The University of Arizona and the World’s Land Grant University: Teaching, Research and Service that are World-Class, World-Wide, Real-Time and Relevant

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Units and Programs:
Office of the Vice President for University Outreach
Division of International Affairs
University of Arizona Outreach College
Proposal: The University of Arizona and the World's Land Grant University

Introduction and Background: Advancing The University of Arizona Strategic Plan

As The University of Arizona builds its international reputation for academic excellence, we have also built a unique reputation for international relevance. These descriptors are not mutually exclusive; a unique strength of this University lies in our effective integration of excellence and relevance. Whether partnering abroad to build the world’s most advanced telescopes, develop critical cultural research and language instruction, or create electronic library resources in Afghanistan, our faculty have inspired in their international partners the desire to learn and the desire to create change.

Indeed, our faculty and students engaged internationally have played a critical role in the University’s advancement from regionalism to legitimate aspirations of being among the world’s great public universities. Their success can guide the University in defining the greatness we hope to achieve.

Who are these global participants in the Arizona Experience? Can these colleagues and former students, now leaders in academe, industry and government, help advance our university in an increasingly connected yet competitive environment? What defines and sustains the Arizona Experience, on campus or abroad, for current, former or prospective students, colleagues, philanthropic investors or foreign granting agencies?

These inquiries beg a fundamental question: Do we have mechanisms for engaging these questions, let alone implementing a meaningful international strategy? Historically our institution has not attempted to define a coherent strategy with respect to our university’s role in international academic leadership, or in leveraging our internationalism to differentiate ourselves from our competition. To succeed in becoming an internationally preeminent university, and to respond to a new emphasis on global issues by major funding agencies and foundations, we must adopt a coherent internationalist strategy, and develop a support structure charged with implementing that strategy. In short, our international administrative structure must be consolidated to better serve the efforts of our faculty and students abroad, and to enhance the financial support they are able to generate for these programs.

Conceiving the World’s Land Grant University: A New Model for International Activity

Last year, the Division of International Affairs was moved under the Vice President for Outreach. International Affairs, for all its strengths, represents only a part of the university’s international support functions, with many activities housed elsewhere. Examples include admissions, economic development and the Office of Hemispheric Programs. Aside from good will and the beginnings of a shared vision, few incentives are in place to support collaboration across these units. Moreover, considerable gaps exist in administrative support, and some critical functions, such as contracting guidelines or foreign program revenue models, are not served or even triaged by any single office. Thus, the VPO undertook a review of existing activity to begin to identify issues, solutions and alternative structures.

In addition, an ad hoc committee of nine faculty was constituted last spring to identify an international vision and to propose the first steps toward a strategic plan to achieve that vision. This committee consists of faculty representatives from four colleges, including CALS, SBS, Humanities, and Public Health, with the understanding that the development of a comprehensive strategic plan would require expanded representation from across campus. The committee reviewed a number of peer institutions to identify models that might be applicable to our institution. The committee found consensus
around two clear opportunities, namely to centralize and expand administrative support functions, and to build on expertise and connections to frame the UA as a global land grant institution.

While the UA has a strong Division of International Affairs, its scope is limited primarily to study abroad, exchanges, bilateral agreements (not related to research or curriculum), and various services related to the international academy. No single office on this campus triages the breadth of international agreements frequently reaching the President. No institutional representative walks the halls of USAID, IMF or World Bank to create program opportunities beyond the range of general collaboration supported by International Affairs. Further, no single source exists regarding the role our alumni play internationally, whether as Germany’s Minister of Trade to Japan (Dr. Bernd Fischer) or as the Dean of Natural Resources at the Instituto Technologico de Sonora (Dr. Juan Pablo Gortares Moroyoqui). No single organization on this campus can purport to know of institutional strategies for China, Mexico, Africa, the Middle East or the European Union.

The committee concluded, as had the VPO, that we have historically lacked both a global strategy and the administrative structure to implement it. Despite a diffuse and significant number of international activities and pools of expertise across our faculty, our University has limited global visibility as an institution and this has limited our ability to compete effectively with institutions that have strategically placed themselves at the forefront of current global concerns. The challenge is to respond in a forward-thinking manner to the tremendous opportunity horizon available in a global environment which, based on author Tom Friedman’s recent description, may uniquely suit our expertise: “hot, flat and crowded.” The committee strongly suggested that the global vision for The University of Arizona be coherent and consistent with our land grant mission—in effect, an explicit extension of that mission to a global constituency in a way that will advance Arizona’s participation in the global economy. The VPO has specifically endeavored to implement these recommendations as set forth more fully below.

