

Can metropolitan universities be international universities?

In a broad sense the answer to this question is clear: Teaching, learning, research, and scholarship transcend national boundaries. Virtually every campus in our diverse system of higher education maintains some degree of contact with institutions abroad. Every campus exhorts students to consider living and studying in another country; every institution welcomes foreign professors and students as members of the academic community; and exchange agreements and joint programs with foreign partners abound. Like all universities, metropolitan universities accept the value of international education and recognize the need to prepare students for life, work, and citizenship in the global community.

But the question becomes a bit more complex in another sense. Colleges and universities have different missions and different priorities. Some give greater weight to international education and outreach than others. The high priority that metropolitan universities assign to programs and activities that reflect the needs of a community or region might suggest to some that international issues are less central to our basic mission. Indeed, the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities makes no explicit reference to the international dimensions of teaching, research, service, or outreach in a metropolitan context. So the question remains: Can— or should—metropolitan universities devote energy and resources to serving as (to paraphrase the language of the Declaration) “major intellectual *and international* resources for their metropolitan regions?” Are these two foci contradictory or complementary? What is the role of international programs at universities that identify almost by definition with issues that are local and close to home?

A global perspective is essential to a full understanding of the needs, problems, and concerns of any metropolitan region. As Dr. John Ryan suggests in the lead article of this international issue of *Metropolitan Universities*, the Declaration acknowledges the “commitment of metropolitan universities to the newly emphasized imperatives of international participation by the metropolitan concentrations of the United States.” Certainly, problems of economic development cannot be resolved without close attention to the forces that shape our global economy. Elementary and secondary schools, as they become more attuned to issues of global studies and multiculturalism, must identify new and effective ways to incorporate international perspectives into their curricula. University-level schools of business and education, as well as other professional schools, must not only help students understand the international dimensions of their fields; they must also strive to update practitioners—and themselves be regularly updated—on international trends that define the global environment for business, engineering, technology, education, the health professions, and other fields. Virtually no issue of public policy, and hardly any item on the public agenda of our communities, lacks some degree of international resonance. If our metropolitan areas represent both an extended classroom and an extended student body, metropolitan universities themselves must be active and creative as a point of contact between the community and the world.

The international agenda of any university, and especially that of metropolitan universities, should reflect the needs and priorities of the campus as well as those of the larger metropolitan region. We must encourage our students, and the institutions of our community, to rise above merely local perspectives and engage

the world in a real and personal way. No matter how it is structured or managed, the development of a strategic international agenda for metropolitan universities will entail new and challenging partnerships in the United States and abroad. Our new alliances abroad certainly will involve universities, but they must also extend to the same institutions that strengthen us at home: government, business, the nonprofit sector, and private citizens. These partnerships will challenge the conventional way that metropolitan universities finance, support, and structure international relationships. The partnerships also represent potentially fruitful opportunities for metropolitan universities to begin the process of reshaping higher education for the international and interdependent world of the twenty-first century. And they will also help us educate our students and serve our communities.

This international issue of *Metropolitan Universities* seeks to address, at least in a preliminary way, the international implications of the mission of metropolitan universities. The subject is obviously a vast and interesting one that could easily occupy the pages of several issues. Most metropolitan universities are already engaged in innovative projects abroad, activities that enrich the curriculum, enhance the international perspectives of faculty, and link metropolitan regions with the international community. The articles that appear in this issue describe only a small sample of these activities, and they raise questions and present ideas that will surely require continuing analysis and debate. Our primary concern, as always, must be the obligation that metropolitan universities share: to provide a focus on the educational needs of students and to provide opportunities for high-quality education at an affordable cost as part of the academic experience. But several of our contributors suggest that metropolitan universities should also serve as dynamic international resources for communities, both in the United States and abroad.

