

# Internationalizing Geography in Higher Education: Initiatives of the Association of American Geographers<sup>1</sup>

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## Resum

L'ensenyament global implica uns aprenentatges sobre problemes i temes que creuen les fronteres nacionals així com interconnecten diversos sistemes –culturals, ecològics, econòmics, polítics i tecnològics. L'ensenyament global també suposa aprendre a entendre i apreciar als nostres veïns que tenen un rerefons cultural diferent al nostre; a veure el món utilitzant els ulls i els pensaments dels altres; i entendre que les altres persones del món necessiten i volen el mateix que nosaltres.

**Paraules clau:** Geografia en l'ensenyament superior, Estats Units d'Amèrica, Associació de Geògrafs Americans.

## Resumen

La enseñanza global implica unos aprendizajes sobre problemas y temas que cruzan las fronteras nacionales así como interconectan diversos sistemas –cul-

1. Conferència realitzada el 10 de novembre de 2004 a la Societat Catalana de Geografia.

turales, ecológicos, económicos, políticos y tecnológicos. La enseñanza global también supone aprender a entender y apreciar a nuestros vecinos que tienen un trasfondo cultural diferente al nuestro; a ver el mundo utilizando los ojos y los pensamientos de los otros; y entender que las otras personas del mundo necesitan y quieren lo mismo que nosotros.

**Palabras clave:** Geografía de la enseñanza superior, Estados Unidos de América, Asociación de Geógrafos Americanos.

## Abstract

Global education involves learning about those problems and issues which cut across national boundaries and about the inter-connectedness of systems – cultural, ecological, economic, political, and technological. Global education also involves learning to understand and appreciate our neighbors who have different cultural backgrounds from ours; to see the world through the eyes and minds of others; and to realize that other people of the world need and want much the same things.

**Key words:** Higher education geography, USA, Association of American Geographers.

This statement by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is notable for its geographic content. Being a geographically informed person goes hand-in-hand with being a global citizen, a person who recognizes that the world is highly interdependent and who makes decisions with regard to the welfare of the entire global community of nations. As the world's peoples and places become increasingly linked through technology, migration, political events, and economic integration, the challenge for educators becomes one of connecting this rising interdependence to the concept of citizenship in a way that promotes a sense of individual responsibility for a global community.

Students need international perspectives and high levels of competency in geography to understand contemporary issues related to the environment, economy, development, national security, and human rights. In an age of global interdependence, students also need social skills that enable them to interact constructively with people having different cultural backgrounds – and oftentimes very different points-of-view on matters of foreign policy and international affairs. As global citizens, individuals must feel committed to international goals, value multilateral approaches to policymaking, and reject isolationist thinking. In short, global citizenship requires globally oriented hearts, minds, and actions.

Geography is a cornerstone of global education because it provides a unique perspective of the world, one that recognizes the interplay of human and environmental phenomena across local, regional, and global scales. And yet, many geography students are taught primarily with lectures and textbooks, providing them with few opportunities to engage directly with the perspectives of their peers in other world regions. Although knowledge of global geography is necessary and important, such knowledge does not fully encompass the affective and behavioral dimensions of global citizenship education. A global citizen must also be able to explain why such knowledge is worth knowing and understand how it can be applied for the global good.

To what extent is educational practice in geography preparing future global citizens? In recent years, the Association of American Geographers has launched a number of projects designed to promote internationalization in higher education. Internationalization is defined here as “the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into teaching, research, and service functions of the institution” (Knight and de Wit 1995). Today, I would like to discuss some of the ways that the AAG supports internationalization through its services to members and to the international community of geographers. First, I will establish the framework for my discussion by reviewing some of the relevant principles of global education. Next, I will introduce three of the AAG’s current initiatives that seek to enhance international education, research, and professional networks in geography. I will conclude by posing a set of questions that I hope we can discuss together as a means of exploring opportunities for collaboration between our respective professional societies.

## **Context of the initiatives**

As the world’s peoples and places become increasingly interdependent, so too are approaches to teaching and learning in higher education. Certainly, international education has always been dedicated to promoting respect for global diversity through cross-cultural experiences. “International education,” write Hayden and Thompson (1995:328), “is a dynamic concept that involves a journey or movement of people, minds, and ideas across political and cultural frontiers.” This view implies that teaching for global citizenship requires us to discard practices that are solely “embedded within national cultures” (Reeve, Hardwick, Kemp, and Ploszajska 2000: 230) in favor of those based on “the trading and migration of ideas and practices across national borders” (Alexander 2001: 514).

