

The Role of Institutional Research in Supporting Internationalization of U.S. Higher Education

Ann S. Ferren

Association of American Colleges and Universities

Martha C. Merrill

Kent State University

The internationalization of higher education institutions is complex and constantly mutating. Research on its many components is essential, but the questions to be asked and the range of issues to be covered may be new to some institutional researchers. The internationalization process includes strategic planning; recruitment, admissions, and support of international students; study abroad and student exchanges; curricular initiatives; the role of faculty; research and research centers on campus; international collaboration; overseas campuses and dual degrees; and organizational support and funding. Questions researchers may ask and data sources they may use as they meet new institutional needs are discussed.

FOCUS AND CHOICE OF DEFINITIONS

In the last decade, international education in the United States has expanded dramatically offering extraordinary new opportunities for students and faculty. For institutional researchers, the bad news is that international education in the 21st century is diverse, complex, rapidly expanding, and constantly mutating. The good news is that IR staff are not the only ones collecting data on events and trends in the field. Throughout this article, the authors will reference sources and data to help orient IR practitioners to the issues, key questions, and tools so that they can avoid re-inventing the wheel.

To begin, although “international education” is used as a catch-all title, in actuality, six different terms with six different meanings are recognized in the field. The term *global* describes a field or issue in which national borders are not relevant, such as global warming. The term *international* means between nations, such as an educational exchange between a university in the US and one in Germany. The term *comparative* addresses similarities and differences, for example, in political systems. The term *international education* means adding the study of other nations into any academic field and experiencing another nation through various forms of student and scholar mobility. *Intercultural education* provides students with the tools to understand other cultures using concepts such as individualism and collectivism. *Multicultural education* addresses the diversity of ethnic and cultural groups within a particular nation, perhaps focusing on majority/ minority status or power relationships. If administrators, faculty, and students use these terms interchangeably as they describe curricula and activities, it hampers the work of those leading and assessing institutional change.

We have chosen to write this article around “internationalization,” using the definition: “*Internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating an international/,intercultural*

dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution.” (Green & Olson, 2003, p. 12). What follows is a brief description of many components of campus internationalization and suggestions about the various roles that IR can play in supporting and monitoring the progress of internationalization (de Wit, 2002; Knight, 2008; Olson, Green, & Hill, 2006). To facilitate their work, institutional researchers need to not only clarify these terms but also carefully assess the values, characteristics, and goals of their own campuses.

A SYSTEMATIC PLAN FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

Strategic planning in higher education aims to bring about change and reposition an institution within its environment so that it can address emerging challenges and take advantage of opportunities. Typically a plan includes statements of mission, values, and vision for the future; priorities, goals, and initiatives to be accomplished in a set period of time; and indicators of how progress will be measured. It is only in the last decade that international issues have been reflected in planning in order to be systematically addressed. Despite growing interest, one survey indicated that less than 40% of institutions make specific reference to international education in their mission statements, require a course with an international focus, or have a full-time person to coordinate internationalization (Green, Luu, & Burris, 2008). Even on campuses with a clear international focus and a well-developed strategic plan for internationalization, that plan is often a separate document from the strategic plan for the institution.

This article focuses on many elements that make up an internationalized campus, for example, enrollment of international students, study abroad, course requirements, international faculty, international research, and formal agreements with international partners. Too often these elements are based on individual initiative and are stand-alone efforts. Effective change—the goal of strategic planning—requires not only a listing of goals and initiatives, but also a reorienting of attitudes, policies, relationships, resources, and rewards to be aligned with the new vision and supported by continuous feedback on progress. IR staff can play a central role in the intentional transformation of their institutions by using appropriate assessment tools, tracking indicators of progress, making information readily accessible to faculty and administrators, and taking the initiative to put the micro level data into a macro institutional framework through well written reports (Sanders & Filkins, 2009).

An overall audit of the institution will show IR staff where to focus their work. Has the mission statement been updated to say “civic and social responsibility *in a global context?*” Does the strategic plan include international initiatives across all divisions with a clear indication of who is responsible and how the initiatives are connected? Are the goals measured, not just in numbers such as the percentage of students who have studied abroad, but also in learning outcomes at the individual, program, and institutional level? Are there symbolic indicators of a commitment to internationalization such as campus wide events? Is internationalization promoted in institutional communication such as press releases and the president’s speeches to donors, alumni, or new students? Finally, at what stage is the campus in the change process—is internationalization an add-on, infused in activities, or transforming campus understanding and attitudes? To meet the needs of students and faculty in a rapidly changing world, internationalization efforts must be both comprehensive and systematic (Brustein, 2009).

RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS, AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Enrollment of international students is central to internationalizing US campuses. In the 1970s and 80’s, campuses did not pay special attention to international students as they were typically strong students with resources who chose US education because of its quality. Institutions invested neither in recruiting nor in specialized support services as the numbers were insignificant. As international students were increasingly welcomed as a form of development assistance to countries without strong higher education systems or sufficient opportunities for their own young people, both social and financial support were required. Currently, campuses invest in the over 600,000 international students studying in

the US expecting them to contribute to both institutional revenues and the quality of education for US students (Institute for International Education, 2010).

IR offices routinely collect demographic information on international students for the annual Fact Book and external reports. Using data such as from the Institute for International Education (IIE) and NAFSA: Association of International Educators, IR staff can research the trends in countries of origin, average family income, available government support, and desired programs of study by country to help the admissions staff shape an effective recruiting strategy that matches students' and institutional strengths. To guide admissions decisions, the IR staff can study the predictive value of standardized tests such as TOEFL and GMAT on academic success. When students are conditionally admitted and required to study intensive English, IR can evaluate the effectiveness of the program as a source of additional well qualified students.

Once international students are enrolled, standard IR studies of academic progress, retention, and graduation rates provide important information for planning support services. To help improve services, the IR office may design focus group interviews with newly enrolled international students to identify how best to eliminate barriers to enrollment such as complicated visa processes and develop retention support such as pre-arrival orientation materials and on-campus programs. A careful audit of the same issues for all students may well show that many subpopulations, not just international students, benefit from targeted services.

IR also has an important role in cost benefit analyses. Although the Department of State—Education USA Advising centers and other networks are effective in recruiting international students, campuses bear additional costs for travel, specialized staff, tailored recruiting materials, in-country activities, and financial aid. IR can analyze the cost to recruit an international student, average net tuition, and success of students by country. As financial pressures mount on US campuses, accurate information about both the investments and real financial return of international students is needed.

Where competition for admission is keen, whether it be for Harvard or the University of Virginia, some observers argue that giving spaces to international students is unfair to US students. At many public institutions, the state taxpayer even finds a student from a neighboring state suspect. To encourage community support, IR offices routinely conduct Economic Impact Studies to demonstrate the multiplier effect of direct institutional investments in the community. Just as tuition revenue from out-of-state residents is reported for public campuses, a further breakout of international tuition revenues for both private and public campuses can aid budget planners and public relations. As of 2010, international students were estimated to add 17 billion dollars to the US economy (Institute for International Education, 2010). Data by state is readily available as well.

The majority of international enrollments in graduate programs are in science and technology programs offsetting the significant decline of US students in these fields (Hoffer, Hess, Welch, & Williams, 2007, p. 27). IR professionals at campuses that are filling some of the major skill needs of the US could also analyze the impact of their investment in international students on those sectors of the US economy. Although such studies are complex—requiring new definitions from “brain drain” and “brain gain” to “brain circulation”—they are worth the time of IR as the results can lessen negative public attitudes. Reporting on the number of students who return to their home countries can support the argument that the campus is making an important political and social investment in national security and technical assistance.

The economic benefits are often easier to quantify than the positive academic benefits of enrolling international students. Typical descriptive studies of student academic outcomes or self-report surveys are insufficient evidence that diversity is an educational benefit for all. As higher education becomes more sophisticated about the need to structure interactions in order to gain the cultural and social benefits of a diverse student body, the research efforts related to those initiatives must become equally sophisticated (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Leask, 2009). IR can help both the International Student Services staff and academic departments conduct qualitative studies to increase understanding of not only the needs of international students as they “fit in” but also the contributions of international students as campus change agents.

STUDY ABROAD AND STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Long before campuses undertook systematic efforts to internationalize, many institutions supported Junior Year Abroad, especially for foreign language majors, either with overseas institutions or at their own overseas sites (Hoffa & DePaul, 2006). Whereas international experiences of the 60s and 70s were limited, the internationalization goals of the 21st century recognize that knowledge of world affairs and cross-cultural competence are essential for career success and effective citizenship and urge all students to have an international experience (Stallman et. al., 2010). Despite encouragement from legislators, foundations, administrators, and faculty, US higher education is far from that target as less than 10% of all students participate in any form of learning abroad (O'Hara, 2009), and the majority continue to be white, female, middle class, full time, and majoring in liberal arts (Siaya & Hayward, 2003).

