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Interdisciplinarity: 
A Catalyst for Faculty Engagement in Internationalization

Lisa K. Childress

Despite the benefits of international scholarship to higher education institutions, faculty engagement in internationalization remains a major challenge for many universities. This study sheds light on this problem by investigating the strategies used by two institutions to engage faculty in internationalization through interdisciplinarity. This study found that as interdisciplinarity emphasizes comparative approaches, it prompted faculty to advance the comprehensiveness of their scholarship through the integration of cross-cultural perspectives. Notably, this study presents a model to assist institutions in overcoming endogenous obstacles by providing three infrastructural components—time, place, and financial resources—for faculty to engage in interdisciplinary and international scholarship.

Introduction

Internationalization has become an increasingly important trend in American higher education. Recent national and global events, such as September 11th and the War on Terror, have demonstrated the importance of international knowledge for national security and global peace (Collins & Davidson, 2002; Samaan, 2005). Moreover, the rapidly changing demographics in the United States have underscored the importance of cross-cultural understanding and communication within the United States in order to enable individuals to effectively contribute to their civic communities (Egge, 1999; Vialpando, Yedlin, Linse, Harrington, & Cannon, 2005).

But, what is internationalization? Internationalization is the process of integrating international and intercultural dimensions into the teaching, research
and service functions of a higher education institution (Knight, 1994, 1999, 2004). Internationalization is integrative as it incorporates knowledge produced from various national and cultural settings into the teaching, research, and service of an institution. Moreover, internationalization is interdisciplinary as it connects knowledge produced from various disciplines to construct new and more holistic ways of understanding social phenomena (Paige & Mestenhauser, 1999). As such, internationalization grants faculty complex intellectual tools to gain a comprehensive understanding of the problems they seek to address in their teaching and solve through their research (Klein, 1986; Kline, 1995; Paige & Mestenhauser, 1999). Yet, faculty engagement in internationalization remains a major challenge for many higher education institutions (Green & Shoenberg, 2006; NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2006a; Siaya & Hayward, 2003). This study seeks to shed light on this problem through its investigation of the strategies used by two higher education institutions to overcome these barriers and effectively engage faculty in internationalization through interdisciplinarity.

**Literature Review**

Despite the importance of faculty engagement to successful internationalization efforts (Fischer, 2007; Green & Olson, 2003; Stohl, 2007), numerous obstacles exist which impede faculty involvement in internationalization. As faculty are, in general, known to be resistant to change (Odgers & Giroux, 2006), it should come as no surprise that there is considerable faculty resistance to internationalization, which is inherently a change process. In particular, research to date indicates that some faculty do not recognize the benefits of infusing international perspectives in their teaching, research, and service (Bond, 2003; Cleveland-Jones, Emes, & Ellard, 2001; Tung, 1992). Bond (2003) described this lack of motivation as “faculty intransigence” (p. 8), which obstructs the implementation of institutions’ internationalization goals. Yet, a degree of faculty resistance to internationalization may in fact be constructive in ensuring that an institution’s internationalization plan and its implementation strategies address faculty and departmental needs.

In order to develop widespread faculty involvement, the engagement of latent supporters, skeptics, and opponents is critical (Backman, 1984; Bond, 2003; Childress, forthcoming; Green & Olson, 2003; Mestenhauser, 1998). Green and Shoenberg (2006) emphasized that generating the involvement of faculty whose support may be dormant is both essential and challenging to the implementation of an institution’s internationalization goals:

> Experience with many important education initiatives has shown that it is comparatively easy to get the enthusiastic agreement
of a small group of committed people to lay out a particular course of action and generate ideas for its implementation. The problem is generating sufficient interest and action from the thousands of faculty members on the front lines to make the recommendations a reality. (Green & Shoenberg, 2006, p. 22)

Given this juxtaposition of the importance and challenges of developing faculty engagement in internationalization, as Mestenhauser (1998) asserted, it is important to understand the sources of resistance to internationalization.

