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## Developing Global Citizens

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### Abstract

“Developing global citizens” is the goal of colleges today but does this phrase have any meaning? College students who view themselves as global citizens also express a complex view of knowing, are committed to the common good, and desire to relate to others unlike them. Education abroad is one effective pathway to develop students with a global perspective, but we should not limit our perspective to cultural differences that are only associated with nations and countries. We instead need to understand and respect justice, equity, fairness, and equal opportunities as virtues and values that are important goals and ends of education.

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Everyone in the academy, especially college presidents, now extol the virtues of developing “global citizens.” But what does being a global citizen mean? Is it related to intercultural competence or maturity or sensitivity, global learning, world citizenship, or some permutation and combination? We recently developed a survey instrument, Global Perspectives Inventory <http://gpi.central.edu/> to gauge student progress on their journey of life organized around three major questions: How do I know? Who am I? and How do I relate to others? This trio of questions serves as a framework to characterize student learning and development holistically, based on the argument that students—and all humans—go through life trying to find meaning and making sense of who they are and what they wish to do with their lives. Students are human because they are simultaneously thinking, feeling, and relating to others.

The GPI includes an item, “I see myself as a global citizen.” We correlated this item with the other 45 items, and based on a sample of over 2500 students from several diverse colleges, items that correlated highest with this item include:

- I prefer complex rather than straightforward interpretations of debatable issues.
- I am informed of current issues that impact international relations.
- I understand how various cultures of this world interact socially.
- I can discuss cultural differences from an informed perspective.
- I am aware of how other cultures consider “fairness” differently from my own culture.

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- I currently feel that I am developing a meaningful philosophy of life.
- I intentionally involve people from many cultural backgrounds in my life.
- I enjoy when my friends from other cultures teach me about our cultural differences.
- People from other cultures tell me that I am successful at navigating their cultures.
- I am open to people who strive to live lives very different from my own life style.
- I work for the rights of others.
- I consciously behave in terms of making a difference.
- I think of my life in terms of giving back to society.

“Global citizenship” thus is an appropriate image to frame our aims and goals in educating our students. The set of items reflect all three domains of student development—thinking, seeking a sense of self, and relating to others. It relates to both knowing—how one decides what is important and true—and knowledge about different cultures. It relates to one’s sense of identity and purpose. And it relates to one’s relationships with others, including responsibility to others.

How can we use “global citizenship” as an image to increase our commitment to and preparation of our students? Derek Bok, in *Our Underachieving Colleges* (2006), concludes that our students today receive “very little preparation either as citizens or as professionals for the international challenges that are likely to confront them” (p. 233). During this past year, I visited over a dozen study abroad centers in Europe and South America and interviewed scores of American students from numerous US colleges, and administrators and faculty from universities in host countries and the United States. I offer these observations and ideas about how the academy can think about its effectiveness, focusing on education abroad as one pedagogical strategy in developing global citizens. First, the “liberal arts,” as many of us knew and experienced it as students, is becoming less of the ideal college education as perceived by students. An American, who attended an elite US college in the 1970s and rejoined the overseas Center at which she studied, stated rather starkly, “Liberal arts is dead” for today’s students. This is hardly new news, since external forces today encourage students to be both more experiential and instrumental in their college work. We should no longer think about career preparation and liberal learning as opposites but as complementary. We need to recast the argument for an undergraduate education in terms of assisting students in making a difference in lives of others, with a career as a part of one’s calling in life. Students need to become “global citizens” and useful neighbors to everyone, including those in our own communities. In fact, being a global citizen requires a liberal education. Leaders and citizens of tomorrow need an understanding of the world’s cultures, languages, religion, economics, science and technology, and a sensitivity and respect for all cultural traditions. For many decades the goal of an undergraduate education was to “Know thyself,” a worthy goal to be sure. Knowing about the world was implicit, and it primarily or only meant “Western Civilization,” a required course I took as a college freshman in the late 1950s. Today “Know yourself, Know your world” is a more appropriate goal as we think about, plan, and implement undergraduate education.

