

## European Universities and Their International Perspectives

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There is a vast body of literature analyzing the issues surrounding higher education internationalization which the European University Association has asked us to address on this occasion – in particular, the numerous insightful and comprehensive contributions by such well-established experts as John Davies of the U K, Hans de Wit of the Netherlands, and Jane Knight of Canada (not to mention the substantial overview provided in OECD’s 2008 *Thematic Review of Tertiary Education*, the recent survey of university internationalization by IAU, and Raabe’s new handbook on the “Internationalisation of European Higher Education” – plus a just-completed doctoral thesis on the subject at the University of Bath by Sally-Ann Burnett). I cannot pretend to know all that they have produced, nor could I share it here even if I did. Rather, all I can do is offer a few personal observations on the subject – in response to the three questions posed to us – based on my own experiences. Because my background includes both a long career in higher education management in North America (including seven years in the US and fifteen years as president of two Canadian universities) as well as a fairly intense exposure to the European context over the past dozen years through my involvement with EUA and the Salzburg Seminar, I’ve been requested to focus especially on comparisons between the European and North American scenes. My perceptions are of course selective, intended simply to stimulate interaction during this session.

### How Do International Partners View European Universities’ Efforts for Internationalization Compared to Others?

To address this question, I must first indicate what I understand “efforts for internationalization” to mean. There are numerous definitions of this concept but my favourite is the overview advanced by de Wit, which includes four categories of program strategies:

- (1) *academic programs* – including student-oriented ones (such as mobility schemes, exchanges, work and study abroad), staff-oriented ones (such as faculty-staff mobility, visiting lecturers, and joint appointments for teaching purposes), and curriculum development activities (such as internationalization of the curriculum, foreign language study, area and international thematic studies, joint and double degree programs);
- (2) *technical assistance* – including capacity-building (such as human resource development, institutional reform, and curricular innovation), inward-focused knowledge export (such as recruitment of international students for economic reasons and developing special profit-based courses for them), and outward-oriented transnational education (such as offshore programs hosted by other institutions, distance education offerings [increasingly via the internet], twinning and articulation schemes, branch campuses and franchise arrangements);

- (3) *research collaboration* – including PhD-oriented programs (such as joint doctorates and international doctoral students), staff-oriented programs (including faculty-staff mobility, visiting scholars, and joint appointments for research purposes), and research development programs (including international scholarly projects and agreements as well as international conferences and publishing ventures, area theme centres, and joint research institutes); and
- (4) *extracurricular activities* – including student clubs and associations, international student and staff residences, intercultural events, international alumni programs, and intercultural community-based projects.

The internationalization of higher education is clearly an immense enterprise, and it appears to have evolved differently in Europe as compared with the US – for reasons that are contextually driven and historically understandable. (Canada tends to be a hybrid of those two approaches [as it does in so many other domains] and Australia seems closer to the American than the European situation.)

Data I've seen support some comparative generalizations such as the following:

- (1) *international research and scholarly collaboration* are highly valued in both settings, with a slight edge going to the Americans at present (although this may be ameliorated as the European Research Area evolves);
- (2) *international academic programs* (especially student mobility schemes) have progressed further in Europe than in North America – thanks in part to such programs as ERASMUS, SOCRATES, TEMPUS, and their successors – although the value of these has been largely limited to the European continent;
- (3) *technical assistance strategies* are more advanced in North America than in European universities – especially transnational operations such as offshore programs and branch campuses, twinning and franchise arrangements, and virtual programs and institutions; and
- (4) I don't perceive much difference between Europe and North America in de Wit's category of *extracurricular activities*, except for the area of international alumni programs (mainly because European universities don't share the American tradition of nurturing a continuing and mutually supportive relationship with their graduates, either domestic or international).

I believe that the main reasons for these distinctions relate to the degree of autonomy that universities have achieved from their national governments on our two continents, in the following respects:

- (1) public universities in North America are creatures of their respective states and provinces, and the constitutional capability of their national authorities to influence their directions as well as the financial obligation those governments accept for supporting their activities are considerably less than with many of their European counterparts – in addition to the fact that internationalization is not a high priority for the lower levels of government which have the major

responsibility for higher education (this distinction is sharper in Canada than in the US);

- (2) these circumstances result in the need for North American universities to be more entrepreneurial in their approaches to internationalization than their European counterparts – hence the former are more dependent on the vagaries of private sector support for their approaches to student mobility while their trans-Atlantic “cousins” can resort to the more reliable EU-funded schemes, and the North American institutions place more emphasis on the exporting of their programs overseas through substantial self-funding and profit-making operations than do the Europeans (with some notable exceptions that most of us have probably encountered in our various travels);
- (3) I sense less concern for curricular internationalization in European universities than in North America (indeed, the latest issue of EUA’s *Trends* publication notes that “many institutions don’t see potential benefits for *all students* of studying in a more international environment” but choose rather to focus on their study-abroad programs, which are accessed by a much higher proportion of students there than in America), so the institution’s curriculum is the only vehicle of internationalization for a much larger proportion of students in Canada and the US than in Europe; and
- (4) internationalization tends to be more organically embedded in the culture of European universities (probably in part because of the greater proximity of and interchange with other countries and the less isolationist perspective of primary and secondary education) than in North America, where international approaches in higher education are more frequently treated as supplements that are desired for political more than academic reasons and are thus not as well integrated into the institutions’ strategic planning and administrative structure as in Europe.

