

## PROMOTING STUDENT MOBILITY IN A GLOBAL AGE

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I served as the Vice President for Academic Exchange at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan from March 2011 to March 2014. My job was to promote research and global education. Based on my experience, I would like to share what I consider key elements in building a successful university.

In this competitive age of global education, a successful integrated university should be fully engaged in both research and education in both the humanities and the sciences. This will provide a broad and balanced undergraduate curriculum as well as an advanced research environment for graduate and postgraduate education and research.

I will focus on the various aspects of undergraduate and graduate education, faculty, research environment, innovative education, and international academic and student exchanges.

**Undergraduate education:** For both the humanities and sciences, basic undergraduate education should emphasise a liberal arts curriculum that encourages students to read extensively and think deeply and critically about issues in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and economics. Students should be engaged in critical thinking and trained to articulate their ideas in public speaking and writing.

Graduate education should provide close interaction between faculty and students, and a good access to research materials. Good library and lab facilities should have top priorities. International symposia and seminars will provide opportunities for graduate students to interact with scholars from the rest of the world. Both undergraduate and graduate courses should provide clear syllabi.

**Faculty:** a good balance of international faculty and a healthy ratio of male and female faculty are extremely important. Faculty members should be actively engaged in research and education and maintain a consistent good record of publication as well as high performance in education. The number of classes per semester should allow time for research, and adequate research funding should be provided. International recruitment is a must to maintain a high global standard. Faculty should be encouraged to be active participants of international conferences and regular evaluation of their research and teaching performance is necessary for quality control.

A good research environment is necessary to attract leading and strong scholars to the university. A strong faculty with high research profile will also attract highly qualified students, both undergraduates and graduates, to the university. Without high quality research output, a university will attract mediocre students and scholars at best, and will not survive the competitive environment in global education.

**Innovative education:** faculty should be encouraged to devise innovative ways to improve the classroom. Provide regular funding to encourage design in innovation education both within and outside the classroom.

**International academic and student exchanges:** academic exchange includes faculty exchange, symposia and conferences, joint research and projects, funding for inviting international faculty, the construction of dual degree, joint degree, and various creative collaborative programmes among universities all over the world. Student exchange involves a network of exchange partners for students to study abroad both short-term and long-term without increased financial burden. This entails financial support for both students going overseas and coming in on exchange programmes, and a network of support for these students both at home and abroad.

I would like to elaborate a little more on my experience on international student exchange. I was the executive director of two major governmental projects in promoting international

student mobility. One was the "Global 30 Project" (academic year 2009-2013) and the other one is "Reinventing Japan Project" (academic year 2014). Global 30 focuses on creating academic programmes to attract international students to study in Japan, and Reinventing Japan focuses on a two-way exchange between Japan and certain target countries, which in our case was Southeast Asian countries.

For Global 30 we created several English degree programmes to attract international students. These include undergraduate degrees in "Green Science" and "Green Engineering" in the Faculty of Science and Technology as well as a graduate degree in Global Environmental Studies in the Graduate School of Environmental Studies. These English programmes were built upon our decades of experience of offering a full-fledged undergraduate degree entirely in English in the Faculty of Liberal Arts as well as a graduate degree in the Graduate Programme in Global Studies. In addition to the degree programmes, we also consolidated our language programmes into the Centre for Language Education and Research, which currently offers 18 languages. We also enhanced various support systems to enable student mobility, including staff support and financial aid.

The Reinventing Japan Project was designed to promote student mobility between Japan and Southeast Asia. We developed partnership with six universities in three Southeast Asian countries: Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The programme lasts for one semester with an option for participating in fieldwork in the summer, and focuses on the global issues of environmental studies and human development.

The key elements to student mobility hinge upon the educational preparation and support system both for students going abroad and coming in. For both types of students, funding is the key issue, and that depends largely on government policy and support, since individual university will not be able to come up with enormous capital to fund all the students. If there is adequate funding to stimulate student mobility, then the following issues should be taken into consideration in planning for student mobility.

#### **For Students Going Abroad:**

- Language preparation is a must. In addition to that, courses that stimulate students to think about the history, culture, literature, art, etc. of the target country or region in relation to the home country will contribute to better understanding;
- Creating partnership with universities in strategic areas to promote peace and understanding will facilitate student mobility. It is often safer and more affordable for students to go abroad on an exchange programme with a partner university than just going to an unaffiliated university;
- Provide courses to stimulate students' intellectual curiosity. Always remember that students have to WANT to go abroad for any student mobility programme to be successful, and the reason they desire to go abroad is not just financial or utilitarian. Encountering an inspiring teacher, an overseas student, or taking a stimulating course about world literature, politics, etc. will make them intellectually curious about studying abroad. So do not underestimate the "soft persuasion" of intellectual stimulation in cultivating global-minded students.;
- Encourage students to go to places where they can serve and promote peace and understanding. Service learning is a great motivation for students to go abroad and connect with other people in less privileged part of the world. It is also a great way for a country to build mutually friendly and peaceful relationship with other countries.

**For Incoming Students:**

- Provide a good support system for international students. These include staff support, academic support, language support, housing, counselling, security, and above all, FRIENDSHIP;
- Have a rich and substantial list of courses for students to take. Since international students come different linguistic background, one way to create a common ground is to create courses in English, which by far is the common second language for most countries and regions;
- Integration with local students is a key point in genuine global interaction and understanding;
- Accreditation of courses is important in order for students to transfer credits to their home institute.

Even though the list can go on forever, I will limit it to a few key points each. The issues of matching calendar, accreditation, creation of short programmes, etc. are crucial to a successful student mobility scheme. Finally, I would like to encourage universities interested in promoting student mobility to visit the websites of NAFSA: Association of International Educators and European Association of International Education.