



Conceptual Framework:

University of Minnesota's Approach to Internationalizing the Curriculum and Campus

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The University of Minnesota, founded in the belief that all people are enriched by understanding, is dedicated to the advancement of learning and the search for truth; to the sharing of this knowledge through education for a diverse community; and to the application of this knowledge to benefit the people of the state, the nation and the world. The University's threefold mission of research and discovery, teaching and learning, and outreach and public service is carried out on multiple campuses and throughout the state.

The Global Programs and Strategy Alliance (GPS Alliance) team for curriculum and campus internationalization continues to develop and revise a guiding framework for its work in aiding the University of Minnesota (U of M) to achieve its goal of graduating students who are prepared for global citizenship. Ongoing research adds to our bibliographies on the internationalization of higher education, study abroad outcomes, and the internationalization of the disciplines. From this research, four recent articles emerged as a foundation that best explains the intention of our efforts and to identify desirable outcomes from the internationalization process. These articles focus on global competency, internationalization of the self (Sanderson, 2008), and the ways in which the disciplines engage in internationalization (Clifford, 2009). Additionally, two of these articles focus on specific disciplines—globally competent engineers (Downey et al., 2006) and internationalization of mathematics (Applebaum et al., 2009). The core ideas of these articles can serve as concrete examples of the ways in which internationalization is applicable across academic disciplines. The following summary discusses the articles' key insights broadly.

To ground our motives for internationalization, we—as academics and practitioners—must ask ourselves, *What do global competency and international perspectives add to the disciplines and, more specifically, to student learning outcomes?* We first must establish learning criteria, or outcomes, for our students. The U of M has already determined that “global citizenship” is a desirable outcome of its graduates, but what does this mean for students and what does this mean for the faculty members who guide student learning? In the article “The globally competent engineer: Working effectively with people who define problems differently,” Downey et al. (2006) identified three targeted areas for competency development: knowledge, abilities, and predispositions. The authors acknowledge that students need to understand how professionals' approaches to work differ from country to country, and from culture to culture. They further argue that students must move beyond awareness and apply what they learn in new or unfamiliar situations. Finally, and perhaps the most difficult task to achieve, Downey et al. assert that students must develop tendencies to not assume “right” or “wrong” approaches to the work of others who may define and solve problems differently (Ibid). In order to achieve these outcomes, students must learn to understand difference and must know how to effectively engage with people from other countries.

Applebaum et al. (2009) suggest additional knowledge-based learning outcomes in their article “Internationalizing the university mathematics curriculum.” The authors indicate that students should recognize the contributions and developments of discipline-specific concepts from non-Western cultures, and that they should be aware of the social role that an academic discipline plays across cultures.

Applebaum et al. advocate for hands-on experience interacting with scholars and practitioners from different countries in their disciplines to foster this deeper understanding. Echoing Downey et al. (2006), the authors speak to the need for

sensitivity to cultural differences and the appreciation of different approaches to solving problems beyond an awareness of the problems themselves.

Faculty are uniquely positioned to enable students to effectively achieve these learning outcomes. An authentic teaching approach, in which faculty learn and practice self-reflection of their own cultural and personal value systems to better understand their worldview (Cranton, 2001, as discussed in Sanderson, 2008), is a critical element of campus internationalization and development of global citizens. If an institution expects graduates to be accepting and knowledgeable of cultural differences, it is especially important for faculty to have modeled this and aided students in the development of these capabilities. Two forms of reflection are particularly useful: A focus on *content*—understanding the development of personal identity, and a focus on *process*—how to question one’s underlying value premises. Through this type of self-reflection, faculty can better understand how their values influence their own behaviors, assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives. Moreover, it is necessary to understand how these influences shape faculty’s teaching practices and the classroom environment that is created for students.

In addition to authentic teaching, Sanderson (2008) recommends incorporating a “cosmopolitan outlook” into a faculty member’s academic self. He argues that faculty should develop openness to others, to different places, and to new experiences. An important component of cosmopolitanism is recognizing the dynamic between local and global influences; by understanding the interplay of global influences on the local environment in which faculty teach, faculty can better relate a global learning environment to their students. It is important for faculty to holistically embrace such a transformation, meaning that such an outlook cannot be turned “on” or “off” in and outside of the classroom environment.

To more broadly understand the disciplines, we look to Clifford’s (2009) case study of an Australian university and her use of Becher and Trowler’s (2001) categorization of the disciplines on a continuum. These categories include *hard pure* (natural sciences and math), *hard applied* (science-based professions, e.g., engineering), *soft pure* (humanities and social sciences), *soft applied* (social professions, e.g., education, social work, and law)” (p.134). As more disciplines move toward interdisciplinary approaches, the boundaries between disciplines make classification more difficult. Clifford (2009) found that lecturers in hard disciplines believed it to be more difficult to understand how students from different backgrounds or different pedagogical approaches would change their discipline. Lecturers in the soft disciplines, conversely, saw their disciplines as more value-laden and open to different ways of thinking. Clifford’s study identified the possibility of cultural clashes (e.g., because of religious values) in teaching certain social concepts in soft disciplines (Ibid). This study also identified the need to adapt to the learning environment as well as modifying course content when considering internationalization. This latter concept specifically refers to incorporating local elements from the place in which

the class is taught, but is applicable to the ways in which faculty can adjust for diverse classroom environments, as well.

This summary has identified three different components of internationalization: Student learning objectives, faculty development of personal and academic identities, and how representatives from different academic disciplines may view the adaptability of internationalization. From these concepts and other voices in current scholarship about internationalizing higher education, the Global Programs and Strategy Alliance continues to build a foundation and a framework for internationalizing the curricula and campuses of the University of Minnesota.

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