Establishing an Efficient and Enabling Administrative Structure

Virtually all the peer institutions included in the committee’s review have a centralized administrative structure that coordinates an extensive array of international activities, provides cross-campus support services in teaching, research and service, and aggressively represents the university to the global community. The committee borrowed from several alternatives and proposed a consolidated structure designed to support and implement the vision of our faculty, rather than to control or inhibit faculty activities.

The committee recommended creating a central administrative unit headed by a Vice Provost or Vice President with institutional responsibility for the University’s overall international image and activities in three areas: services, program development and internationalization. Failing to receive funding from central administration for the recommended functions, the VPO has nonetheless gone forward with these recommendations to the extent possible under an Associate VP for International Programs. Existing activities reporting to the VPO are consolidated in items one and three below, while item two will require realignment of programs not currently reporting to the VPO. None of these changes involve academic units:

1. International Student and Faculty Support Services: Include current International Affairs programs such as Study Abroad and Student Exchange programs (which deserve to be significantly expanded) and related contracts, passport and visa services, foreign scholar assistance, student associations and travel grants.

2. International Program Development and Strategy: Address core needs not currently addressed by International Affairs, such as identifying and tracking opportunities for international program
initiatives, providing administrative support to international research and outreach activities (e.g. proposal preparation, contract clearinghouse), coordinating interdisciplinary international projects, creating and cultivating international research partnerships, creating and maintaining databases (e.g., for faculty expertise and experience, international alumni, and international contracts), developing a public portal to demonstrate international commitment and expertise, and developing and implementing institutional strategy. Critically, other central administrative support functions which are not located in admissions or the graduate college should be aggregated here, and would report to a single individual, in the Associate VP’s office, charged with advancing these activities. Hence, this white paper.

3. Global Studies Initiative: This virtual unit would be a collaboration between International Affairs and the Outreach College, and would facilitate the delivery of distance education programs abroad. Currently, such programs are delivered through a variety of mechanisms, with no uniform financial model. This virtual unit, working in coordination with the VP for student affairs and the VP for instruction, would also facilitate the internationalization of campus curriculum, implementing opportunities (other than Study Abroad and Student Exchange) for student exposure to the global community, the procurement of private support for international activities (scholarships, etc.), and the development of a comprehensive distance learning capacity designed to introduce the University’s academic excellence into institutions of higher learning worldwide. This unit would intend to work closely with and rely heavily on guidance from the International Studies Program located in the Honors College, as well as the various area studies programs, CESL and other language and culture programs, regarding internationalization of curriculum. This office will also coordinate short-term training programs for international students and adult professionals, and develop sustainable business models for these and credit activities along the lines of the financial model currently employed by the Outreach College. This unit could directly support and “brand” international delivery of main campus content created by the proposed School of International Area and Language Studies and the current International Studies Program, though all faculty lines would remain in their respective academic homes.

An Office of Global Affairs: Resource Issues

The committee recognizes the constrained state of University resources, and also recognizes that realignment as described here will not save money, but instead reflects a strategic reallocation of resources. Once fully implemented, this model has the potential to significantly increase international contracts, enrollment, diversity and revenue.
Budget:

An Office of Global Affairs: Resource Issues

The committee recognizes the constrained state of University resources, and also recognizes that realignment as described here will not save money. Instead, this model reflects a strategic reallocation of resources, and has the potential to significantly increase international contracts, enrollment, diversity and revenue. But absent either as infusion of funds or following through on reallocation, these gains will not occur.

The faculty proposal involved creating a new leadership position, as set forth above, plus appropriate administrative, operations and data support for international program development. The VPO all-funds request for $205,000 plus ERE was denied. We also require an additional $150,000 plus ERE specifically aimed at Mexico and Latin American initiatives, for a total budget of $355,000 plus ERE, which we believe would have been self-sustaining and in fact significantly revenue-positive within four years.

Again, we understand that these investments will not be forthcoming, as least in the short term. In the alternative, we have begun to construct a matrix management program of “volunteer” leadership from across campus, involving critical faculty from successful programs served by this new structure, as well as key administrators from existing (and hopefully consolidated) units, reporting to the Senior Associate VP for Outreach and International Programs and the VPO. Revenue generated by this collaboration will be retained to formalize and advance our proposed structure.