Some of the factors that affect college going and completion rates also impact the decision to study abroad, for example, level of parental education and family income. Knowledge of the extensive research on the individual student factors that inhibit or encourage participation, ranging from concerns about food, missing friends, and safety to positive attitudes about travel and better career prospects, can help an institution understand how to design and promote its study abroad programs (Naffziger, Bott, & Mueller, 2008). For example, institutions serving large numbers of working adults will find that job and family responsibilities are barriers. IR studies can also reveal institutional barriers, such as faculty attitudes, course requirements, scheduling, and insufficient staff support. IR staff will find a review of research studies useful, both for identifying issues and for ideas about methodologies.

Some institutions have been able to eliminate many of the structural barriers by joining consortia that facilitate student exchanges. Pre-approved credit transfer and payment of tuition at the home institution can be handled through such networks as the International Student Exchange Programs (ISEP). For students willing to go for a semester, this type of program is effective. However, if institutions want all students to have an international experience, both better research and more innovation in program design are necessary. Careful surveying may reveal that students in a particular program will miss a sequence of courses if they take a semester off but could fit in a summer experience, or students with no foreign language would be interested in programs in English speaking countries such as India and Australia.

IR support in the early stage of program planning is critical. Many campuses have addressed cost issues by moving from London and Paris for less expensive locations only to find that students are reluctant to go to Kenya or Viet Nam on their own. The short term faculty-led international experience is the fastest growing form of study abroad as it can be tailored to both program and student needs (Spencer & Tuma, 2007). For the student reluctant to be without US amenities for even three weeks, an alternative spring break service-learning opportunity to rebuild homes in Haiti has appeal because it is only one week and feels more manageable. The least disruptive international experience of all, and most cost-effective, is a shared course taught by professors in two countries using video links and e-mail chats to expose students to another culture without leaving home.

IR has an important role in assessing learning to help students and faculty understand the degree of global understanding and personal growth from each of these many types of international experiences (Engle & Engle, 2003). For example, the impact of interaction with local culture through home stays, work experience in another culture, or summer school abroad can be weighed against US-based experiences such as living in an International House with international students, an internship in a Spanish language bank, or service learning with an immigrant community. Assessments can be developed by the IR staff in collaboration with the faculty and students and provide insight into how best to use resources and advise students.

CURRICULAR INITIATIVES

Internationalization of the curriculum takes many forms from the traditional foreign language study and area studies majors to courses on international topics and the integration of international materials into many courses. These initiatives aim to prepare students for citizenship, careers, and personal

competence in an increasingly international and multicultural world. On many campuses, IR is tasked with supporting assessment of student learning by helping faculty refine learning outcomes and identify indicators by which a student will demonstrate the related knowledge, skills, and attitudes. With clear outcomes, faculty can align their pedagogy, materials, and assessments of individuals and courses. IR can help develop curriculum maps showing at what point the “learning” is introduced, developed, or mastered, recognizing that learning is an incremental process. IR staff can also help faculty locate useful assessment rubrics (Rhodes, 2010).

Many campuses with well-developed assessment programs find they were designed long before sensitivity to internationalization developed, and do not reflect current learning goals with sufficient direct and indirect assessments at the level of the major and the overall degree program. To close the gap, IR must regularly review their own studies and surveys to make sure that international learning goals are integrated into program review, accreditation self-studies, employer surveys, and the many other institutional effectiveness processes that IR oversees.

Depending upon the curricular model for internationalization, assessment will be more or less complex. For example, if every student is required to take an international course, then the final exam can be the form of assessment. If the curriculum integrates international issues throughout a series of courses, it is more challenging to determine the cumulative effect of addressing issues in different contexts and disciplines. If the international experience is primarily a co-curricular one based on Culture and Language Days and International Week, it is very challenging to identify the learning and the measure. For example, what construct does having close friends from other cultures represent? IR will need to evaluate not only the validity of various measures, but also the reliability of formats such as the typical self-reporting on a senior exit survey. Is a positive response to “respect for others” a true measure of how students behave? Finally, those campuses who want to determine value added will need to conduct pre-and post-assessments thus making assessment even more complicated and time consuming.

