



Association of International Education Administrators
Leaders in International Higher Education

**Lessons Learned in the Internationalization of Higher Education:
'A Call to Leadership' Revisited**

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In 2003, when I was president of the University of Cincinnati (UC), I was asked to participate in a special task force of what was then the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and is now the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) to address the need for member schools to embrace internationalization as a core mission. Our work led to the publication of the 2004 paper, “A Call to Leadership: The Presidential Role in Internationalizing the University.”

“A Call to Leadership” turned out to be seminal work on the subject—an important bridge that allowed many to move beyond dated perceptions of the global role of higher education. The imperative, we argued, was not simply the number of students studying abroad or how to compete for Fulbright scholarships. Politically, economically, and socially, the world had undergone fundamental changes, which means the responsibility of preparing students to compete and have an impact on that world demands new focus and strategies from leaders in higher education.

Change, we argued, or face obsolescence.

But there was a concurrent story then that bears special relevance to the challenges and questions confronting today’s university and college presidents, chancellors, and boards tackling twenty-first century internationalization more than seven years after our report’s release

In the course of constructing our case for internationalization, each one of us on the task force was forced to examine the state of global thinking at our respective institutions. We at UC were still in the early stages of navigating our own learning curve when it came to the emerging twenty-first century realities of internationalization and how to define and fulfill our global role. In many ways, my task force involvement served as a catalyst for UC’s full engagement with internationalization and its inherent challenges—the demands of the former task helped inform and ensure the success of the latter.

Here, I will briefly discuss the key take-a-ways of that process and how I am taking those ideas to scale in my current role as chancellor of The State University of New York (SUNY). I will

also share my views on where “A Call to Leadership” stands in 2012: how the forecasts made in the NASULG report are playing out (or not) in today’s climate for schools, students, and the global community, and where the focus needs to be for those institutions determined to lead.

In the early 1990s, the University of Cincinnati was typical of schools of its scale: internationalization existed more in theory than practice. There were student exchanges and modest opportunities for studying abroad, but there was no unifying vision guiding these efforts, nor was there any kind of blue print for creating one. We did not know it then, but long-held ideas about how U.S. universities traditionally prepared students to be global leaders in their chosen fields were being upended with the collapse of Soviet communism; the emergence of developing nations onto the global eco-political stage; and new competitiveness among nations for innovation, investment, and advantage in the global marketplace.

It was a whole new world, indeed.

Historic advances in communication technology fed into the growing momentum that grew from these changes, rapidly blurring borders and minimizing their importance with regard to job creation, collaborative research, and economic development. Globalization had arrived. Was UC prepared to deal with it?

To find out, I directed a full and immediate implemented external review of our international programs and strategy. Self examination forced us to conclude that UC was not keeping pace. Our approach was dated, our programs fragmented and lacking coordination. Worst of all, we lacked the expertise to get up to speed. Our first task was to create a senior staff position responsible for comprehensive internationalization and to fill it with a candidate who was informed and conversant in global trends and could identify opportunities for UC to expand its global reach.

UC’s nationwide search for its first vice provost for international affairs did not lead us to a career academic, but to systems expert and entrepreneur, Dr. Mitch Leventhal.

Although an expert in international trade in higher education services, Dr. Leventhal also brought extensive international experience across many industry verticals, including shipping, chemicals, finance, insurance, information technology, and technology transfer. Just as important, he brought a perspective we lacked. He saw that universities were facing a critical marketing challenge with regard to their international programming. Social, political, and demographic trends, he argued, pointed to a growing global demand for quality higher education opportunities in the U.S.

Some large U.S. universities and colleges had long-established international profiles. Names like Harvard and Yale sold themselves. The UC brand—as with so many state institutions—did not. Nonetheless, Leventhal argued, UC would have to compete on a global playing field just the same if we were going to maintain relevancy and academic standing. We had to become competitive to ensure that our graduates could compete—and win—in the global marketplace of ideas, employability, and achievement.

It is a testament to UC success at rethinking and implementing a new approach to internationalization that The State University of New York is in the process of taking the best practices developed in Cincinnati to scale across the 64-campus SUNY system.

With Dr. Leventhal on board as our vice chancellor for global affairs since 2009, SUNY is moving quickly and steadily toward full system integration of internationalization into the fabric of public higher education in New York State. For SUNY to serve as an engine of economic revitalization, we must become a comprehensively internationalized higher education system. Our campuses combined make up one of the most diverse learning communities in the nation. More than 18,000 international students from 160 nations attend our campuses, and more than 5,000 students each year participate in study abroad programs. SUNY's several international offices act as bases for student recruitment yet are also community resources in and of themselves—points of contact that allow us to build on longstanding partnerships with foreign universities, governments, and NGOs on research, economic development, and broadening access to education. In a departure from tradition, in late 2009 SUNY moved its headquarters for global affairs from Albany to New York City. Located in midtown Manhattan, the SUNY Global Center now truly has worldwide reach and also serves as an agent to bring our many upstate campuses and students into the thick of America's most global of cities.

Taking our global participation to the next level, we are enhancing our talent pool to draw more international students to our campuses and send more students abroad. SUNY is looking to increase international enrollment by 14,000 students over the next five years, to approximately 32,000 across all 64 campuses. Integral to this effort is a worldwide system of commission-based international recruitment agencies, certified by the American International Recruitment Council (AIRC). Within five years, annual new international student tuition fees will enable SUNY to offer more than 3,000 study abroad scholarships per year and 125 faculty internationalization grants, as well as to seed many other global initiatives.

Building on this foundation, SUNY is redefining the classroom by taking away physical walls *and* borders. We are developing excellent online international study programs through hybrid online and classroom instruction and courses that are team-taught with our partners around the globe. Through our Open SUNY initiative, we are creating the country's most extensive distance learning network, which will connect students with faculty and peers worldwide, and which will also provide a means to engage in institutional capacity building with emerging institutions around the world.

Looking to enhance our global effectiveness beyond the classroom, SUNY just last year opened a Confucius Institute for Business—the first of its kind in the United States. Housed in the SUNY Global Center in New York City, the institute is a prime example of SUNY's growing emphasis on economic development and globalization education for industry. The focus of the SUNY Confucius Institute for Business is on providing working professionals with the skills necessary to build effective business relationships in and with China.

New York in the World, another initiative geared toward enhancing New York's competitive global position, aims to create a data- and fact-driven foundation for sound decision making by state policy makers and industry leaders. Smart, informed decisions will ensure New York's

continued competitiveness, spur economic growth, and help improve the standard of living and quality of life for all New Yorkers.

With these and other global initiatives, SUNY is cultivating a culturally fluent, international mindset that will be felt across every field and campus in the SUNY system—and serve as a model for the nation and the world.

And it began by adopting a global mindset ourselves. Understanding the role of higher education in the larger scheme of political, economic, and cultural changes worldwide is the key to preparing for them in order to be effective and thrive. Committing to comprehensive internationalization in deed, not just word, is the cornerstone.