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Internationalization of Higher Education in Turmoil

Patrick Arsenault

The goal of this piece is to provide an overview of the internationalization of the University of Missouri using historical artifacts from the institution's archives. As a result of bringing together these artifacts, the author identifies three distinct internationalization stages that demonstrate where the institution is currently situated. The University of Missouri's internationalization process has been slow and cumulative, like its peer institutions, until recently. However, the author argues that current events, including travel bans and uncertainty around immigration policies, have disrupted this pattern and created turmoil and uncertainty.

After studying abroad, I became interested in learning more about how colleges and universities started to welcome international students on their campus. I wanted to know what initiatives they were working on to engage with the rest of the world. I saw value in learning about international education as a foreign student, which is what drove me to pursue a graduate degree at the University of Missouri (MU). I quickly realized that in order to understand the current state of international education, I had to look back and study its evolution.

Internationalization of Higher Education in America

Originally I assumed that international higher education was a relatively new and dynamic concept, however, international education has been present for centuries. For example, it was not uncommon for the sons of Europe's elite to travel to England to attend Oxford University five hundred years ago (Thelin, 2011). Brickman (1965), defined international education as,

The transfer of media and individuals concerned with advanced and professional learning. [It] comprises professor and student interchange, international and cultural aid to other countries, intervisitation by scholars and educated persons, exchange and translation of learned writings, and so forth (p.18).

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Internationalization, which includes to international education, is a newer process. Internationalization encompasses all the changes colleges and universities undergo to better adapt to globalization given the increased interconnectedness of nations, ideas, and people (Knight, 2001). Additionally, Green and Olson (2008) found that internationalization of colleges and universities is usually slow and cumulative. Overtime, colleges and universities realized internationalization as a necessity to ensure revenue growth and enhance learning experiences. College and universities now invest more time and resources in international initiatives (Hser, 2005).

However, Vestal (1994) cautioned researchers that international education had “different meanings for different people” (p.13). In that sense, administrators at institutions can differently understand internationalization and pursue entirely different goals. Because higher education is so diverse and complex in the United States, standard practices do not exist, especially in international higher education (Eckel, 2008). For these two reasons, I decided to focus my piece on one specific example of internationalization higher education, the University of Missouri.

Internationalization of the University of Missouri

When I initially set foot on campus, I joined a community of over 3,000 international students from over 110 countries. We collectively represented one of the largest underrepresented students on campus with 10% of the student body (MU International Center, 2015). This is roughly the same as African American and Latinx students combined, which are the second and third most represented minoritized groups on campus (Forbes, 2017).

Even in the earliest stages of research on the topic, Brickman (1965) found that conducting an adequate historical analysis of international higher education as a whole would be tedious and recommended doing so through several distinct studies. Hence, I solely focused on identifying the stages of the MU’s internationalization through primary sources available through the University’s archives and other secondary sources.

Stage 1: Coincidental (1849-1967)

The first known international student at MU came from Germany in 1849. He was followed by only three others in the 1850s; from Scotland, Germany, and France. Students outside of Western Europe only made their way to MU about thirty years later (University of the State of Missouri, n.d.). Enrollment lists had several spelling mistakes and annotations referring to original documents for accuracy, which were not archived. Some of the notes in the margins refer to events of 1903 indicating that these lists were compiled at a much later time.

Several accounts from the early twentieth century discuss enrolling to MU after spending some time in the United States. (Missouri's Foreign Students, 1907). Having international students on campus was quite unexpected and something that was deemed newsworthy enough to make several campus publications. In 1905, MU welcomed 21 international students, which was considerably higher than comparable institutions (Our Foreign Enrollment, 1905). Unfortunately, there are not a lot of details about the journey of international students before 1960 and there seems a hiatus between 1910 and 1960 at MU, which could partially be explained by World War I and World War II. My observation of this hiatus is congruent with Gürüz's (2008) findings that international student populations remained low and then drastically decreased in the 1930s (by nearly half). These populations did not start to grow again in the 1950s, but the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s have much more significant growth.

Stage 2: Deliberate to Structured (1968-1995)

Although there were prior conversations and involvement from leaders on campus leading up to the establishment of the Center for International Programs and Studies (CIP), the next internationalization stage was initiated when CIP was officially founded in 1968. Unfortunately, CIP remained fairly inactive until 1977 when it was reconstituted. Shortly after its re-launch, a taskforce was organized to help guide its development. The recommendations were to increase resources, staff and campus prominence. Between 1977 and 1981, CIP had four different directors and a failed hiring process. This unstable environment, the lack of leadership, lack of definition, and limited funding hindered the ability of the Center to develop and gain more presence on campus (Program Review: Center for International Programs and Studies, 1984). Although there are some advances in terms of organizing internationalization at MU from the 1960's, significant progress is only attained in the late 1970s and 1980s. In 1978, the Intensive English Program (IEP) is created. That program had stable human resources, which allowed it to grow and organize campus activities.

In 1976, an international student from Australia became the president of the MU Student Association, which provided more visibility to international students and their specific needs. The student admitted that having lived in two countries was an asset during his campaign, so there is evidence that the student population was supportive of internationalization activities (International Student Heads Student Body, 1976). Interestingly enough, most of the international students were graduate students (Baskin, 1979). In 1982, MU published a "Philosophy of International Programming Statement," which expressly aligned the goals of programs that promote internationalization to the core mission of the institution (Program Review: Center for International Programs and Studies, 1984). From that moment on, it became clear that MU's internationalization was deliberate. In

1989, the now renamed International Center was appointed a full-time director for the first time in approximately twenty years (Vermillon, 1989). This finally made it possible for MU's internationalization to be more structured after several attempts.

