



*Increasing the power of higher education institutions
as sustainable and scalable engines of development*

Webinar Summary

Knowledge Center Town Hall with
USAID Higher Education Coordinator
Barbara Schneeman

June 26, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Over 60 participants participated in APLU's first Town Hall Webinar, with special guest Barbara Schneeman, Ph.D. Barbara recently joined USAID as the Agency's higher education coordinator, working to increase engagement between USAID and the higher education community. During the webinar, she provided insightful perspective into where the Agency is heading in terms of engaging higher education institutions and asks APLU members to share their experiences working in developing countries.

BACKGROUND

Meet Dr. Barbara Schneeman

Barbara's unique and varied professional experiences provide her with a deep appreciation of both university research and what it takes to effectively share that information. After earning her Bachelor's Degree in food science from the University of California, Davis and a Ph.D. in nutrition from the University of California, Berkeley, as well as postdoctoral training in gastrointestinal physiology at Children's Hospital in Oakland, CA, she taught as a professor of nutrition and served as dean at the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at the University of California, Davis.

Her experience in higher education continued as she worked as associate vice provost for university outreach and international affairs

and chair of the Department of Nutrition at the University of California, Davis. She worked from 2004 to 2013 as the director of the Office of Nutrition, Labeling, and Dietary Supplements in the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. These various experiences, combined with serving on various government, non-profit, and foundation boards and committees, have given Barbara a unique perspective when examining the legal, economic, and political workings of fostering higher education in the developing world.



Newly appointed USAID Higher Education Coordinator Barbara Schneeman is looking forward to increasing engagement between USAID and the higher education community.

HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Recognizing the critical role of higher education in program development, the Higher Education Coordinator plays both an internal and external role within USAID, to champion the role of higher education institutions. In her time as Coordinator,

Barbara aims to first coordinate bureaus to form a united front on how they plan on using higher education in development, and then work to find opportunities to partner and build higher education institutions.

The cross-cutting nature of higher education – in being both a tool to achieve goals in basic education, health, agriculture, democracy, etc., and a sector in its own right—makes investing possible across various bureaus. Indeed, in most successful development programs, there will be a role for higher education. With this in mind, Barbara is establishing and collaborates with an internal working group that interacts with bureaus across USAID. This group will develop core principles to understand the role, challenges, and efficacy of higher education institutions to establish concrete actions for development. In that same vein, Barbara aims to create clear visions of what can be done moving forward amongst the various bureaus at USAID, encouraging APLU members to share their successes and experiences gained in developing countries with the Agency.

Although this is a presidentially appointed position, Barbara is in a critical position to advise on the current and future roles of higher education and development. With her interactions with organizations like APLU, she seeks opportunities to learn how best to support the higher education sector and how to share the value it brings to development. USAID is working to create a broader role for higher education in countries of crisis and incorporate it into the next Education Strategy USAID, after it expires at the end of 2015.

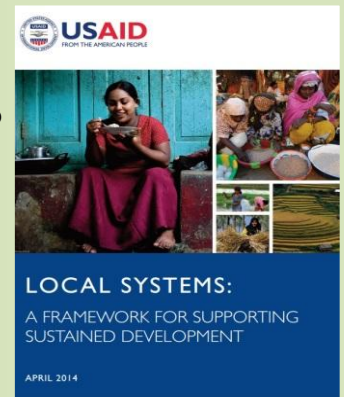
FUTURE FOR USAID

Alongside USAID's initiative to move towards a results-based framework, it is focused on

programs that demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and sustainability while building local institutions and systems. We at APLU hope to see building and supporting higher education institutions in developing countries become a larger part of the local systems discussion. The Agency has followed a local system engagement framework, focusing attention on 5Rs – resources, roles, relationships, rules, and results. As the local systems approach moves forward, USAID intends to use the 5Rs agency wide.

USAID's FIVE Rs In order to identify strengths and weaknesses in existing local systems, USAID established a framework focusing on the 5Rs.