As a concept, global citizenship broadens the duties, rights, and privileges typically associated with national citizenship to acknowledge the interdependency of places, cultures, and nations. Education has always played a vital role in the development of citizens, yet remains (at least in the US context) large-

ly nationalistic in scope and practice. In preparing global citizens, a challenge for education is to provide students with opportunities to collaborate directly with international peers, or in the words of Kenneth Bruffee (1993), to practice the “craft of interdependence.” Simply put (which is not to say simply practiced!), education itself must become interdependent if students are to acquire a globally oriented perspective of themselves in relation to other people and places.

Is it possible to determine whether an individual has acquired a “globally-oriented perspective” on citizenship? This is an important question because the answer will influence how educators define the goals of internationalization. Though answers are likely to vary, I would like for you to consider the ideas of one Robert Hanvey, a scholar who has written extensively in the area of global education. Hanvey (1976) proposes five qualities of a global citizen that I would argue have high geographical relevancy. He asserts that every student can acquire a global perspective through educational experiences that encourage intellectual and moral development in five dimensions:

1. **Perspective Consciousness** – The recognition on the part of the individual that he or she has a view of the world that is not universally shared, that this view of the world has been and continues to be shaped by influences that often escape conscious detection, and that others have views of the world that are profoundly different from one’s own (p. 162)
2. **State of the Planet Awareness** – Awareness of prevailing world conditions and developments, including emergent conditions and trends (p. 163).
3. **Cross-Cultural Awareness** – Awareness of the diversity of ideas and practices to be found in human societies around the world, of how such ideas and practices compare, and including some limited recognition of how the ideas and ways of one’s own society might be viewed from other vantage points (p. 164).
4. **Knowledge of Global Dynamics** – Some modest comprehension of key traits and mechanisms of the world system, with emphasis on theories and concepts that may increase intelligent consciousness of global change (p. 165).
5. **Awareness of Human Choices** – Some awareness of the problems of choice confronting individuals, nations, and the human species as consciousness and knowledge of the global system expands (p. 165).

Hanvey’s ideas provide a clearly understandable goal, although not necessarily an easily obtainable or measurable one.

The AAG is planning new initiatives that directly support the goals of global education, and I would like to continue my discussion by reviewing the goals of three of those projects. The first project is a collaboration between the AAG, the American Council on Education, and three other disciplinary organiza-

tions to develop an action plan for internationalization. The second project is developing experimental educational materials for geography in higher education, with the aim of creating online learning environments to engage students in international learning and discussion. The third project is a research study that will survey a sample of faculty in the U.S. and internationally through the International Geographical Union and International Network for Learning and Teaching Geography in Higher Education.

### **Ace internationalization project**

The AAG, along with three other disciplinary associations (the American Historical Association, the American Political Science Association, and the American Psychological Association) and the American Council on Education (ACE), are part of a new project promoting the internationalization of teaching and learning at U.S. colleges and universities. The project, entitled “Where Faculty Live: Internationalizing the Disciplines,” is being funded by a Carnegie Corporation grant to the ACE. As part of the project, each association is charged with three goals: (1) articulate global learning outcomes relevant to its membership that will inform both the major and general education and communicate those outcomes to the membership, (2) develop an action plan to promote internationalization within its discipline, and (3) explore how the work on internationalization accomplished by the disciplinary associations can be integrated into institutional strategies to promote internationalization.

To assist the participating associations in this work, ACE has formed a steering committee consisting of representatives of the associations and several other academic organizations, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Council of Learned Societies, the Consortium of Social Science Associations, and the National Humanities Alliance. The committee will serve as a mechanism for the exchange of ideas among the participants and will explore how the work of the project and overall institutional efforts to enhance internationalization can be mutually reinforcing.

It is expected that the ACE project will demonstrate how disciplinary associations can take a leadership role in promoting the internationalization of student learning. The project will also provide guidance to faculty in the participating disciplines to help them incorporate an international dimension into their teaching and the experiences of their students, in both upper-level courses in the major and in courses that comprise general education or the core curriculum.

The ACE initiative rests upon the assertion that internationalization is necessary to prepare students for life, work, and citizenship in a globalized modern economy. In the second project, we are directly addressing this challenge by creating materials for an internationalized curriculum in geography.

## Online Center for Global Geography Education

The Online Center for Global Geography Education is producing a series of course modules to enhance the teaching and learning of global geography. The Center is partially funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and is being developed with the full support and involvement of the Association of American Geographers, Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education, International Geographical Union, International Network for Learning and Teaching, and National Council for Geographic Education. The project aims to internationalize teaching and learning by providing geographers with the materials, technology, training, and technical support they need to start their own international teaching projects.

The Center currently offers three prototype modules: *Population*, *Global Economy*, and *Nationalism*. An early prototype, *Migration*, is also available for review. Each module is a self-contained, collaborative learning environment featuring lessons that engage students in collaborative projects, promote understanding of geographic concepts, provide practice using geographic skills, and deepen awareness of international perspectives about contemporary global issues. Important geographic concepts and skills are illustrated through data, case studies, and animations drawing on the AAG's *Activities and Readings in the Geography of the World* (ARGWorld) project. The modules support online collaboration using Blackboard™, a software platform for e-learning. To support broader dissemination, the modules will be published in English and Spanish.

