Globalizing Colleges of Agriculture

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Abstract

This paper is a case study of how the International Programs Division (IPD) at the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR), University of Nebraska, was managed during its second year of reorganization. A strategy to support globalization of the college was written and approved during the first year, then adapted and implemented during the second year. This case study tells 1) which efforts were continued into year two of the reorganization, 2) what new efforts were initiated, and 3) how scarce resources were augmented. It also describes management techniques that were used, program accomplishments, impacts and evaluation results.

Efforts continued from year one included emphasis on the undergraduate minor and study abroad. The number of minors increased by 466% in 2001. Two new study abroad programs were initiated and two others were continued. A directory of international jobs was updated to help graduate and undergraduate students find jobs after graduation. Geographical interest groups (mainly faculty) started in 2000 continued and carried out at least one major project for each group.

New efforts initiated focused on residents of Nebraska. IPD collaborated to offer nine seminars and conferences on impacts of globalization upon agriculture and families as well as a multi-state immigration forum.

A senior faculty associate position was created in IPD to augment scarce resources. Student interns helped handle clerical duties and special projects.

Evaluation results indicated increased participation in IPD programs. Grants brought in funds to support programs. IPD was recognized by USDA as a strong, stable program.
Introduction

International programs offices are essential partners for the globalization of colleges of agriculture. They are a doorway from the university to international opportunities for faculty, students and the agricultural community of the state. If the office is a strong partner, programs and opportunities may flow freely. If it is a weak partner it may be a bottleneck.

At the Seventeenth Annual Conference of AIAEE in Baton Rouge, a case study described the first year of a plan to reorganize one such international programs office at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln (Etling, 2001). An advisory committee was formed that included students, faculty, staff and residents of the state – particularly those concerned with issues of agriculture, natural resources and family sciences.

Following a program planning process that involved all stakeholder groups, priorities were identified and turned into goal statements and objectives. Creativity was used to call attention to the reorganization. A logo was designed to help with publicity. A variety of mass media and group meetings were used to communicate this new beginning and to solicit participation.

Interested stakeholders were encouraged to join one of six geographical interest groups (Latin America, Asia, Africa, Newly Independent States, South Pacific, and Western Europe). These groups met to exchange past experiences and current interests. Then they were encouraged to explore future possibilities and to develop new grant proposals and programs in order to realize those future possibilities.

These efforts were publicized through visits with campus groups and organizations, a monthly newsletter, seminars, exhibits, a new web page and a brochure. An evaluation plan was begun as soon as the action plan was accepted by college administration.

Partnerships with USDA and USAID were cultivated through participation on their committees and at conferences in the US. A new undergraduate minor in international agriculture was developed. Together these actions turned around an office that had lost much of its funding, direction and support. (Etling, 2001). Much was learned during the first year of reorganizing this program. Year two, however brought new challenges and opportunities.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide a followup case study of how the program to support globalization of the college was adapted and implemented during the second year. Specifically the case study will tell 1) which efforts were continued into year two of the reorganization, 2) what new efforts were initiated, and 3) how scarce resources were augmented.

In this case study program planning methods were supplemented by negotiation techniques. Advisory groups and geographic interest groups were reorganized using new methods and techniques for leadership and program management.

Results

Efforts Continued – The advisory team was continued as were all efforts aimed at communicating international opportunities to stakeholders. The web page was expanded with new sections and pictures. Opportunities for international involvement were described for students, faculty and residents. The newsletter and “eye-opener” breakfast seminars remained.
International experience for undergraduate students continued to be emphasized. Two new study abroad programs were initiated in Russia. A semester-long program at Moscow State Agroengineering University (MSAU) was funded through a consortium of Penn State, the University of Florida, Texas A & M, Montana State and the University of Nebraska. Two students from each of the U. S. universities were recruited. MSAU chose 10 of their best students who were fluent in English to complete a class of 20. Introductory Russian was taught to the U. S. students by MSAU faculty who also taught a course in U. S./Russian agricultural policy to all of the students. Faculty from the U. S. universities taught the rest of the 18 semester credits in agricultural education, agricultural engineering and computer courses. Each U. S. faculty member taught a three-credit semester course intensively during a 30 day period. Evaluations from students and faculty involved in this pilot program were very positive.

The second Russian study abroad program that was piloted was a two-week study tour of three universities and numerous agricultural sites in Siberia. This program was conducted during the summer of 2001 and also received high evaluations from participants.

The College of Human Resources Family Sciences (CHRFS), which is also part of IANR, initiated their own short-term study abroad program in China. Planning is underway to link this international experience to a Family Strengths Conference to be initiated in China in 2002.

A fourth study abroad offering was the short-term program in France. Centered around Dijon, this study abroad focuses on crops, animal science, food science and the history and culture of Burgundy. Short visits to sites in the Burgundian countryside are supplemented by an extended trip to the South of France. This trip includes students from both IANR colleges.