To some extent, campuses are relying on integrating into the institution as many different forms of international experience as possible in the hope that every student will benefit. Given that all campuses must make informed choices about how to use their resources, IR increasingly must assess learning from the standpoint of cost-benefit. Integration of diverse cultural frames of reference throughout many courses is not only less expensive than launching many sections of a new course, but also more effective because the learning is reinforced many times. Using the international resources on the campus, both faculty and students, is less expensive than sending students abroad, but not as powerful as an immersion experience. To stretch their own limited resources, IR staff might engage faculty and students in action research projects that can contribute to both individual learning and institutional learning about internationalization.

ROLE OF FACULTY IN INTERNATIONALIZATION

The role of faculty in internationalization is varied including, through the presence of international faculty on US campuses, teaching international topics, and conducting research with colleagues abroad. As campuses internationalize, some resistance is inevitable as faculty need time and support to adapt their courses, adjust their pedagogies to a more diverse student body, and understand colleagues from different cultures. Faculty attitudes and involvement are highly individual, vary by discipline, and are influenced by colleagues and personal experiences. Because faculty play a central role in advancing campus efforts, the stated institutional commitment to internationalization must be supported with good information, targeted resources, and appropriate rewards aligned with the goals.

Although IR staff can benefit from the many published studies such as in the Journal of Research in International Education, they will find it more valuable to conduct studies of the faculty role in their own institution. For a campus just beginning to internationalize, IR can initiate the effort with an audit of faculty readiness and degree of commitment to internationalization. This self-evaluation might focus on input measures such as field of specialization, foreign language competency, and travel for research, as well as outcome measures such as international courses taught, integration of international issues, and

international topics of research. More sophisticated institutional research might address some of the process measures such as involvement with international students and engagement with international faculty.

Using these periodic reviews, administrators can decide where to invest to support both US and international faculty and track progress toward institutional internationalization goals. A complete inventory of faculty interests, needs, and activities can help key administrators, such as a Vice Provost for International Initiatives, strengthen connections among individuals, projects, and faculty development activities. For example, investing in faculty to help them go abroad clearly stimulates international understanding. When faculty return, they not only make changes in the material they teach and their research, but also take on responsibility for contributing to campus international activities. They become advocates for study abroad and are more culturally aware in their own classes. They recommend that colleagues go abroad, and they stay in touch with their international hosts, building an effective network for continuing activities. Visiting scholars also have a strong impact on their hosts and institutions as they bring new approaches to research problems and new perspectives to courses (O'Hara, 2009). The IR office can track both the initial faculty development activities and the multiplier effect on other activities through well designed audits and surveys.

As faculty recognize that a diverse student body presents particular types of culture-based issues, they need a broader repertoire of teaching approaches. At the same time, attention needs to be paid to how students evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods and courses. Challenging the ideas presented in class or offering a critical analysis of readings are new behaviors for international students from traditional systems where the faculty member is in charge and the rewards come from parroting back the lectures. Thus a faculty member who requires class participation and group projects may get a negative review from international students unfamiliar with American-style pedagogy. Similarly, international faculty with a more formal pedagogy may be misunderstood and downgraded by US students who expect informal give and take in the classroom. Low teaching evaluations would have a chilling effect on change efforts. IR can help design evaluation instruments that are sensitive to these issues and help interpret results for the purpose of development not just evaluation.

Evaluation criteria for tenure and promotion must also reflect internationalization as a priority. Traditional measures of research activity may need to be updated so that the faculty member who attends an international conference or publishes in an international journal is not penalized because the venue is unfamiliar or the journal ranking is difficult to locate. Training grants and consulting projects abroad need not be called service and given less credit than action research in the very same settings. The IR office may not be able to influence directly these standards, but can include data on international activities in the annual Fact Book and reflect internationalization in the quality measures for program review and accreditation.

To some degree, internationalization efforts require innovation, collaboration, and interdisciplinary work—all activities that involve some risk of not succeeding in the initial stages. Young faculty often have more international and interdisciplinary experience and are willing to try new things, but they are also vulnerable to pressures to do what is expected in order to get tenure. Ensuring a safe environment for experimentation is essential if more faculty across all disciplines are to be fully engaged in internationalizing the campus. Qualitative studies can provide valuable information to supplement surveys and audits. The IR staff may need to take the initiative to let deans, department chairs, and faculty take advantage of their expertise.

