A Partnership Strategy in Transition

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Institutional Context

• Land-grant institution
• 15 colleges and instructional units
• Second largest international student population among all public institutions in the U.S. (>10,000)
  • Largest Chinese student population in the U.S.
• Ranked 9th in the U.S. in the number of students participating in credit-bearing study abroad programs
Partnership Strategy in Transition

• 500+ MOUs with limited activity
• 45% non-binding
• 45-50% Agreements and contracts including
  • Student exchanges
  • Faculty exchanges
  • Collaborative research
  • Joint academic programs
Partnership Strategy in Transition

• 5-6 years ago ...
  • Focus on few strategic partners with significant institutional investment to support the partnership
    • INSPIRE
    • BRIDGE

• Re-evaluating this approach
  • Where do our international students come from?
  • Where do send our students for study abroad?
  • Where do faculty conduct research?
Example 1: INSPIRE

• Illinois-Sweden Program for Educational and Research Exchange (INSPIRE)

• **Goal:** Form broad and deep engagements with the three leading institutions of higher education in Stockholm, Sweden: KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm University, and the Karolinska Institutet

• Awarded 2016 Andrew Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education
INSPIRE Joint Activities

• Faculty collaboration on research and education projects
  • Colleges of Engineering, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Fine and Applied Arts, and Media

• Kungstenen Fellowship
  • Full scholarship to cover tuition and fees for MA level study at Stockholm University in addition to a living stipend for the entirety of their academic degree. (2 awarded to date)

• Exchange and study abroad opportunities for students
INSPIRE Outcomes

• 100+ Illinois faculty participants, from 11 different colleges

• 45+ co-authored publications in peer-reviewed journals

• 105 Illinois students have studied in Stockholm (sevenfold increase from pre-INSPIRE)

• 56 collaborative research projects provided seed funding through INSPIRE (approximately $325K institutional investment)

• $17.5 million dollars in external research funding awarded to INSPIRE research collaborations (NSF, Fulbright, STINT, EUC, Marie Curie, Osher Foundation, Swedish Polar Research Secretariat, US Dept of Transportation)
Example 2: Njala University

• Njala University College was formed in 1964 as a new educational institution, with assistance from Illinois.

• 33 degrees were awarded to Njala faculty from U.S. universities from 1964-1973, 27 of them from Illinois.

  • 19 Illinois staff members also served as long-term advisors in Sierra Leone in various academic discipline.

• 7 administrative personnel assisted as short-term advisors in accounting, campus planning, and college administration.
Illinois and Njala University Joint Activities

• Illinois-Njala Global Health Partnership
• Study abroad programs
• Delivered six workshops covering topics such as: nutrition and food security, food processing and nutrition, agribusiness, agricultural extension approaches and sustainability
• Research seminars at Njala University, which provides a platform for faculty and graduate students from both institutions an opportunity to present findings on their latest research projects
• Multiple research collaborations between faculty and graduate students, primarily in the College of Agriculture
Challenges of the Current Approach

• Demand vs. Strategic engagement
  • How to vet demand for partnerships and ensure you engage with those that provide mutual benefit

• Quality vs. Quantity
  • How do we develop metrics for quantifying impact and return on investment?

• How do we expand geographically to engage in the global south and diversify our own institutional scope?
  • Evolving into the 21st century landscape; Diversification is essential now.
  • Traditional student markets are shifting; so too should the partnership landscape.
  • Over-reliance and focus on Asia limits opportunities and creates dependence.
Opportunities

- Develop a taxonomy of partnerships
  - Differentiate between institutional, “strategic” partnership initiatives and department/lab/college “transactional” partnerships
- Integrate an international partnership plan with overall campus strategic plan/goals/priorities
- Identify and build on existing clusters of international engagement (research collaboration, co-authorship, student mobility, alumni bases, corporate connections, etc.)
- Support partnership activities through a variety of internal and external sources, and an effective administrative infrastructure
- Evaluate partnership inputs, outputs, and outcomes