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# GLOBAL TRENDS IN UNIVERSITY REFORM AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE US-EURASIAN UNIVERSITY COOPERATION

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A former vice-president of the United States, Dan Quayle, once observed, "I believe we are on an irreversible trend toward more freedom and democracy-but that could change." Irreversible but subject to change! That amusing unintentional paradox may describe how many current trends in higher education appear internationally: moving forward dramatically, but unpredictably, persuading us of their inevitability one moment, of their transience another.

Our obligation to manage change every day may sometimes prevent our acknowledging just how much change we have already experienced. But the distraction of continuous motion also can inhibit careful planning for the future. Higher educators must therefore assume the perspective of mountain climbers and understand the value of taking stock and looking ahead. We are in some sense at a "base camp," a staging area, in that we should take the opportunity to look back down the mountain to appreciate how far we have come as we plan the next stage of our journey looking up at the mountain before us.

In this paper I want to provide a broad view of issues confronting higher education, to discuss some responses to these issues, to consider ways in which higher educators are called to address global issues, and, finally, to suggest directions we may want to consider for the future.

The challenges I shall cite are indeed global, though many of them have a particular importance for the nations and cultures of the northern hemisphere. Some of these challenges are particular to higher education, but others, while not indigenous to colleges and universities, require attention. Hence the reforms I will mention concern both the academy itself and the world in which we live. Similarly, my examples of progress will in some cases concern our institutions of higher education. Others appear more broadly in societies that benefit from our engagement.

Let us picture in the mind's eye two circles joined, as in a Venn diagram. Imagine that the circle on the left represents broad global issues, while that on the right points to issues that pertain principally to higher education. The two circles intersect in global issues that receive the attention of our universities. There remain on the left side global issues that may deserve study but discourage our more active engagement.

I approach this complex topic according to five fundamentals. First, I want to consider internal challenges we face as higher educators and ways in which we are responding to them. Second, I will offer a highly selective view of global issues that invite the engagement of universities in the US and Eurasia. Third, in the light of

these issues, I will suggest that US-Eurasia university partnerships are now especially important. Fourth, I will offer salutary examples of some signal accomplishments in this regard. Finally, I want to propose what more higher educators and their institutions might do.

## Issues Higher Educators Face

Most will find few surprises in a selective list of internal issues higher educators face. I will suggest that the principal disadvantage in barely adequate support for our institutions lies in a restriction of access to well-qualified students who deserve an education. But I believe also that we can do a better job in educating the students we do recruit. How we respond to increased demands to document our effectiveness may also be worth our attention. Taken together, these issues suggest we need to offer stronger, better coordinated public messages, and that such messages must stand as part of our commitment to breaking down insularity and provincialism. We understand also that the collaborations we celebrate, together with those we plan, rest on an information foundation that must be secure. Otherwise, the ties that bind us can unravel easily. Finally, because we know well the benefits of experience in other cultures, we must meet head-on impediments that limit such experience only to a few.

So far as resources are concerned, few would boast that their institutions receive all the support they need. Rather, most higher educators continue to face the challenge of doing more with less. But the most troubling dimension of this issue is its practical effect on students. When student support is inadequate or when highly challenged institutions must force students to pay higher instructional costs, the result is a higher wall around colleges and universities. If high costs bar students who would benefit from higher education's offerings, another victim is society itself. Without a well-educated workforce, nations will be challenged to compete effectively in the global economy. And if social concord depends at least partly on access to opportunity, risks may prove to be even greater than imagined.

Fortunately, there is evidence to suggest that higher education is responding to this challenge through increased efficiency, requiring additional instruction from professors, through working to create a closer alignment between what is taught and what students require, and through the sharing of access to equipment, publications,

and services. Many universities have centralized library resources. Other institutions, having conceded that a comprehensive mission is not longer affordable, have strengthened areas of focus. That has allowed a greater differentiation among universities while reducing duplication. Finally, many colleges and universities are turning to new ways of making money-through the licensing of products and technologies, through the offering of services to society, and through seeking philanthropic support for their mission.

By balancing our books, we support our shared responsibility for recruiting students and for encouraging their perseverance to graduation. But we face the reality that many students attend more than one institution. Fewer than half in the United States receive the baccalaureate degree from the institution at which they matriculated. Hence, if we are to support all students, we must enable them to transfer their academic credits easily from one institution to another, both within our respective nations and internationally. However, having recognized this reality, we should continue to teach the value of a student's commitment to a single university and provide the services and support that encourage such persistence. As part of that support, we should consider that formal recognition of progress towards the baccalaureate degree can become a valuable incentive to stay the course.

As we face changes in our resource base and student populations, we must acknowledge the present force of a familiar axiom: a government that must reduce resources may seek to compensate through increasing regulations. For instance, universities in the United States are facing increased demands from society, from accrediting agencies, and from state and federal governments to document in more detail what they accomplish. There are benefits of such expectations, certainly. As educators, we should be willing to define more clearly what students should accomplish, we should be willing to measure how successful we are in supporting the success of our students, and we should use what we learn through our measurements to make our programs stronger. These commitments will enable us to satisfy those who certify the effectiveness of our institutions and should reassure our citizens: our students, their parents, and those whose taxes help to support our institutions. But because funds, time, and attention spent on measuring the educational process must inevitably be diverted from learning itself, we should insist that measurements be useful-and that they be used.

Given all these issues, it should be no surprise that colleges and universities are banding together to defend their interests, to provide information to the public, and to offer sustained advocacy that is truthful, consistent, and persuasive. In the United States, most large universities employ individuals who represent the institution's interests in the federal and state legislatures. However, broad interests shared by many universities are more often the purview of national associations created to ensure the development and delivery of consistent messages.

Some of these associations represent institutional categories. For instance, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) speaks primarily for large, state-supported institutions, most of which have well-developed programs of research and graduate study. A similar organization, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), represents smaller state-supported universities, those that emphasize undergraduate teaching. The American Association of Universities (AAU) convenes by invitation the most prestigious universities, public and private, while the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) addresses the interests of that sector. The American Council on Education (ACE) serves as an umbrella organization for many associations and offers the most influential voice on Capitol Hill.

An example of a broad interest that draws the attention of such associations is the periodic legislation to approve reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act, the means by which federal funding for student aid is provided. Consideration of this legislation, which can take a very long time, has been a recent priority of associations seeking a more generous and less restrictive outcome.

Other kinds of associations are responsible for different kinds of messages. The Association of American Colleges and Universities promotes the advantages of a comprehensive general education for all students. The Association of Governing Boards provides development opportunities for those who accept appointment as university regents or trustees. The Modern Language Association convenes scholars of language and literature, while the Renaissance Society of America attracts specialists in a particular era. I have mentioned a few; there are hundreds more.

Such examples will suggest universities in the United States find it expedient to join forces. By doing so, they develop and articulate messages that encourage understanding and support, just as they offer opportunities to create shared understanding and well-coordinated approaches to issues. But there are similar advantages to be found in a broader association of universities across national and continental boundaries. Because colleges and universities share many of the same commitments, the same aspirations, and the same challenges, they do well to continue their exploration of the benefits to be found in closer cooperation with one another.

Standing as an impediment to such broader cooperation is the threat of redeveloping national insularity, local provincialism and Xenophobia, and cultural hegemony. There is always the concern that when nations face eras of national anxiety and fiscal constraint they will erect barriers, turn inwards, and think principally of themselves. Universities must apply a counter-force. Universities that live up to their name will take the lead in insisting that nations work to resolve cultural misunderstandings, to move beyond national self-interest in favor of a more global perspective, and to seek the well-being of all as the only