum, and through the friendships and personal interaction they establish with their U.S. counterparts. Since many U.S. policies have broad international implications, a more thorough understanding of the impact of these policies on other countries will position domestic UK students for leadership in a global environment.

³ For example, “Report of the International Activities Committee” (12-20-81), “OIA International Summit Summary Report” (5-15-99), “Proposal for New Structures for International Studies and Public Policy” (2-24-05), “Office of International Affairs Program Review Committee Report” (3-30-06).

IV. Benefits for the Institution

Globally engaged universities are essential for the United States to maintain its leadership role in the world community. Clearly, an effective international agenda will be required for institutions desiring a position at the forefront of U.S. higher education.

Students in the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world who value the importance of an education that prepares them for citizenship in the global community will seek those institutions that have established a global presence. An added benefit of internationalization, therefore, is a broadening of our pool of applicants, and a continuing increase in the quality as well as quantity of students at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels.

As UK becomes more competitive in attracting high quality national and international faculty and other experts to the UK campus, we will find enhanced opportunities to establish international connections. Benefits will include a higher quality curriculum as well as more opportunities for students both here and abroad. Students, faculty, and staff at the university will benefit through increased interactions with international students, faculty, and guests. Faculty and students will also be able to take greater advantage of the many international service opportunities and clinical experiences now available, thus enhancing their understanding of global issues while contributing to the well-being of people around the world.

The University of Kentucky will also benefit from improved relationships in the local and statewide communities. By having an institution that better reflects the increasing diversity of the state and nation, and that addresses the challenges and opportunities in an interdependent world, our community will view the institution as a stronger resource and an ally in addressing local as well as global issues.

Internationalization will also yield short-term and long-term financial benefits to the institution. The increased number of international students will result in additional tuition income as well as income from housing, food, and involvement in University-sponsored activities. As the institution graduates students who are well prepared to serve as the next generation of leaders in a global society, it is our hope that they will also find ways to give back to the University through scholarships, internships, or other opportunities for future generations of students.

V. Benefits for the Commonwealth

One of UK's missions, as an engaged land-grant institution, is to serve the Commonwealth of Kentucky, by helping its citizens understand the past, address the present, and prepare for the future. The University believes that it has a responsibility to develop future leaders of the Commonwealth – our students – to work and compete successfully in the global community. Internationalization of the University, and its concomitant effect on our students and the Commonwealth, remains a key to this

development to promote success in an increasingly globalized world. While this internationalization takes many forms, certainly two major areas underscore the benefits to the Commonwealth. By sending more students abroad, a major strategic plan goal, the University will continue to prepare students to deal better with a world economy and with increasing multiculturalism within our own Commonwealth borders. To succeed in a putatively “flat world”⁴ that is increasingly competitive, our students need the global competence that comes with being exposed to different cultures, languages, values, and practices. They need to understand that Commonwealth issues exist in national and international contexts. By going abroad, our students serve as ambassadors for the University and the Commonwealth. They not only gain specific knowledge and cross-cultural skills, but also learn to appreciate better what the Commonwealth offers and needs.

UK’s international students also serve as resources in the Commonwealth, interning in businesses, visiting schools, interacting in the community. From an economic standpoint, UK’s international student population by conservative estimates provides an annual \$18.3 million boost to the Commonwealth’s economy.⁵ When they return to their home countries after having positive experiences in Lexington, these students will also serve as ambassadors of the University and Commonwealth, helping to develop global recognition of all that Kentucky has to offer intellectually, economically, and culturally.

In sum, the Commonwealth and the University are inextricably bound in a global society and economy. As the flagship university, the University of Kentucky must help lead the internationalization not only of its students, but of the entire Commonwealth.

