Why Internationalize NASULGC Institutions:
Challenge and Opportunity
John Hudzik, Dean, International Studies,
Michigan State University

The case to internationalize higher education is unimpeachable. National borders are increasingly porous. Easier world-wide communication, travel, migration, trade, and the global dispersion of cultures shape local contexts and challenge higher education to "cross borders" in its missions of knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination.

The visible impact at the local level of a worldwide economy and the international mobility of capital, jobs, labor, and technology have taken market competition from the local and national to the global level. Rapid political and socio-economic changes—forced by more diverse world actors, issues, and problems—challenge our ability to acquire information on a wide array of nations, economies, cultures, and languages. The complexity of community and world problems demands a wider array of problem-defining and -solving perspectives that cross disciplinary and cultural boundaries.

A diverse world culture and an interdependent global system impact everyone, not just those engaged in international activity. Competent and engaged NASULGC institutions are not just institutions for their states and the nation, but for the world.

$ Instructional and research paradigms must be continuously updated with global and comparative content in order for our students and our economy to work effectively in a world marketplace.

$ Outreach to citizens, business, education and public leaders must equally prepare them to live and work in a diverse and interdependent world.

$ A competent NASULGC institution engages in problem solving abroad as well as at home because unsolved problems abroad, such as poverty, impact us all in a myriad of ways.

NASULGC institutions are obliged to think broadly about how instruction, research, and outreach must change to meet the tests of globalization. As the effects of globalization transcend national boundaries, interdependencies intensify.

The Report Card on Education

Most senior higher education leaders recognize the importance of internationalization. The rhetoric coming from many is strong. However, in far too many cases the rhetoric is not matched by institutional commitment and action. Yet, international and global phenomena are
pervasive, important, and unavoidable. As a result, universities are increasingly judged by their peers and by students and other clientele for the extent and excellence of their commitments and action to internationalize.

By numerous measures, American higher education has failed to meet the challenges and opportunities of globalization, and the American public is ill-prepared. The U.S. falls short on virtually all indicators of international knowledge, awareness and competence. In a National Geographic-Roper (2002) poll of geographic knowledge among young adults in nine countries, Americans finished next to last. American 18- to 24-year-olds averaged 3.1 correct responses when asked to locate 11 countries on a numbered outline map of Asia. Less than 25% of the Americans surveyed could name four countries that acknowledge having nuclear weapons. Not only in this poll, but in dozens of other reports and studies, Americans reveal a woeful lack of basic knowledge about world affairs and skills in cultural exchange, mobility and languages.

Engberg and Green (2002), in a report for American Council on Education showcasing internationalization at eight very different institutions of higher learning, suggest:

Colleges and universities have an enormous task ahead of them if they are to internationalize their curricula and student experiences. Financial constraints, competing reform agendas, the absence of public and student insistence, and the paucity of government funding make the work all the more difficult. No wonder that progress has been slow. The data on campus internationalization are not encouraging:

Foreign-language enrollments as a percentage of higher education enrollments have declined from 16 percent in the 1960s to a current average of less than 8 percent.

Only 6 percent of all language enrollments are in Asian languages, with less than 2 percent in Arabic and Hebrew combined.

Only 3 percent of U.S. students study abroad before they graduate. The 143,590 who did in 1999-2000 constituted less than 1 percent of postsecondary enrollments.

In the 1980s only 14 percent of students took at least four credits of internationally focused coursework.

The percentage of four-year institutions with language degree requirements for some students declined from 89 percent in 1965 to 68 percent in 1995. (p. 13)

The gap between our students’ aspirations to study abroad and their actual participation rates is an example that suggests to some that universities themselves are an impediment to internationalization. Only about 3% of U.S. college students in four-year programs participate in
study abroad annually. Yet, one-half to two-thirds of prospective freshmen say that they want or intend to study abroad. Approximately 70% of the public as reflected in several recent opinion polls believe that study abroad should be encouraged or required of undergraduates.