John Ryan offers a useful conceptual framework for international education, which builds upon the principles incorporated into the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities. He suggests that the international resources of metropolitan institutions are critical elements of community development. He argues that the metropolitan centers that we serve need our leadership and assistance if they are to compete effectively in the global economy of the post-Communist era. He goes on to say that metropolitan universities can play an important role in the effort to transform the former Communist-run socialist states in central and eastern Europe and Eurasia into successful democracies and free-market economies. This transformation must be based in some economic and political theory and requires the skills of synthesis and application that are a special strength of metropolitan universities. Indeed, he suggests that metropolitan universities can provide a new paradigm for the development of higher education in these countries because they function as brokers and incubators of ideas, interpreters of information and experience, and agents of constructive and thoughtful change. Universities in the United States and abroad can realize substantial "reciprocal benefits" from such international collaboration.

Henry Enck and Zdzislaw Kremens give one concrete example of such a partnership. We are used to thinking of large international technical

assistance projects as the domain of flagship research universities. But Enck and Kremens report that technical assistance projects that are firmly anchored in the ethnic or international concerns of a community provide metropolitan universities with the opportunity to participate in and benefit from this form of global outreach. They discuss the experience of Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) and the Technical University of Wroclaw in Poland. Working within the context of a clear set of international priorities, and in conjunction with the Polish American community of New Britain, Connecticut, CCSU launched a business program in the Lower Silesian region of Poland. The university was able to provide structure and focus to the strong sentiment of Connecticut's Polish Americans that something had to be done to help the fledgling democracy of Poland make the difficult political and economic transition to a new, post-Communist era. Moreover, the people of Wroclaw had no time for theory or experimentation; they had to learn fast. They didn't want to be the subject of research studies; they wanted to build democratic institutions and construct an economic infrastructure for private enterprise. The partnership between CCSU and the Technical University of Wroclaw thus provides a good example of how a metropolitan university in the United States joined with an outstanding, research-oriented and engineering university in Poland to raise the money to sustain a mutually beneficial partnership. Central Connecticut, by responding to its community, opened up opportunities for businesses in its metropolitan region to begin working directly with emerging enterprises in Poland. The Technical University of Wroclaw, on the other hand, became a focal point for economics training in Lower Silesia and has now realized the importance of reaching out to its own community to help it confront the challenges of political and economic change. As a result, the model of the American metropolitan university is now taking root in Poland.

Prem Gandhi and Alan Lessler have taken a different, but equally promising, approach to the issue of training and technical assistance. Building upon a faculty member's contacts, the Institute for International Business, Research, and Training (IBERT) at the SUNY College of Plattsburgh entered into a direct relationship with the Institute for Business Studies (IBS) in Moscow to organize an executive training program for one hundred business executives from the timber and railroad industries of the former Soviet Union. Because of its location in upstate New York, the College at Plattsburgh was ideally suited for this kind of program, and it was able to cover its costs and realize a modest profit through its contract with IBS. The experience enhanced its academic program and proved useful for the business community of Plattsburgh as it sought to open up new international markets. It also encouraged IBERT to extend its international training efforts to other countries in Europe and Asia. The program demonstrates the capacity for metropolitan and regional universities to compete successfully for training grants through direct contact with foreign partners. IBERT's emphasis on practical training and its close ties with its own business community were important factors in its success. SUNY at Plattsburgh has now been able to realize additional income to reinvest in areas that are usually underfunded, e.g., faculty research, etc.

Don Behrend and Douglas Barry inform us of another sort of international outreach: the unique partnership between the Alaska Center for International Business (ACIB) at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, and the World Trade Center Alaska (WTCA). After the university itself had persuaded the state government to provide an endowment to establish ACIB in order to promote international trade in Alaska, the struggling World Trade Center Alaska and ACIB entered into a relationship that eventually brought to the university a full franchise from the World Trade Center Association in New York. The synergy between ACIB and WTCA has now expanded to include the field office of the U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, the Governor's Office of International Trade, and the Alaska Inventor's Association. Even the International Trade Program of the Anchorage school district has played an important role in bringing these various partners together. The campus continues to serve as an active resource on a wide range of international issues, not only for business but also for elementary and secondary schools. These arrangements are complex and sometimes difficult to sustain. They require both visionary leadership and patience with the occasionally nettlesome details of implementation. But, once in place, they provide both to the university and to the state an expanded opportunity for economic development on a global scale.

