

I. Executive Summary

This report examines the internationalization efforts of U.S. colleges and universities with comparisons to previous data, as appropriate and possible. It also looks at the international experiences and attitudes of undergraduate students and faculty. Key questions addressed include: To what extent are institutions internationalizing the undergraduate experience? What practices and policies are in place to support internationalization efforts? Do students graduate with international skills and knowledge? What international experiences and skills do students and faculty possess? Do students and faculty support international education initiatives?

OVERVIEW

Internationalization has been high on the agenda of the American Council on Education (ACE) since the 1950s. Two ACE studies, Andersen (1988) and Lambert (1989), were the first systematic efforts to provide an overview of the state of internationalization at U.S. colleges and universities.¹ They revealed major gaps in undergraduates' international education.

Since those studies, the need for graduates with international knowledge and skills has increased substantially. U.S. international responsibilities have gone far beyond any previously imagined. At the same time, U.S. deficiencies in language training and cultural understanding of many parts of the world have come to light. The breadth and depth of skills that graduates need to work effectively in this more global environment have expanded, causing higher education to rethink its goals and student learning objectives.

In 2000, ACE began a series of surveys, funded by the Ford Foundation, to examine the status of internationalization in U.S. postsecondary education and identify any noticeable changes since the earlier studies were completed. To accomplish this, ACE conducted three national surveys. The first survey included a national sample of 752 U.S. colleges and universities chosen to reflect the range of institutional types: community colleges, liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, and research universities.² The second survey gathered data from 1,027 undergraduate faculty, drawn from the institutional survey respondents. The third survey collected information from 1,290 undergraduate students,

¹ Andersen, C. (1988). *International Studies for Undergraduates*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education. Lambert, R. (1989). *International Studies and the Undergraduate*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

² See Appendix G for a detailed discussion of each of the samples and techniques used to identify institutions, faculty, and students, and for information about other questions regarding methodology.

all from the institutions that responded to the institutional survey. Highlights of the overall findings, according to institutional type, and recommendations of the study include:

Strengths in Internationalization: Overall Findings

- Institutional type alone did not determine an institution's success at internationalizing undergraduate education.
- The percentage of institutions with foreign language requirements has increased since the Andersen and Lambert reports.
- Half of all students surveyed had taken at least one international course during the 2000-01 academic year.
- There was strong support for internationalization among students, faculty, and the public.
- The majority of students and faculty reported that they had a variety of international travel experiences and some foreign language learning.
- The personal interest of faculty and staff greatly contributed to internationalization efforts on campus.

Weaknesses in Internationalization: Overall Findings

- Most institutions exhibited a low level of commitment to internationalization, as evidenced by the low percentage of institutions that included internationalization in their mission statement or as a priority in their strategic plan.
- The majority of students and faculty expressed support for international activities, but failed to participate in these activities.
- Foreign language enrollment as a percentage of total course enrollments remained static and enrollment was increasingly concentrated in Spanish. Students preferred foreign language and foreign culture learning that is focused on Western countries.
- While the number of participants had increased, only a small portion of undergraduates participated in academic programs abroad and many of those that did had short-term experiences.
- Internationally oriented extracurricular activities attracted a very small minority of students.

Internationalization at Community Colleges

- Significant progress had been made in internationalizing community colleges, especially through heightened foreign language requirements and study abroad opportunities.
- Community colleges were the most likely to offer faculty workshops on internationalizing the curriculum, compared with other types of institutions.
- The proportion of community colleges receiving external funding for international education programs and activities increased from 10 percent in 1989 to 46 percent in 2000-01. Yet, community colleges were still the least likely to seek actively or receive external funding to support their internationalization efforts, compared with other types of institutions.

- While the number of international students at community colleges was relatively small, the share of colleges with international students had increased by more than 10 percentage points since 1995.
- The majority of community colleges had not made a stated commitment to internationalization. Community colleges were the least likely of those studied to include internationalization in their mission statement, list it as a priority in their strategic plan, or have assessed their efforts in the last five years.

Internationalization at Liberal Arts Colleges

- Liberal arts college faculty were the most supportive of international course requirements, compared with faculty at other types of institutions. They also were the most likely to report that they had taught an international course, incorporated reading from foreign authors into their curriculum, and integrated new technologies to enhance the international dimension of their courses.
- Compared with students at other types of institutions, liberal arts college students were the most likely to report that they had taken an international course during the 2000-01 academic year (63 percent).
- Liberal arts colleges actively recruited international students and were the most likely to earmark funds for international student scholarships.
- Thirty-two percent of liberal arts colleges had a foreign language graduation requirement for all undergraduates, the highest percentage among all types of institutions surveyed. And yet, compared with other types of four-year institutions, liberal arts colleges were the least likely to include internationalization in their mission statement, list it as a priority in their strategic plan, or have assessed their efforts in the last five years.
- In spite of the fact that liberal arts colleges actively recruited international students and provided an array of international offerings, few had dedicated administrative structures with full-time, non-student staff.

Internationalization at Comprehensive Universities

- Comprehensive universities were the most likely to require undergraduates to take an international course (57 percent). The majority of students at comprehensive universities said they had taken an international course during the 2000-01 academic year (54 percent).
- Seventy-four percent of comprehensive universities with an international course requirement required international courses with a non-Western perspective, more than any other type of institution.
- Students at comprehensive universities were the most likely (19 percent) to have traveled outside the United States for academic purposes for more than one year, compared with students at other four-year institutions.
- Compared with students at other four-year institutions, comprehensive university students were the least likely to have reported participating in international clubs or organizations, international festivals, or study groups with international students.
- Among four-year institutions, comprehensive universities were the least likely to earmark funds for international student recruitment activities, including scholarships for international students.

Internationalization at Research Universities

- Research universities were the most likely to seek and receive external funding for international education programs and activities, compared with other types of institutions.
- Compared with other types of institutions, research universities were the most likely to include internationalization in their mission statement (55 percent), state it as one of their strategic priorities (49 percent), and have had a task force on campus dedicated to advancing internationalization efforts (66 percent).
- Research universities had the greatest number of different foreign language offerings, compared with other types of institutions.
- Research universities were the most likely to have had an office that administers international education programs and the most likely to have employed full-time non-student staff in these offices, compared with other types of institutions.
- Compared with faculty at other types of institutions, faculty at research universities were the least likely to have agreed that most undergraduates at their institution graduate with an awareness of other countries, cultures, or global issues.

Recommendations

- Given the low level of student participation in internationally oriented extracurricular activities and academic programs abroad, colleges and universities should focus on the curriculum to ensure that students gain international skills and knowledge.
- Resources close to home are often underutilized, such as international students, faculty, and community members. Taking greater advantage of these resources can enhance internationalization efforts.
- Building upon and strengthening existing support for internationalization among students, faculty, and the public can provide momentum for internationalization efforts and turn support into greater participation.
- There is particularly strong support for foreign language education. Furthermore, recognition of the need for foreign language skills and cultural literacy is at an all-time high. Institutions should seek ways to increase student participation in these areas, especially the study of less commonly taught languages and cultures.
- Institutions should make internationalization an institutional priority—include it in their mission statements, make it visible in their strategic plan, and assess their institutional efforts.

Higher education has made some progress in internationalizing the undergraduate experience in the past 15 years, but there is still much work to do. Colleges and universities should focus their efforts on the curriculum to ensure broad exposure to international learning, identify and build upon their existing available resources, bridge the disconnect between attitudes and actions, clearly articulate their commitment to internationalization, and create conditions that will increase the level of international learning on campus.