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Second, students like experiential learning, such as service learning, internships, community research, and education abroad; they favor the “pedagogy of active engagement.” However, the challenges in providing this type of learning and developmental environment should not be underestimated. Many faculty remain uncomfortable with this type of instruction since it is time consuming, naturally introduces issues of ethics and personal development, creates difficulties in grading, and challenges the traditional standards of academic quality. I often heard from students and study abroad administrators that many faculty discourage students from “disrupting” their education on campus under their leadership. They are also uncomfortable in getting into “values” education as they call it, and do not see their role as role models and mentors in helping students develop as integrated persons. To them the “life of the mind” is where faculty should start and stop in their teaching. I prefer the definition of this phase as proposed by Richard Hersh, “The ubiquitous phrase *life of the mind* must now encompass a far wider sense of meaning-making if we are to help students develop a strong sense of self, a resiliency that enables them to face the ups and downs of modern life, and a yearning for and capacity to learn from different peoples, cultures, and ideas” (*Peer Review*, 2007, p. 30). The Very Reverend Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, states it this way, “True education, education really worthy of the name, is an organized effort to help people use their hearts, heads, and hands to contribute to the well-being of all of human society” (*Conversations*, 2007, p. 47). We need to design better environments that integrate learning and development, that is, we need to think and act from a holistic and integrative perspective. Just being engaged is insufficient and results in an incomplete education. Focused reflection, analysis, and synthesis based on experience are essential for growth.

Third, college students are not all alike. I call today’s students the 3 M mix—millennial, post-modern, and missionary (Braskamp, 2007). Students have varying goals, motivations, religious perspectives, dreams, and backgrounds. I am more convinced than ever that self-selection is one of the most important factors in our lives—we choose and engage in what we find most meaningful. Students are no exception, and they now have more choices on how to spend their time and invest themselves. Perhaps this range of choices may be why it seems that more and more students have a form of AADD—Academic Attention Deficient Disorder—according to staff and faculty here and abroad. And money matters more in education abroad, from my observation. That is, how students spend their time abroad does depend to some degree on how much money they have at their disposal. To some students being busy often means traveling, without considerable thought and reflection. Education abroad presents a challenge to balancing two major principles of promoting student learning and development—exposure and practice. Students can experience so much of the world today so easily, but do they forego the discipline and time to reflect, think critically, and construct and create from their exposures? Just being busy is insufficient.

Jon Wergin, in the Forward to our book, *Putting Students First: How College Develop Students Purposefully*, (Jossey-Bass, 2006) argues that effective colleges “are not just fostering ‘engagement’ (as if simply being engaged in something, anything, were enough), they are helping students with their vocation, their calling, something to be

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engaged *about*” (p. xi). Colleges can be more effective if they view and organize their curriculum and experiences more holistically and with greater integration and coherence. What students do before and after they go abroad is critical. I give one simple example that has had an impact on me. Creating a green world—being concerned about conserving our resources and being good stewards—has been a part of the culture in many countries. Taking a shower without concern for the amount of water used is not an option in many places I learned. So taking shorter showers is a worthy goal for all of us—try it and, it may not be easy!

Fourth, parents still are helicopter parents regardless of the location of their students. While *in loco parentis* has all but disappeared on a campus, we now have “parents on location.” They can easily hover over their son and daughter on foreign territory thanks to the phone, Skype, and email. A surprising number actually land and involve their son or daughter as their personal tour guide, sometimes in conflict with their studies. But education abroad is much more than travel abroad. We need to help parents be effective partners in educating students, rather than allowing parents to do the education for their son or daughter.

Fifth, American culture and values are influencing the youth and the nature of higher education around the world. One long time administrator suggested that globalization may be a euphemism for Americanization. He asked, “Are we preparing our students to be able to function in other countries so they can be more competitive, rather than providing them experiences in their education that will prepare them for their personal and professional life for living in a global world?” Does it merely embody an international corporate strategy for American business to be more competitive in the world market? If so, we are missing the mark. And how much are we in America aware of the influences of our values and way of behaving on others? I learned that the most popular TV show among pre-teenagers in many countries is “The Simpsons,” and American movies and pop culture artists have an increasing influence abroad. A growing number of young people in other countries are now “binge drinking,” previously only an American phenomenon. Are we part of the problem or the solution?

Finally, developing a global perspective does not only mean recognizing differences across continents or countries, but rather integration of all racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Our son who taught in a high school in Chicago commented, “Dad, I have to go across a greater divide and more cultural barriers in my four miles from home to school to teach than you do traveling around the world visiting people in your projects.”

What is important is that we do not limit our perspective to cultural differences that historically have been associated with nations and countries. We instead need to understand and respect justice, equity, fairness, and equal opportunities as virtues and values that should not be viewed as assumed universal truths, but important and contested goals and ends in our dialogues that also accept different traditions. Moreover, we need to work together and collectively to achieve these virtues and values.

That the world is getting smaller is trite to say, but in fact it is. Today’s students have no choice but to be global citizens and their perspective is a good one. The challenge for we elder citizens of the academy is to provide the experiences that integrate

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how students think, feel, and relate to others, i.e., develop students to become global citizens.

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