These observations are of course highly generalized and numerous exceptions to them can be found on both continents, but I think they accurately reflect some overall tendencies that are significant to our aspirations for greater trans-Atlantic cooperation among universities. I also believe that progress in the Bologna process – which is greatly admired by those of us from outside Europe who are familiar with it – as well as the gradual growth in entrepreneurialism over here, are having the effect of reducing some differences between European and North American higher education and increasing the attractiveness of our expanded collaboration.

#### How Do They Cooperate with Partners across the Globe?

In addressing this question I’ll limit my comments to what I know about the Canadian scene, with which I am most familiar. The simple answer is that one can find in Canada examples of cooperation with partners across the globe that represent all of the program strategies summarized earlier. A better answer is to discuss how we identify and pursue opportunities to engage in such arrangements; for this, we rely largely on strategic networks and collaborations.

Our university leaders are well aware that their institutions are in competition with others in Canada, the US and abroad for international staff and students, research projects and

program funding, capacity-building and development assistance opportunities – and for the profile and status that are required by and result from such engagements. But they also recognize that they can compete more effectively by cooperating with strategically chosen partners than by going it alone. So let me outline some forms of networking that we use for such collaborations:

- (1) *select “clubs” of universities* that share particular interests (like a focus on urban settings, liberal arts, or research concentrations), characteristics (like small size, isolated location, or private status), or purposes (like benchmarking endeavours, joint degrees, or personnel exchanges), etc. – these cooperatives use mutual assistance to collectively increase their internationalization and competitiveness with those not “in the club”;
- (2) *formal organizations of institutions* (national and multinational) that include in their mandates the fostering of internationalization among their members – these include for us the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, and the International Association of Universities (like you have the European University Association over here);
- (3) *non-governmental organizations* concerned specifically with advancing international education – like the Canadian Bureau for International Education, the Council of International Educational Exchange, the Institute of International Education, EAIE, IREX, NAFSA, and others that exist to facilitate the internationalization of people, institutions, programs, and services (as well as professional associations and academic societies with international reach);
- (4) *government agencies* (at both the provincial and federal levels in Canada) – these include education departments in provincial governments that support the enrichment of their universities through internationalization, national research-funding councils that support our participation in international scientific undertakings, the federal government’s trade agencies that view higher education as an internationally marketable commodity and also see it as instrumental to international trade in other industries (our universities play a significant role in government trade missions to other continents and in the North American Free Trade Agreement, for example, and you can be sure the same will be true for Canada’s new Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU – in which I presume your European universities will be active as well), the Canadian International Development Agency which uses universities extensively in its work, and the foreign affairs department that views higher education as a vehicle for spreading Canadian culture and enriching Canadian diplomacy (and is thus willing to use its embassies around the world to foster the internationalization and promote the “brand” of Canadian universities);
- (5) *multilateral entities* to which Canada belongs and which involve universities in conducting some of their activities – these include the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation agency, the Commonwealth of Nations, La Francophonie, certain International Financing Institutions, the Organization of American States, and the Arctic Council (all of which provide funding for various international higher education efforts); and

- (6) *internationally active Canadian and multinational industrial enterprises* which require university graduates and expertise in their global endeavours – and are prepared to underwrite some of the institutional costs of producing them (such private-sector partnerships can substantially enlarge the impact and scope of higher education operations overseas).

So there are many potential partners whom we approach for our internationalization efforts, several of which fall outside the domain of higher education – and all of which can enhance our global competitiveness.

### What Are Their Suggestions and Wishes for Effective Cooperation?

My main *suggestion* for effective cooperation is that each university “get its own act together” before seeking out partners in internationalization. More specifically, it is important for us to:

1. *Clarify our purposes and priorities* in pursuing internationalization; we may be in it for revenue generation, for educational enrichment, for knowledge advancement, for status seeking, for development assistance, for local valuation, or for other purposes – which (though not mutually exclusive) are potentially conflicting goals, so priorities must be established among them in order to determine which of the many possible internationalization activities and partners we should invest in because choices must obviously be made; this is true for geographic regions, specialization areas, and instructional languages as well. Then we need to incorporate these purposes into our mission statements so they are transparent and can be understood, and integrate them into our strategic plans with their attendant operational objectives, policy supports (such as incentive programs), resource allocation systems and implementation actions, schedules, and responsibilities.
2. *Adjust our organizational structures* to accommodate such internationalization activities, with provision made for stimulating, coordinating, and facilitating them – and an appropriate balance between centralized and decentralized leadership, somewhat similar to the ways some of us have organized for managing such distributed functions as quality improvement, fund raising, and public relations. Also, we should ensure the necessary infrastructure (facilities, ICT, personnel, etc.) to implement our internationalization activities – because without these kinds of structural, logistical, and material supports being available and apparent, the “internationalization culture” that is ultimately necessary for true success will not emerge in our campus communities.
3. *Pursue collaboration with other institutions* to gain economy of scale, division of labour, and range of response that will enable us collectively to undertake aspects of internationalization that would not be possible for any of us working alone; for example, joint purchasing of travel and materials, sharing of facilities and equipment, and spreading responsibilities for certain programs and services among cooperating institutions can make all of them more competitive on a global scale – which will increase the value of each of them locally; this, of course, is easier for those of us in metropolitan areas than for those that are more geographically remote.

These suggestions are all based on my personal observations and experiences (as well as supported by the literature in this field), and I'd be happy to elaborate on them if desired.

Finally, my *wishes* for effective cooperation boil down to the hope that we can achieve more of it. In particular, I look forward to substantially advancing the "Transatlantic Dialogue" that EUA has launched with my North American colleagues.