So, what happens? Why is there such a gap between aspiration and participation? Many believe that higher education itself gets in the way through inattention to the needed international dimension of curricula, failure to allocate university resources to internationalization, and overly constrained degree requirements that leave no room for international content and experiences. Neglect by faculty and advisors in educating students about the need to develop international perspective and understanding is also a problem in many settings.

Catalysts for Change

We are challenged to respond effectively to many new global realities. There are many, some of which include:

$\$ The emergence of new or strengthened political and economic entities (e.g., the European Union, NAFTA, and the strong economic development and concomitant growth in geopolitical influence of Asia and other world regions) are reshaping alliances, access, markets, and global influence.

$\$ The rise of significant middle classes in numerous previously under-developed countries reconfigures the global market and economic systems, as well as national economies. Global market systems are further significantly reshaped by global agreements (e.g., through GATT and then through WTO).

$\$ The development of modern and effective university systems throughout much of the world expands learning and diversifies the world research base.

$\$ Growing ethnic and racial conflicts, increasing economic inequalities, and expanding sources of global terrorism have augmented political and economic interdependencies of countries and regions.

The worldwide spread of research capacity is globalizing scholarship and education. Although the uneven availability of technology re-stratifies those who can participate easily in this new scholarship environment, the rapid diffusion of technology seems nonetheless to widen and increase exponentially the frequency of intellectual exchange across borders. The best universities and the best scholars in all fields institutionalize access and interaction across borders.

National Interests and National Security. Internationalizing higher education serves both national security and economic competitiveness goals. While the end of the Cold War may have removed a focal security-related reason for supporting language acquisition, area studies, and
internationalizing the professions, it concomitantly fragmented power in many places. This made other dangers more obvious (e.g., civil wars, religious and ethnic conflicts, intensification of identity politics, migration, refugees) and brought a renewed and diversified urgency for language and area studies. Numerous language and cultural differences that once seemed less pertinent in an earlier era, because certain societies were not connected to the world system or were suppressed by powerful regimes, have now taken on new relevance and salience.

Strong foreign language and area studies programs, such as those supported under Title VI of the Higher Education Act, are critical in developing the expertise needed to address national security needs. Our nation’s knowledge and skill deficits have been known for some time. September 11th and its aftermath put our inadequacies in sharp relief with the pointed example that the United States lacks the expertise in Arabic and other languages of Muslim nations needed to address the challenges of the war on terrorism. Scores of other languages and cultural systems are also critical to the nation’s security.

The role of higher education in U.S. public diplomacy programs is also of major significance in maintaining our security. The good will and strong personal ties to this nation built through generations of students coming to our colleges and universities from around the world are important underpinnings of U.S. foreign relations. Yet these vital programs are under serious threat today, in part from competition by other nations who are seeking to attract these students to their institutions and in part from the very steps we are taking to control entrance to the U.S. in order to address the immediate threat of terrorism.

Maintaining U.S. leadership in science and technology is another critical issue. Clearly U.S. colleges and universities have played a significant role in ensuring our nation’s security through cutting-edge research and technology programs. Faculty, researchers, and graduate students from around the world have been vital to this great American success story. For these national security reasons, it is vitally important that the nation’s university systems remain forthrightly and positively engaged in internationalization, even in the face of regulatory hurdles that make the job more difficult.

**Why Internationalize across the Mission?**

At NASULGC institutions, instruction, research and outreach missions are mutually reinforcing and strengthen the connection between knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination. Likewise, internationalization of universities requires not only attention to internationalizing instruction, research and outreach missions, but to reinforcing their interconnections as well. International perspective in the classroom and in outreach is enriched and reinforced through faculty engaged internationally in their research and scholarship.

**Why Internationalize Instruction?** Our students will work throughout the world. Students in our classrooms now will be leaders and citizens in the U.S., other nations and in international organizations for the next 50 years. It is critical that our universities provide enlightened
educational experiences to help students not only understand international dimensions, but appreciate the challenges and richness this more interconnected world offers.