VI. Benefits for the Nation

As the American Council on Education has noted, “Global changes have made the global competence of Americans an essential ingredient for ensuring the nation’s security, economic competitiveness, foreign policy leadership, and ability to understand and meet global challenges in the 21st century.”⁶ As a public research institution, the University of Kentucky recognizes its responsibility not only in preparing its students for this world, but also in fostering research that contributes to our national well-being. Whether in the areas of healthcare, energy research, agricultural and environmental exploration, creative expression, or cultural research, UK can bring its global expertise to bear on the challenges facing the U.S. Through international collaboration, engaging in dialogue with the world’s top researchers, we can emphasize to students the importance of their engagement with the nation’s most pressing issues, and we can also equip them with the cultural competence and real-world knowledge required for taking on those problems.

⁴ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

⁵ Estimates based on Institute of International Education formula for calculating economic impact of international students, based on tuition, living expenses (including support for accompanying family members), and related costs. See www.iie.org.

⁶ American Council on Education Coalition for International Education, Memorandum September 10, 2008, p. 1.

The United States has much to offer the world, but the global knowledge community also has a great deal to teach to the United States. By establishing bidirectional partnerships with other nations and communities, the United States can benefit from listening as well as teaching. It is our vision that UK will serve as a model in this regard, not only disseminating knowledge but also bringing new knowledge back to Kentucky to foster innovative solutions to our persistent challenges.

In addition, UK can contribute to a greater global understanding of the United States' current and potential roles in the world through the integration of international students into our campus conversations. As these students enrich the classrooms of U.S. students, at the same time they carry back to their home countries a richer understanding of the diversity within the U.S. social, economic, scientific, and political spheres. Thomas Friedman observes, in *The World Is Flat*, that "An Indian student who is educated at the University of Oklahoma and then gets his first job with a software firm in Oklahoma City forges bonds of trust and understanding that are really important for future collaboration, even if he winds up returning to India."⁷ As we continue to bring the world's top students and scholars to our campus, we can both apply their discoveries to the solutions of the nation's problems, and also enrich their understanding of our domestic issues.

VII. Benefits for the World

The University of Kentucky takes seriously its mission to enhance human well-being and economic development, not only in Kentucky but in a global context. UK seeks to attract international students from both traditional sending countries and from developing nations. This initiative will serve to enrich the environment of the Kentucky campus and the well-being of the countries from which the students come. By honing their skills of inquiry and their vision of engagement, we prepare these students to become real agents of change in leadership roles within their various national and cultural contexts. The application of our research skills to global engagement, as demonstrated by the University's internationally recognized healthcare and agricultural research programs, benefits our international partners, our students and our institution.

VIII. Can we afford internationalization?

Even at times of budgetary contraction, a university must find ways to continue to advance the quality of its programs in education, research, and engagement. The Internationalization Task Force has concluded that many dimensions of this initiative will generate increased funding, through greater success with large grant applications, new revenues from international students, and development opportunities. Further, the Task Force has identified various strategies for making better use of existing, and substantial, resources in international programs. In sum, a cost/benefit analysis demonstrates that the process of internationalization is fiscally responsible, academically essential, and beneficial to all dimensions of the UK mission.

⁷ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat* (2nd ed. 2007), p. 335.

IX. Summary

By definition, a highly ranked research university is already international. Today, scholarly research is necessarily international both in scope and in its networks of communication and dissemination. Indeed, we expect that our programs and our faculty will demonstrate evidence of an international scholarly reputation, and assume positions of leadership within their disciplines on a global rather than only a local or national level.

At an internationalized university, the international arena is not seen as one more dimension of the courses we offer, the research we undertake, or the experience we offer our students. Instead, it forms part of the fabric of our support structure for research and instruction, pervading both the curriculum and the co-curriculum of our students. An internationalized university makes its students engage intensely with the world at large as a matter of course. As part of our plan to ensure that international perspectives and experiences are brought within the range of all students, we will seek ways not only to support international research in a more intentional way but also to bring that research more visibly to bear in the classroom. We hope to promote that research not only as “knowledge” but as “knowledge produced internationally.” While we recognize that the faculty has long been conducting their research on a global scale, through our current project of review and enhancement we will seek ways to ensure that this work becomes more visible and more accessible to our increasingly global constituency.