And what about our students? All of the networks, partnerships, and collaborations that advance the global dimensions of metropolitan universities' activities, or which promote international economic development, are pointless unless they also enhance the educational experience of students. Involvement in international training, technical assistance, or outreach projects certainly enables faculty members to expand the horizons of their work as teachers and scholars and to bring fresh international insights into their classrooms. But metropolitan universities must invest an extra measure of effort in helping students to engage the world personally and directly as part of their total academic experience. What can we do to encourage students to take advantage of international linkages that our universities have developed?

This is a special challenge for metropolitan universities. Our students do not fall easily into the traditional patterns of study abroad any more than they conform to traditional patterns here at home. They do not always see the value of the study of a foreign language or an experience abroad; their interest and professional education often prevents them from even considering the possibility of a supervised trip, an internship, or work experience in another country. Their economic or family circumstances frequently make it impractical or impossible for them to interrupt their academic program in order to live and study in a foreign land.

Robert Scott and Kathleen Sunshine report on the experience of Ramapo College of New Jersey, which in 1985 adopted international and multicultural education as a strategic focus. It set out to infuse international and multicultural perspectives into every aspect of its curriculum, its research and training activities, and its outreach into the community. One especially interesting aspect of this effort has been Ramapo's use of telecommunications technology to support its distinctive global mission.

The creation of the international telecommunications center at the college has enabled it to make use of international television, audio and video conferencing, and excellent broadcast-quality television production facilities to bring a rich variety of international resources directly into its classrooms and community. The college makes these resources readily available to public schools and community colleges through a regional television network. Ramapo students and faculty have regular contact with peers and colleagues around the world, and the conferencing facilities have been useful to local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and corporate headquarters. The Ramapo experience offers a useful international complement to the interesting material already included in the "telecommunications" issue of *Metropolitan Universities* (vol. 3, no. 1). It demonstrates that a rich international experience can reach our students right here at home.

Giles Packer and Frank Larkins, along with Brenda Robinson, focus our attention on the specific issue of getting our students abroad. They offer us pragmatic advice not only on the problems but also on workable and affordable solutions. Packer and Larkin suggest that international cooperative education represents an affordable, practical, and attractive strategy for making a structured international experience for students who could not otherwise afford or justify it. They describe two paradigms: programs offered by a single campus or those developed by a consortia. In this case they tell us about the approach of the Georgia Consortium for International Cooperative Education and that of another cooperative effort coordinated by Northeastern University and funded by USAID. These programs seek to provide students not only with paid positions abroad that relate to their academic or professional interests. They also, in contrast to some university-based programs, require a student to live and work not on a campus in a foreign country, but actually in the community itself. The flexibility, affordability, and career-related aspects of international cooperative education are ideally suited to the needs of many students for which study abroad might not otherwise be interesting or feasible.

Robinson examines the social, cultural, and economic factors that discourage our students from going abroad. Then, from her broad perspective from the Chancellor's Office of the California State University system, she describes a number of innovative campus-based programs that have overcome these problems and succeeded in getting students with quite diverse academic backgrounds and professional interests to study in foreign countries. She is especially careful to emphasize the critical importance of strong administrative leadership in creating an institutional culture that actively supports the development of creative international and study abroad programs, many of which strain conventional approaches to administration and financing of academic programs. Her comments underscore a basic precept of effective academic leadership: the role of administration is to help make good ideas happen.

This international issue of *Metropolitan Universities* does not answer all the questions or address all of the important issues. We must still look carefully at quality assurance in study abroad programs, the kinds of new and existing networks that exist to help metropolitan universities work



effectively abroad (e.g., sister-city and sister-state relationships or international organizations like the International Association of University Presidents), and entrepreneurial strategies for fund raising and development to provide financial support for students who cannot afford to go abroad. Of additional importance is the critical role to be played by faculty in helping universities identify and exploit opportunities abroad. Perhaps we can address these and other important questions in future issues.

But, to return to the original question: Can metropolitan universities be international universities? The real question is: How can they afford not to be?