Recruitment was continued for the minor in international agriculture which was designed the previous year. A core course, introduction to international agriculture, was reorganized and team-taught. As a result, the number of minors which had been zero in 1999 went from three in 2000 to 14 in 2001. A new minor in the College of Human Resources Family Sciences (CHRFS) was designed in 2001 and will go into effect in 2002.

As a result of these efforts, the number of students involved in study abroad doubled (29 in 2000 and 58 in 2001). Most of the students studying abroad participated in one of the four programs described above. Some of the study abroad students, however, chose to participate in the mainly language and culture programs conducted by the International Affairs Office on the main campus.

The geographical interest groups continued to meet and to implement programs they had planned. Those programs are described in the next section.

International Programs Division (IPD) continued to organize World Food Day observance and provide training programs for faculty from other countries. This year 36 faculty from 11 countries were trained. Funding for the training allowed IPD to retain $8,200 after expenses and to send $24,750 to cooperating departments. These amounts were down from 2000 ($22,785 to IPD and $32,698 to departments) due to cancellations after the events of September 11, 2001. IPD also provided an administrative home for the international sorghum and millet (INTSORMIL) collaborative research support program funded by USAID.

Evaluation efforts were expanded to include long term “indicators of program quality.” The indicators chosen were: 1) number of students completing study abroad
programs, 2) number and quantity of scholarships received for study abroad, 3) number of faculty receiving travel support and average value of the grant, 4) proposals submitted, 5) proposals funded, 6) evaluation scores on courses taught through IPD, and 7) evaluations by faculty from other countries who completed training programs through IPD.

**New Efforts Initiated** – Each of the geographical interest groups started in 2001 finished at least one project in 2002. Some were more ambitious; some were more successful.

The Asia Group hosted a delegation from the Tibetan Agriculture and Animal Husbandry College (TAAHC) in January, 2001, then sent a UNL delegation to TAAHC and Sichuan Agricultural College in September. While in China they wrote a new memorandum of understanding and an action plan that details future faculty exchange, germ plasm exchange, and research in horticulture, livestock, biotechnology, natural resources and distance education.

The Latin America Group co-sponsored two seminars and a conference. They advised UNL delegates to the MidAmerica International Agricultural Consortium on priorities and programs. Their greatest success was in organizing and leading a seminar which focused on Latin American graduate student opinions concerning their personal and academic life at IANR. Perspectives were gained which should help IANR with recruitment and advising of graduate students from Latin America.

The Australia/New Zealand Group helped plan a Family Strengths Conference in Australia. Based on a successful model developed by the group’s chair, Dr. John DeFrain, the Family Strengths Conference was held in August.

The Africa Group worked on a proposal for a web-based project which had been supervised by USDA and funded by USAID. A new web manager and a new approach to managing web based information on agriculture for Africans was needed. The Africa Group submitted a proposal which was selected then shelved by USAID for lack of funds.

The Southern South America group, a seventh interest group which grew out of the Latin American Group, organized a study tour for faculty and students to Brazil and Chile. All arrangements, including academic credits, were handled by the group. The tour was realized in January, 2002.

The Newly Independent States Group provided the labor and ideas for the new study abroad programs in Russia (described above). They also sponsored two forums with speakers from Russia and Ukraine and they assisted with training programs for individual faculty from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan who were at UNL on USDA’s Faculty Exchange Program.

The Western Europe Group helped with a proposal for study abroad in Ireland, France and Denmark under the Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. Working with partners at Iowa State and the University of California, Davis, the group helped produce a proposal which was successful. The three year exchange program began in the fall of 2001.

A small “innovation grant” from USDA allowed the development of an instrument to guide the creation of international partnerships in higher education. This instrument was used to help develop and strengthen partnerships with universities in other countries. As a result of that small grant and ongoing relationships, IPD was able to develop new or strengthened partnerships with colleges in Tibet, Sichuan, Shanghai, Mexico, Ukraine, Russia, Ireland, France and Denmark as well as a research institute in Colombia, and the Ministry of Agriculture in Malaysia.
In 2000, IPD addressed primarily campus issues: 1) reorganize the office and program plan, 2) get the undergraduate program up and running, 3) help faculty who had international programs underway, and 4) identify new partners and opportunities. These activities only indirectly addressed the needs of Nebraska residents who have concerns about agriculture, natural resources and family issues. A priority for 2001, therefore, was to connect the international programs office with agriculturists in the state. This was done through IPD participation in a governor’s trade mission and work in organizing seminars and conferences.

The governor’s trade conference went to Chile and Brazil in 2001. It provided an opportunity to connect state government with IPD and get acquainted with a number of agricultural and commercial leaders in the state. It also provided an opportunity to make contact with universities in Chile and Brazil to explore partnerships.