RESEARCH, CENTERS, AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Creating and disseminating new knowledge is a fundamental purpose of higher education. Thus the diverse research activities of an institution will also reflect the progress of internationalization, for example, an increase in research on particular geographical areas, research collaborations with scholars in other nations, multinational government funded projects, and centers for studies on topics with a global

impact such as climate change and population. In addition, the scholarly work of most fields will show a broader understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts.

Typically, IR has played a tangential role in supporting research and limited its interest to reporting the amount of grant funding and the number of visiting scholars for the Fact Book or reporting on research unit productivity and quality for internal program review. If the Institutional Review Board is hosted in the IR office, the staff will be involved in approving project designs and data gathering instruments and need to know the regulations on human subjects research in other countries. Depending upon the organization of the university, support for establishing formal networks or applying for research grants, for example, may rely on a database of faculty interests and activities housed in IR.

As campuses interact and take on more applied research and training, found research parks, and form international partnerships focused on knowledge transfer, new units and new policies are needed to manage the financial arrangements and legal matters involved. Technology transfer, patents, and protection of intellectual property in an international environment require specialized expertise (Maskus, 2004). This expanded role for higher education in international economic development may encourage institutional researchers to develop more complex direct and indirect measures for their economic impact studies. IR staff may also find they are called upon not just to inventory results for annual reports but also to participate at the initial stages by providing data for business plans, conducting policy analyses for these new activities, and evaluating whether the initiatives are in the institutional and national interest (Peterson, 2003).

International doctoral students play a major role in the research capacity of a campus and the commitment to transfer of knowledge abroad (COSEPUP, 2005). IR may find that in the course of analyzing data on graduate students, such as time to degree for doctoral students, a finding that is not congruent with institutional goals emerges. It is not uncommon for international students to take longer than expected for a variety of reasons, including being required to spend significant time supporting the activities of a research center, finding it difficult to get funding to do field work, or being reluctant to finish so they can continue to live in the US on a student visa. IR can provide the data for academic administrators to evaluate program effectiveness and efficiency.

Internationalization of a major research institution requires significant funding for facilities, fellowships, and faculty exchanges and developing long terms relationships with other ranked international universities. Justifying these investments cannot always be based on immediate return, yet at the same time cannot be a drain on other institutional priorities. Faculty may avoid taking on large scale projects with the many partners and deferred results, even if there is potential for wide impact, if they do not have an agreement with the institution about how they will be supported and how their work will be evaluated. For smaller campuses where research impact is not the major focus, faculty can shape their research agendas and create positive collaborations by taking advantage of the ease of communication, travel, and access to international data bases. In either case, large research campus or small baccalaureate institution, research productivity is one of the measures that institutional researchers use to assess educational quality and institutional effectiveness. Both internal and external reports should list international projects and activities separately and quantify the work.

OVERSEAS CAMPUSES, DUAL DEGREE PROGRAMS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

No aspect of internationalization of US higher education is more controversial than the marketing of a broad range of education services abroad (Ross, 2008). Rather than bring international students and faculty to the U.S., many institutions provide on-line instruction, set up branch campuses, and develop dual degree programs as part of their commitment to internationalization. The impetus behind these initiatives includes the social function of expanding access to educational opportunities and technical assistance; the economic interest in enrolling more students often subsidized by local governments; and the political focus on stabilizing critical areas of the world through education.

Turning education into an export commodity seems antithetical to the ideals of U.S. higher education, yet at the same time, hoarding this remarkable resource is hard to defend as it privileges rich nations and

restricts the development of others. Although the IR staff is unlikely to be at the table for a discussion of purposes or means, they can contribute to the SWOT analysis at the planning stage by asking key questions such as; What is the demand for the program? Will tuition be set by the local market? What incentives will attract and retain faculty? (Ruby, 2010). Once implemented, IR will analyze the program results with special attention to quality and accreditation standards that require a degree of control over the “product.”

Designing dual degree programs where students take some of their courses at the US campus and some at the overseas campus, earning a degree from both, is easily designed, managed, and financed. The usual IR studies of students, faculty, and outcomes can be conducted collaboratively for this model. Extending on-line education abroad is more difficult because of a host of issues ranging from who owns the course to how to verify the identity of the students, but still this form is one of the least risky of these new ventures. Several years of experience with distance learning has helped campuses focus on both sustainability and quality. IR may be asked conduct a retention study or compare fully on-line instruction with a mixed model that includes some face to face instruction with on-site faculty.