We cannot claim to be producing educated and prepared undergraduate and graduate students if their programs of study do not integrate a significant component of international knowledge, perspective and experience. And, we cannot claim to be committed to internationalizing our curriculum unless we mainstream international content and experience throughout the curriculum. Every student, regardless of department or major, needs to be able to extrapolate materials from one culture or region to another, to collaborate with colleagues not only at home but also abroad, and to gain experience in living and working successfully in a global environment. Being globally literate is a measure of being a well-educated citizen of the 21st century.

Students need to understand the international dimension of their majors and professions. Many majors have an obvious international connection (e.g., geography, international relations, foreign language, international business, comparative literature). For other majors, the rationale for incorporating an international perspective is not as straightforward, but no less important. Students in engineering, science, agriculture, law, etc., will have a deeper understanding of these important disciplines and be more productive employees and enlightened citizens if they are taught about the ways these topics are applied in other countries and learn about the different perspectives held by people in these professions who come from other cultures. Beyond the major, all students should develop basic understandings of geography, major religions and cultures, and economic and social systems. Appreciating diverse perspectives will become increasingly important to working through new and creative solutions to the many challenges we face.

People from other cultures and societies contribute greatly to diversifying the knowledge base of disciplines and professions. Students and scholars need to understand and appreciate the variety of contributions people from other societies can make to the globally dynamic knowledge society. Differing cultural frames and experiences enrich how problems are viewed, defined and solved. This applies whether we are focused on social or political problems, challenges in the arts and humanities, engineering and engineering design, science and science applications, health and health care, or environmental protection—to name a few.

We not only need to internationalize the on campus curriculum but also provide the experiential base for living and working in a global environment. Study abroad, if integrated into the regular curriculum, provides the best means for incorporating the experiential component into international education, infusing international education with a reflective dimension, and providing first-hand experience in how others think and make decisions. The report card for American higher education in this arena also falls short, comparatively speaking. Indeed, each year while about 550,000 international students study in the United States, we send only about 150,000 students abroad. They are learning more about us than we are about them.
In 1988 the Advisory Council on International Educational Exchange of the Council on International Educational Exchange offered a compelling argument for providing American students with international knowledge:

The role of the United States as a leader among nations is changing rapidly. Despite our position of international leadership for almost fifty years, we are ill-prepared to face changes in business, manufacturing, diplomacy, science and technology that have come with an intensely inter-dependent world....Other countries have had to recognize the educational implications of interdependence sooner than we, and are ahead of us in the international education of their students....The Advisory Council on International Educational Exchange believes that if we fail to internationalize sufficiently our educational institutions, including expansion of student opportunities for study and work abroad, we will irreversibly diminish the world status of the United States. (p. 1)

A strong and pervasive international dimension to the institution’s learning mission is a prerequisite for being a great university.

**Why Internationalize Research and Scholarship?** While the United States research and development enterprise is the strongest in the world, it is not alone at the forefront. All industrialized countries have recognized the importance of leading-edge research to economic development and the very best research in many areas of science and engineering is being done outside the U.S. We must encourage research collaboration beyond our shores to maintain the U.S. competitive edge. The country that is able to build collaboration among the best researchers in the world, wherever they are located, will be the most successful in research and development in the 21st century.

If U.S. companies are to compete successfully in this global environment, the United States must continue to rely on universities to provide quality basic research. In addition, U.S. universities are responsible for educating the next generation of scientists, engineers, managers, and entrepreneurs who can conduct research and development with international perspectives. They must think globally; they must be both producers and users of research results; they must be prepared to work cooperatively in multinational strategic research alliances; they must develop language and cultural skills; and they must be prepared to use specialized research facilities worldwide.