The first seminar, “impacts of globalization on Nebraska’s agricultural commodities” was quickly organized in response to the President of Nebraska Farm Bureau who asked, “what is the university doing to help us understand how the prices of our commodities are affected in this new era of globalization?” The June seminar consisted of a panel of speakers followed by questions and discussion moderated by the Director of IPD. Invited participants were university faculty and administrators as well as agricultural leaders from around the state. Response from participants was so positive that the seminar theme was recommended for an annual conference, called “Agriculture at the Crossroads” that was organized by the Department of Agricultural Economics. IPD faculty served on the planning committee for that conference which took place in September.

Support was also provided to an international conference on “Family Strengths” organized by faculty in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. This conference had been piloted by Dr. John DeFrain 1978-87 for a state and national clientele. Several successful conferences led to a spin-off “Family Strengths” conferences at other universities. For several years Nebraska did not offer the conference. With the reorganization of IPD and renewed interest in international issues, Dr. DeFrain and colleagues decided to renew the conference, but for an international clientele. The IPD Director served on the planning committee and provided financial support for the conference in 2000 and again in 2001. Participation from Australian colleagues led to the initiation of family strengths conferences in Australia in 2001 and planning for a Chinese family strengths conference for 2002. IPD provided travel support for these efforts.

The annual extension conference in 2001 was planned and organized with IPD leadership on the theme, “global partnerships, local impacts.” The State Director of Agriculture gave the keynote address on international issues and opportunities which impact Nebraska. Breakout discussion sessions identified and debated future actions needed by IANR, particularly the extension division, to respond to those issues and opportunities. The afternoon session looked at local Nebraska issues, particularly the rural and economic crises, and related them to globalization.

IPD co-sponsored a new regional conference, organized by UNL Continuing Education, on cross-cultural effectiveness. It supported a first-time, five-state “immigration forum” that focused on issues of Hispanic immigration to the Midwest. It provided financial support for an annual “women in agriculture” conference and provided leadership for a World Food Day celebration that involved many off-campus community organizations.
Finally, leadership was provided to help 4-H update its international curriculum, “And My World.” This curriculum’s three units were written in the late 1980’s and used across the nation. By 2001, however, they were out of date as to content and format. A national committee was formed by the IPD Director and the Nebraska State 4-H Leader working with USDA staff. Nebraska 4-H and IPD paid travel and meeting expenses for the committee to revise, edit and update the curriculum according to current 4-H standards for experiential curricula. The revised curriculum is being evaluated through pilot tests in several states and should be available in 2002 or 2003.

Scarce Resources Augmented – Funding for IPD is a constant concern. Much of the budget for IPD programs comes from external grants and contracts. So attention to fundraising is important.

New proposals were written. A major grant to support undergraduate study abroad was received. Training contracts were secured which provided funds for the international programs office and to other academic departments in the college.

A “senior faculty associate” position was created to expand formal faculty commitment to international programs. Through a competitive process a faculty member in Agricultural Economics was selected. His department head was offered $10,000 for approximately one quarter of his time. The new senior faculty associate was given $5,000 to use for travel and miscellaneous. Priorities were negotiated for this position according to the background and interests of the faculty member and the needs of IPD.

To partially replace a secretary that had been lost in 1998, students from Germany, Azerbaijan, India and the U.S. were hired, part time, to help with clerical duties in the office. Each of these students brought special skills to the position which they were able to turn into contributions. One student with an “international marketing” major developed a “marketing strategy for IPD” which was implemented with success to attract student and faculty participation in IPD programming. Another student had compute skills which were employed in developing power point presentations and enhancing the IPD web page. A third student, a journalism major, helped develop hard copy for articles, reports, web descriptions and promotional brochures. A fourth student updated a “jobs directory” to assist both graduate and undergraduate students in finding employment after graduation.

Program Management – As international programs expanded in 2002 and the IPD office became busier, program management became more critical. Some of the resources helpful in improving efficiency and effectiveness of IPD are discussed below.

Guerilla Creativity (Levinson, 2001) provides advice about how to give power to a message. It is as appropriate to non-profit programs as it is to commercial enterprises. Levinson describes how to use icons (visual or verbal symbols) to sell a product or service. Icons have the power to simplify and clarify a complex program like the University of Nebraska’s international programs in agriculture. An appropriate, effective icon can win the support of a stakeholder who is confused or unclear about the program.

Who Moved My Cheese (Johnson, 1999) tells about change in the workplace and how to deal positively with it. By learning to accept change, even to anticipate and enjoy it, leaders can become less reactive (particularly in the negative sense) and more effective.

Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest (Block, 1993) is especially pertinent to leaders of service organizations like universities. It helps administrators to replace self-interest, dependency and control with service, responsibility and partnership.
Management of the Absurd (Farson, 1996) discusses many of the paradoxes in leadership. Issues and decisions facing administrators of international education are often unclear and ambiguous. They do not lend themselves to simplistic answers. Understanding that there are usually two or more sides to an issue and that an effective leader must balance conflicting solutions as often as choosing the one “right” solution, are helpful perspectives. Farson talks about paradoxes of communication, organization, change, leadership and the future.

The Contrarian’s Guide to Leadership (Sample, 2002) is similar in approach to Farson. Sample turns around conventional wisdom to show the value in considering the other point of view. He advises the effective manager/leader to “think gray” rather than seeing problems in black and white, right and wrong. He advises putting off decisions and working for those who work for you. He advocates a careful reading of Machiavelli’s The Prince, which he calls one of the most misunderstood books. He feels that Machiavelli was much more “principled” than we give credit, and that The Prince, when understood, is an effective guide to leadership.

Getting Past No: Negotiating Your Way From Confrontation to Cooperation (Ury, 1991) is an older book but quite useful. It provides a sequenced technique for moving from potential or real conflicts to a climate of mutual problem solving. In a university climate where budget shortages lead to program conflicts and confrontations between administrators, this book provides insights that will strengthen programs instead of allowing win-lose confrontations.

Evaluation – All units in IANR, academic and support units, are evaluated each year by an administrative council made up of four deans and the vice chancellor, associate vice chancellor and assistant vice chancellor. A detailed written report by the unit administrator is discussed by the seven evaluators and both verbal and written strengths and weaknesses are offered.

Stakeholders constantly evaluate every aspect of international programs through direct and indirect comments. Students evaluate each course and teacher through a formal system.

The director also continued with a self-evaluation instrument set up in 2000. This instrument takes each item on his position description and describes 1) the responsibility, 2) beginning status, 3) actions taken, and 4) remaining needs.

According to the “indicators of program quality” selected (pages 3 and 4): 1) 58 students completed study abroad (up from 29 in 2000); 2) all of these students received scholarships with the average amount being $535; 3) nineteen faculty received an average of $690 in travel support (79% of these faculty were later active in other IPD programs); 4) seven proposals were submitted; 5) two proposals were funded and two others were still pending; 6) the reorganized AGRI 292 course scored 3.1 on a scale of 4 on the student evaluation form; and 7) the evaluations of international faculty for content and organization of training programs was above 6.5 on a scale of 7.

More faculty and students were involved in IPD programming in 2001 than in 2000 which was significantly higher than 1999. Faculty reported that they converted international experience into more effective educational programs at home. External funds helped to support the budget and lessen the need for “hard” money.

Perhaps the most significant indicator of program quality was recognition by USDA which invited the IPD director to represent land grant universities in writing a major
“entrepreneurship development” program in collaboration with the ten ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members. This was a recognition of program strength and stability. The entrepreneurship development program has great potential for the land grant system.

Conclusions

In the 2000 case study, one of the conclusions was, “Competition among universities must be minimized; partnerships will be desirable and even necessary for some programs to survive.” (Etling, 2001). This conclusion was further confirmed at the end of 2001. Other conclusions include: 1) build the local base before trying to secure partnerships and funding internationally; 2) attend to the mundane details of program planning, communication and marketing in order to build trust, stability and a clear, shared vision; 3) implement a funding strategy that combines low risk proposals for small grants and “long shot” proposals for large grants; 4) emphasize transparency and collaboration over secrecy; 5) stick with the main points of the strategic plan while staying flexible on the details and open to new opportunities; 6) consider ways to move, balance and leverage program assets; 7) think outside the box in terms of program management and leadership but not so far outside the box that conservative stakeholders become confused, and 8) emphasize teamwork, synergy, balance and excellence in all phases of program development.

Educational Importance

Faculty, as well as international programs directors will find ideas in this case study to address their colleges’ international programming. These programs must be saved if land grant universities are to fulfill their mission in this age of globalization. Unique and creative approaches will be needed to avoid budget cuts, or to deal with necessary budget cuts, and to respond to the implications of the events of September 11, including a deeper realization that international partnerships and global agricultural development cannot be ignored nor slighted.

References

Ranking of best colleges for agricultural science majors including horticulture, aquaculture, agronomy, crop science, and turf management. The ranking compares the top agricultural science degree programs including animal sciences, horticulture, aquaculture, agronomy, crop science, and turf management. Read more on how this ranking was calculated. Share on facebook. Share on twitter. View On Map. College Type. Which are the best BSc Agriculture college? Biological Engineering, BA in Agricultural & Resource Economics, BS in Agricultural & Environmental Sciences. Bachelor of Agriculture (Agricultural Economics, Plant & Soil Science or Production Animal Science). 32. McGill University. Canada. Bachelor of Science in Agricultural & Environmental Sciences. 42. University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.