Setting up academic centers abroad is the most challenging model because of the regulatory environment. Beginning in the late 80s, several US campuses began establishing overseas branches to offset declining enrollments at home and have successfully established a niche in global education. A more recent model has countries such as China and Qatar luring top ranked US universities with extraordinary financial incentives to set up full campuses or join a shopping mall of programs offered side by side with other US institutions—all aimed at addressing the need for more highly trained local workers. At some point, IR may be involved in verifying quality and be asked to compare quality to the home campus standards.

Enough has been written about this “educational gold rush” to make any campus wary of new ventures (Verbik & Merkley, 2006). Administrators of US campuses report they receive numerous invitations to cooperate every week and must have criteria for evaluating the opportunities to determine whether there is mutual benefit. Successful projects require an entrepreneurial spirit, a high tolerance for risk, and sufficient risk capital. Many campuses are unprepared to absorb losses or are naïve about expecting additional resources to come once the project is underway. The number of years it takes for any program to gain traction is often underestimated and some campuses pull out of relationships after only a few years, disappointed that success has not come sooner. Whether ending a collaboration after just a brief time damages the reputation of the US campus cannot be measured very easily.

In this diverse environment of multiple models for delivery abroad, IR staff must continue to rely on good research techniques, use standard performance indicators related to the strategic plan, and conduct assessments of quality for improvement and accreditation. Following trends in the annual Fact Book and comparing the overseas data to the main campus can help with future planning. The most challenging task will be to find innovative ways to apply cost/benefit analysis (Knight, 2008).

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

Effective internationalization requires a systematic strategy for the future of the university and sufficient staff to coordinate and energize the efforts. Several truisms are pertinent: “If it is the responsibility of all, it is the responsibility of none.” and “What is measured will get done.” The IR role in supporting planning and decision making in this increasingly complex arena will vary depending upon institutional size, administrative structure, and funding arrangement on a given campus or in a system.

Because international activities have no single home or boundary, the management structure and locus of decision-making are often unclear. The more diverse and dispersed the activities, the greater the need for coordination, cooperation, and shared information. Many large campuses solve the problem of diffused authority by creating a new administrative position supported by a staff to manage a wide variety of tasks ranging from visits of international dignitaries to defining policies for international partnerships. Centralizing functions benefits the faculty who can focus their energies on teaching and research, and benefits other administrators who are assured there is a repository of experience for facilitating

international activities consistent with university policies and legal requirements. The IR office plays a key role in sharing the inventory of activities and assessment data with those responsible for results.

This centralized administrative role requires both managerial skill and collaborative leadership to bring coherence to international activities without stepping on the toes of other administrators, faculty, and staff. The individual in this role may accept the authority of others on a variety of matters such as admissions or faculty hiring, but direct this energy toward shared goals. Absent this collaborative leadership ability, those in the role risk being criticized by faculty as one more unnecessary administrator who is a barrier rather than a facilitator of their ideas and goals. In short, effective shared governance recognizes that the impetus for internationalization must come from both the top and the bottom and be sustained through communication and action.

As noted earlier, expertise in cost-benefit analysis is increasingly important as international activities have both financial and opportunity costs. What may have been a good idea at the initial stage may not be sustainable when time and resources are limited. For example, at one time, campuses were willing to support an international faculty member securing a long term visa, but as the costs, paperwork, and legal hurdles have increased since 9/11, many campuses are no longer willing to foot the bill. Research centers once could be started at “no cost” by faculty with enthusiasm and specialized interests, but as campuses adopt more defined budget models, the centers need to cover all their costs including graduate fellowships, faculty reassigned time, and facilities.

IR studies can not only support financial decisions but also analyze alternative approaches to achieving institutional goals. For example, if choices must be made about international experiences for students, it helps to know the efficacy and costs of various models. How should the budget committee decide between an investment in student and faculty travel or an investment in videoconferencing to allow students and faculty to interact with colleagues at an international sites?

The support role of IR staff in internationalization is invaluable as they are called on to help ask the right questions, identify appropriate measures of progress, design studies to answer real questions, analyze data for improvement, and report data to aid in decision making. However, this cannot be a passive role. The IR staff must be proactive, change oriented, and advocates for their findings—including, stating when initiatives are not successful. Their effectiveness will be further enhanced by keeping up with the literature and following research in this dramatically changing field.

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