The project includes a research and evaluation component to investigate student learning outcomes and faculty attitudes toward internationalization in higher education.

For students, key learning objectives include (a) the ability to use the information, methods, and concepts of geography to examine global issues; (b) knowing how to use Internet technology for effective learning and collaboration; (c) being able to formulate and carry out strategies for asking and answering geographic questions in an international team; and (d) greater interest in the study of geography and appreciation for its perspectives on global issues. Expectations are that student learning and interest in global geography will be enhanced through online interactions with peers and experts in different world regions.

The modules are currently being tested by faculty in several countries to consider what teaching methods and technologies promote the abilities of international students engaged in online collaborative learning. Research has shown that collaborative learning can improve academic achievement and even promote cross-cultural understanding and goodwill (Bruffee 1993; Calvani, Sorzio, and Varisco 1997; Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1998; Springer, Stanne, and Donovan 1998). And yet, few studies have examined the materials, teaching methods, and technologies being used to support online international collaborative learning, particularly with regard to (a) how the learning process is affect-

ed by language and cultural diversity (Bonk and Cunningham 1998; Fortuijn 2002), and (b) whether the practice enhances the learning of geography and appreciation for its perspectives on global issues (Reeve, Hardwick, Kemp, and Ploszajska 2000; Shepherd, Monk, and Fortuijn 2000). The project's evaluation will assess achievement of these student outcomes as well as faculty attitudes toward this approach to global geography instruction. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods will be used to assess the success of the CGGE project. Four central research questions will drive the evaluation:

- How does international collaborative instruction affect college student learning of the concepts and skills geographers use to analyze contemporary issues?
- To what extent does this form of instruction enhance college student understanding and appreciation of international perspectives about these issues?
- To what extent does this form of instruction foster appreciation among college students for the geographic perspective on global issues?
- What specific teaching strategies and technologies promote or hinder the effectiveness of online, multilingual international collaborative learning?

We are using a variety of methods to collect the primary data for the research. Data will be collected from trials conducted by the six module authors and several additional faculty in the U.S., Northern Ireland, Spain, China, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, and Chile over two academic semesters beginning in September 2004. Quantitative analysis will use a pretest-posttest design to measure achievement of specific content outcomes and changes in student attitudes toward global geography. Qualitative methods will focus on areas where more nuanced data are sought, such as the analysis of student appreciation for international perspectives and for reactions to the pedagogy itself. Supplementary qualitative data consisting of classroom observations and interviews will be obtained at two test sites in Europe during Spring 2005 by the project evaluator, who has been awarded a sabbatical leave for that purpose.

## **AAG internationalization survey**

The AAG is planning a study to measure how faculty and departments perceive the value of internationalization for geography education and research. In November of 2004, a survey will be administered to a sample of geography faculty in the U.S. and internationally through the International Geographical Union and the International Network for Learning and Teaching Geography in Higher Education.

The survey will collect data on the social and professional characteristics of faculty who practice internationalization and describe their experiences with international teaching and research. It will identify the tactics that geography

departments are using to internationalize their undergraduate and graduate programs. Respondents will also rate the relative importance of educational goals related to internationalization. Finally, the survey will explore the issue of whether opportunities to participate in international collaborations have changed since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

## Discussion

The initiatives described above are designed to create the materials and information base that can serve as a basis for strengthening geography in higher education. Beyond these initiatives, the AAG supports international collaboration through a variety of ongoing programs. In August of this year, the AAG assisted junior and senior scholars attending the IGU Congress in Glasgow through a travel grant program funded by the National Science Foundation. The My Community, Our Earth project is currently inviting student projects that reflect the themes of the U.N. Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The AAG continues its tradition of holding a special reception at each annual meeting to honor the presence of international scholars participating in the meeting. And many AAG Specialty Groups also focus on international themes and regional studies and help members develop their international networks.

For geographers, internationalization presents some interesting and challenging questions: What is the role of geography in global education? What should it be? Can geography education develop individuals into global citizens? Do geographers share goals with other disciplines in regard to internationalization? How can departments, institutions, and professional organizations successfully plan and design programs for internationalization? Through research and outreach, geographers can engage the internationalization process underway in higher education and help direct it toward the improvement of educational practice and student learning. The challenges are great, but so too are the opportunities to develop global citizens through partnerships between the professional societies that support the work of geographers in the world.

Thank you again for inviting me here today and I look forward to the many conversations I will have with Spanish geographers during my visit this week, and in the coming months.

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