1. Local systems can transform **RESOURCES** into outputs.
2. Local systems involve various **ROLES** as consumers, funders, and advocates.
3. Understanding the **RELATIONSHIPS** established between these different actors is essential.
4. **RULES** serve as an important feature of local systems, assigning roles, and determining accessibility of resources.
5. Measuring **RESULTS** with traditional outputs and outcomes must be expanded to include overall strength of local systems.



More on frameworks for supporting sustained development can be found in [this report](#).

It has proven difficult for small companies and universities to compete with large companies and NGOs for funding, USAID recently released Higher Education Partnerships for Innovation and Impact (HEPII) Annual Program Statement (APS) which hopes to, in part, address this issue. The Agency is expects this APS will act as a flexible funding mechanism for higher education institutions to use. Partnering this APS with the shift towards local system initiatives, there is an opportunity for APLU members to submit individual proposals or to interact with other institutions and organizations to jointly submit proposals to USAID.

USAID Higher Education Partnerships for Innovation and Impact Annual Program Statement (APS)

The recently released APS aims to promote opportunities to leverage HEI capabilities across USAID's portfolio and its program cycle. Confident that encouraging the capabilities of HEI can assist in solving critical development, the Agency is seeking concept papers from qualified U.S. and non-U.S. higher education institutions to achieve sustainable development outcomes, results, and impact.

More on the APS can be found [here](#).



(Above) Sokoine University of Agriculture students participate in a postgraduate seminar sponsored by iAGRI, managed by Ohio State University.

USAID PARTNERSHIPS

In regards to partnerships with APLU universities, the Barbara hopes to encourage an ongoing dialogue with the higher education sector to better understand barriers to effectiveness,

especially in regards to transaction costs and cumbersome legal frameworks and systems.

The steps made towards fostering these partnerships continue to evolve with local systems as an effective solution. For instance, Barbara briefly spoke of reshaping mechanisms to better incorporate Land-grant Universities, Innovation Labs, and Missions into the development sphere as it transforms. Specifically, Barbara points to Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER), a grants program that partners scientists in developing countries with US government supported collaborators to enhance research opportunities. Similarly, programs like the AAAS Fellowship, Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN), and the Global Development Lab can bring innovation from the higher education world into the development sphere while shedding light on the significance of higher education.

When asked if the Missions are aware of the contributions made by strong institutions of higher education, Barbara assured participants that indeed they do, however these universities often need a champion to represent them. A challenge remains to determine how to weigh long-term impact versus short-term goals in development, and understanding how universities determine evaluation metrics to articulate value could be incredibly helpful in finding what works in higher education development.

Barbara also made clear her desire to further engage in dialogue among the bureaus and divisions in the agency and partners to create a more efficient system. For instance, it was brought to her attention there are multiple partnerships working with one host organization that have the potential to build together. While being cognizant of tensions,

USAID and partners could benefit from positive relationships with similar goals.

There is always room to improve future relationships between successful partners and higher education systems. As USAID continues to transform its techniques to tackle development challenges, it will explore relationships with valuable organizations like CGIAR, HESN, Innovation Labs, and higher education systems.

SUMMARY

In her time as USAID Higher Education Coordinator, Barbara aims to engage with APLU members and others in the higher education community to gain insight into the work of US universities in developing countries and to find ways to increase higher education engagement. With collaboration and clear intentions, the cross-cutting role of higher education can play an essential role in unlocking a country's potential.



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The Knowledge Center on Advancing Development through Higher Education

works to create, curate, analyze and share knowledge about capacity building and institutional transformation in higher education for development.

Based in Washington, D.C., the Knowledge Center's activities provide policy makers, donors, researchers, and practitioners with evidence-based approaches to inform investments in human and institutional capacity development of institutes of higher education in developing countries. Our purpose is to develop knowledge in support of strengthening international higher education's capacity to address socioeconomic development challenges facing the developing world and improving APLU member university engagement with these higher education institutions.

Learn more about the Knowledge Center and access the webinar recording at www.aplu.org/knowledgecenter