Research thrives on openness and suffers in isolation. It is counterproductive to impose boundaries on basic research and innovation. Research that might lead to a more virulent form of a disease could also lead to new cures. A GPS system can guide a weapon or steer a family safely to its travel destination.

For more than 50 years, the United States has attracted the world’s best minds in science, engineering and technology. We are dependent on their continued willingness to come to the United States for education, research opportunities and professional careers. Foreign students,
scholars and researchers are critical to our national vitality. Universities need to remove impediments to cooperative research and provide positive incentives to seek out and cooperate with the best research scientists and engineers in the world.

The rapidity of political, socio-economic and technology changes worldwide offers many challenges to our ability to respond flexibly and swiftly to challenges and opportunities. Just-in-time project-based responses using various combinations of faculty and other assets scattered across the University become essential. Doing this requires University investment in an infrastructure that can quickly assemble and support cross-disciplinary project response teams. At the same time, we must protect investment for stable and long-term scholarly work because this in turn is what protects the undergraduate and graduate curricula as well as our ability to acquire in-depth area knowledge and support for University connections abroad.

The new demands for immediately available knowledge about a wide array of nations, economies, cultures, and languages, combined with the electronic systems of information exchange, challenge our libraries and traditional definitions of how knowledge is gathered, stored, retrieved and used by scholars and students.

Internationalizing research and outreach missions should be reinforcing. Successful companies globally engage in research, product development, and marketing on a worldwide scale and are increasingly dominating the world’s economies. Private industry provided 68 percent of total research and development funding in 2000. They make use of research and development organizations that span continents, utilizing the most relevant technologies from wherever in the world they originate. They often support participation of university faculty and/or students in their international research and development activities.

**Why Internationalize Outreach and Public Engagement?** The idea of global citizenship is taking on increased saliency as more governance institutions are situated at international levels and shape domestic policies, opportunities and practices (e.g., in trade, manufacturing, finance, labor, environment, health, human rights and domestic legal systems). The movement toward increased multilateral governance, e.g., WTO, World Bank, UN, NATO, ASEAN, will continue. The collective challenges and opportunities that we face infrequently stop at national boundaries. Citizens and leaders need to develop globalized understandings and competencies to be effective participants in a globalizing world.

Businesses and corporations large and small engage increasingly in activity abroad; their needs for language acquisition, cross-cultural awareness, and knowledge of opportunities abroad intensify. This, in turn, challenges many of the University's traditional international priorities, which either have been directed inward toward the interests of students and faculty or abroad toward developing the capacities of other nations.

We need an enhanced internationalizing dialogue between NASULGC institutions and their other domestic clientele. Just as our students need to become more globally competent and
appreciative of the contributions other perspectives might offer, so do others we serve in our public engagement programs. The increasingly interconnected world requires that our public servants better understand international phenomena, our K-12 teachers develop more competency on global issues, our business leaders acquire skills in international business and financial operations and our citizens develop more sophisticated understandings of other cultures and international interactions. Our continuing education programs, extension efforts and outreach activities will need to address the many new challenges the public faces, including those affected by international issues. True excellence in public engagement programs in this time and the future will require incorporating a strong international dimension.

Our national well-being is enhanced by knowledge and learning from abroad. Thus, for the engaged, 21st century NASULGC institution, a commitment to international development no longer simply means providing assistance but forging collaborations with partners abroad for mutual gain. Traditional institutional commitments to international development and domestic outreach activity need to search for synergies and mutual gain.

**In Sum**

The impacts of globalization are widespread and strengthening; they attract both strong critics and proponents. An educated citizenry needs to be aware of the issues involved, understand their complexities and consequences, and be able to function humanely and effectively within them. Globalization challenges higher education to make international education a component of every student’s program, expanding it beyond the purview of the few students who happen to choose majors in it. It is critical that universities find ways to encourage international linkages in research, connect researchers and artists with colleagues around the world, and support the inclusion of international dimensions into research and technology development and new artistic expressions.