FOR THOSE OF US IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, the present moment is both exciting and daunting. A new landscape is emerging, but we do not yet know all its contours. The good news is we do not have to venture into this new territory alone. The forces now impelling internationalization have dialogue and collaboration at their core. This realization moves the exchanges and partnerships in which our institutions have long engaged to the center of any internationalization strategy. And these relationships, in turn, can become the means by which our institutions collectively move forward together.

For international partnerships to play such a role, however, we must rethink what they are about and how we can best develop and sustain them. In this light, it is little surprise that many colleges and universities are working to transform traditional modes of exchange into more full-bodied relationships. In so doing, they are moving from what might be called transactional partnerships to transformational ones (terms I borrow from the service-learning work of Sandra Enos and Keith Morton).

**Internationalization: Inward to Outward**

We have long approached international education from a campus-based perspective: what it adds to our individual institutions, generally framed in terms of student learning, student diversity, and sometimes—in rare moments of administrative honesty—tuition revenue. It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that this is only half the picture.

To be more specific, internationalization has generally been described as an inward process of integrating international perspectives into our institutions. It is, however, increasingly also an outward process of positioning our institutions in global networks of learning, discovery, and engagement. The forces now impelling internationalization encompass the reorganization of higher education itself, a reorganization in which campus walls are disintegrating, breached by distance education, civic engagement, the global nature of science and scholarship, the emergence of excellent colleges and universities in all parts of the world, the power of postcolonial perspectives, and the globalization of the communities in which we are located.

In short, we are becoming part of an academic world larger than our own institutions, and we must reconsider internationalization in this light. We must think of it in outward terms as well as inward. (In this light, my own institution now defines internationalization as “the wise, informed, and responsible engagement of students, faculty, staff, and the institution itself in the global networks that shape us all.”) We must also place international linkages and collaboration at the center of our internationalization programs.
Partnerships: Transactional
to Transformational

It is for such reasons that many colleges
and universities are now exploring how
international partnerships—whether link-
ing two institutions or several—might do
more than they historically have. Many
are finding their existing partnerships are
plentiful in number but thin in substance:
sending a few students and faculty back
and forth, occasionally engaging in joint
projects, lasting only as long as the original
proposers are interested, and often (some-
times immediately) sitting idle thereafter.
Such partnerships do not reflect strategic
planning and are not seen as integral to in-
stitutional mission.

Such partnerships, which are often re-erred to simply as “exchanges,” also miss the
the power of collaboration to transform not only
individuals but also institutions and even
higher education as a whole. As a result,
many colleges and universities are also taking
a fresh look at what might be accomplished
with broader, more sustained partnerships.
Institutions benefit from, and must insure
that they have, a broad portfolio of partner-
ship types. It is important, however, that this
portfolio include partnerships that are trans-
formational as well as the transactional ones
that have dominated to this point.

Transactional partnerships exchange re-
sources in clearly specified fashion: resources
are traded, they are focused, and product-ori-
ented. On the other hand, transformational
partnerships develop common goals and
projects over time in which resources are
combined and the partnerships are expan-
sive, ever-growing, and relationship-oriented.

Both transactional and transformational
partnerships have roles to play. Transactional
partnerships establish a fluid, easily changed
network that supports individual faculty and
departmental interests. Transactional part-
nerships constitute a simple give-and-take in
which students and faculty go back and forth
between institutions. Such partnerships are
easily constructed and work well for achiev-
ning specific purposes. They are instrumental
and product oriented in nature.

Transformational partnerships, on the
other hand, repay the extra care and feeding
they require by creating long-term institu-
tional platforms for collaborative work. In
transactional partnerships individual faculty
or students may be transformed, but institu-
tions generally are not. In transformational
partnerships, all parties change as they work
together. Resources are shared; collaborative
curricula developed; students; faculty and
staff drawn into dialogue (including those
who have never done international work
before); joint research undertaken; and
common understandings reached. Trans-
formational partnerships pursue what
Susan Gillespie (Bard College) refers to as
“genuine reciprocity” or authentic mutual
interest in which what happens to the other
As institutions move toward transformational partnerships, they find themselves initiating new kinds of activities with new kinds of partners. The 2009 NAFSA Conference Symposium provided some striking examples. East Carolina University has transformed its curriculum (and so have its partners) by establishing live, international videoconference classrooms with three institutions overseas. New Mexico State University and the Autonomous University of Chihuahua have used their long-term, comprehensive partnership to develop a series of joint initiatives that benefit both institutions as well as the intertwined people and economies of their two adjoining states. APLU (the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, formerly known as NASULGC) is using the Africa U.S. Higher Education Initiative to foster deeper and more effective collaboration between universities in these two parts of the world. The audience contributed still more examples, ranging from dual degrees to collaborative campuses to joint research institutes.

My own university has had a 20-year affiliation with Moi University in Kenya that has grown from a simple exchange of medical students to a partnership that has transformed both institutions in significant ways. Together we have now built two hospitals, 26 rural clinics, orphanages, model farms, a craft workshop, and a food distribution center. Together we now treat 80,000 AIDS patients a year in western Kenya and conduct a community-based program of prevention. Students and faculty continue to move in both directions, but they are now embedded in an evolving institution-wide collaboration that has changed curricula, generated dozens of new research projects, and changed our outlook on internationalization in general.

Transforming the Work of International Offices

The move toward transformational partnerships reshapes the work of international offices in ways that bring admissions staff into conversation with education abroad directors, visa specialists into dialogue with chief international officers, and all of the above into collaboration with a host of other campus leaders. (Because international
outreach is important on multiple levels, international partnership development has increasingly become an element of more general institutional development.)

The work involved in developing and overseeing transformational partnerships is an iterative process of rethinking, conversing, and modifying. International offices must take the lead in catalyzing and supporting these activities. They should inventory where their institutions currently are with partnerships and lead campus-wide discussions on the importance of international affiliations for institutional missions. These discussions should also result in a set of procedures for establishing and participating in partnerships (transformational or otherwise), as well as modes of oversight and coordination. International offices should also provide seed money and resources for partnership, construct interdisciplinary study abroad platforms at partner institutions, support teaching on partner countries across the curriculum, and provide professional development for faculty and staff in working with international partners.

Above all, international offices should lead their institutions in the dialogue and mutual learning that is part of developing and growing from transformational partnerships. They should articulate the value of collaboration in approaching the global demands of the twenty-first century. They should shape and guide initial conversations with potential partners. They should convene campus-specific meetings to reflect on these initial conversations and move toward or away from the partnership. And once a strategic, transformational partnership is established, they should establish systems of regular communication with the partner (in multiple formats) and assist in developing the new projects and initiatives that result from these conversations.

Final Thoughts
Deepening partnerships is critical to an internationalization that looks out as well as in. We are at the dawn of a global system of higher education, in which cutting edge research is done everywhere, and students and faculty increasingly swirl from institution to institution. We can approach this situation as individual institutions, or we can approach it in partnership. The latter makes more sense. Sustained, transformative processes of global dialogue and networking enhance what students learn, advance scholarly agendas, serve global as well as local communities, and create international units of education that can be a force for positive change, both in our institutions and in the world as a whole.

Our institutions have already been pulled into global interactions and relationships. The intercultural learning and collaboration we ask of our students must become the processes by which colleges and universities themselves fashion new modalities of education, engagement, and scholarship. Just think of what all of us can accomplish, if we do this together.

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