Stage 3: Internally and Externally Monitored (1996-2015)

In 1996, the MU Council on International Initiatives was established. This marks a transition from the “Deliberate to Structured” stage to the “Internally and Externally Monitored” stage of MU's internationalization. Among other things this group “monitors trends in MU's international programs and facilitates communication across campus on these issues” (MU International Center, 2015b). The Council has more of an advisory role and aims to be informed of all international initiatives deployed on campus as well as to be aware of what other schools are doing across the nation. This is the first time that MU shows interest in not only organizing its internationalization activities, but also in paying close attention to important events, dynamics and changes happening in that area. Monitoring internationalization to make data-informed decisions becomes a priority.

Little changed in regulations around international education until the 1990's when additional immigration laws are introduced, which led to the United States welcoming significantly more students than it had before (Pope, Mueller & Reynolds, 2009). This also indicated a will of the federal government to be more aware and involved in the internationalization of higher education institutions. Following the terrorist attacks of 2001 in New York City and Washington, at least 49 foreign students left MU (Feldstein, 2001). On October 19, 2001, the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) requested that the complete records of MU's 1,300 international students be released to them within two weeks (Paletta, 2001). A new legislation passed that enabled the United States government to better track international students during their studies and \$36.8 million was granted to create a national database for law enforcement and immigration officials (Feldstein, 2001).

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was eventually launched in 2003 (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2015). SEVIS was developed as a way for the United States to continue to lead in international education, while mitigating risks (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). In conjunction with SEVIS, the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act took effect in 2002. This reform better defined what information higher education institutions in the United States should collect and report on international students. In 2009, the INS became even more rigorous, and the International Center had to hire additional staff to be able to comply with the INS's demands.

Consequently, MU introduced an \$80 international student fee that would help offset the costs of increased monitoring of international students (Hager, 2011).

Internationalization of Higher Education in Turmoil Across the United States

When I collected my data in 2015, I remember asking myself how a fourth stage would look. I anticipated that there would be continued monitoring both internally and externally, which would make practices more uniform and transferable from a campus to another. Instead, policies evolved more rapidly and unpredictably than they ever did between 2015 and 2017, which caused turmoil.

Travel Ban and Decrease in Applications

In January 2017, President Trump issued an executive order that immediately made it impossible for citizens of Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen to enter the United States (Almasy & Simon, 2017). The Association of American Universities (AAU) released a statement urging the government to end the ban. The statement was followed by protests on campuses across the country (USA Today, 2017). Higher education was hit hard by this travel ban. A doctoral student from Iran discussed how he felt like the ban was targeting students with a journalist:

We don't have many refugees, so the travel ban is aimed at students who are here for higher education. ... The travel ban has had a huge effect on the mentality of Iranian students who wanted to come to the United States (Wilks, 2017).

The travel ban was successively blocked and amended by various federal judges and the Trump administration, which created confusion and uncertainty for international students as well as prospective international students (Almasy & Simon, 2017). A survey in March 2017 revealed that nearly half of the largest public universities in the United States experienced no growth or a decrease in the number of international applicants (Wilks, 2017).

End of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

Currently, 800,000 individuals are allowed to work or study in the United States under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Nearly half of them are students (Morris, 2017). In an official press release, the Chancellor of Vanderbilt University voiced that "closing the door to [DACA] students is a mistake that will undermine the strength of our universities and the fabric of our nation" (Lewis, 2017). Ending DACA will take away opportunities from

hundreds of thousands of foreigners that came to the United States as children. The last individuals allowed to renew their DACA status had to do so by October 5, 2017 (Mark, 2017).

My Hopes for the Future of International Education in the United States

Choosing to leave the United States to resume my career in Canada was difficult. Although I see many challenges in international education in America, I also see tremendous potential and countless opportunities. I have two main hopes for the future of internationalization of higher education in the United States.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

The recent changes are an opportunity for the government to repair a broken system, where international students are often set for failure. I would like to see the United States make it easier for international students to fully contribute to society during their stay by being able to work more easily off-campus, like in Canada and many other nations. Moreover, I would also like to see initiatives put in place to involve international students within local communities and public affairs. Surprisingly, some international students are allowed to vote in the United Kingdom. The United States should make more efforts to consult with international students as a starting point. For example, international students could be included in census, so that their identities and lived experiences are considered when trying to depict contemporary America. International students should not be seen only as a way to generate revenue, but rather as a valuable part of society.

Generation Study Abroad

More efforts should be made to make it easier for American students to study abroad. Pell grants should be available for students that study outside of the United States, which would make it easier for Americans from lower socioeconomic class. The Institute of International Education (2017) advocates that over 600,000 Americans should study abroad by the end of this decade; approximately double of what it was in 2011-2012. With so many strong programs out there like the tuition exchange initiative between Manitoba and Minnesota, free tuition in countries like Germany, living allowances for international students in France, and scholarships for international students in Denmark, this goal is more attainable now than ever (Campus France, 2017; Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2017; Government of Manitoba, 2017; Matthews, 2017).

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