**Institutional Barriers**

Institutional barriers can significantly impede faculty engagement in internationalization. To highlight the connection between institutional infrastructure and faculty engagement in internationalization, the National Association of State Colleges and Universities (1993) asserted “faculty can only play an active role [in internationalization] if an environment is created that ensures that professional development, scholarship, and public service in the international setting are valued” (p. 6). Yet, specific types of institutional barriers obstruct faculty engagement in internationalization, including disciplinary divisions and priorities (Green & Olson, 2003).

Academic disciplines—the organizational subsystems for faculty scholarship—can limit faculty participation in international activities (Backman, 1984; Carter, 1992; Ellingboe, 1998; Goodwin & Nacht, 1983; Green & Olson, 2003; Green & Shoenberg, 2006; Harari, 1992). A synthesis of the literature revealed four overarching reasons why disciplinary orientations serve as barriers to faculty engagement in internationalization.

First, the disciplinary focus impacts faculty members' exposure to and training in integrating international perspectives in their fields. Although some disciplines are “intrinsically international, global, or comparative in nature” (Green & Shoenberg, 2006, p. 5), knowledge bases in other disciplines are largely constructed from a domestic point of view (Ellingboe, 1998). In concurrence, Maidstone (1996) pointed out that “Faculty typically understand their discipline or field, and teach it in the way they themselves were taught. Transformations of consciousness do not, therefore, come about easily” (p. 37). Thus, faculty members' participation in internationalization efforts is largely dependent upon the international focus, or lack thereof, of their disciplines, as this disciplinary focus directly impacts faculty members' academic training in the international issues in their fields.

Second, faculty tend to prioritize their teaching and research agenda based on the current needs and issues of their disciplines rather than their institutions...
(Carter, 1992; Childress, 2009a; Goodwin & Nacht, 1983). This prioritization can hinder faculty involvement in institutional initiatives, such as the implementation of an institution-wide internationalization plan. Hence, if department chairs and disciplinary associations do not emphasize the importance of international issues to their disciplines, faculty may lack motivation to focus on international teaching, research, and service projects, as these activities may not advance their publication and tenure opportunities.

Third, divisions between disciplines can preclude the interdisciplinary collaboration that is increasingly important in order to realize internationalization plan goals (Bond, 2003; Childress, forthcoming; Ellingboe, 1998). Ellingboe (1998) affirmed this point as she acknowledged “disciplinary walls are often high, hard to scale, and difficult to tear down to create bridges across disciplines in interdisciplinary courses, programs, team-teaching, and faculty collaboration” (p. 212). In other words, the decentralized, “each tub on its own bottom” (Altbach, 2006, p. 49) approach to academic organization precludes the inter-departmental communication necessary to share international teaching and research resources across the institution. Therefore, such inter-departmental barriers prevent the across-department collaborations needed to ensure that international perspectives are infused into an institution’s ethos (Backman, 1984; Knight, 1994).

Finally, not only does the lack of interdisciplinary partnerships and communication hinder faculty from participating in internationalization to their fullest potential, but the politics involved in developing consensus for internationalization within departments is often complex and difficult (Welsh, 1997). Specifically, intra-departmental politics can obstruct the development of consensus and action on a department’s internationalization agenda. Therefore, both intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary barriers preclude the development of faculty engagement that is essential to fulfill an institution’s internationalization plan goals.

Individual Barriers

Three major types of individual barriers to faculty engagement in internationalization exist, which include faculty attitudes towards international learning, personal knowledge and skills, and cognitive competence (Ellingboe, 1998; Green & Olson, 2003). These individual barriers will be addressed in this section.
Attitudes towards international learning

Faculty members' attitudes towards international learning directly impact their willingness and interest to internationalize their courses, engage in research collaboration with international partners, and participate in service projects overseas (Bond, 2003; Ellingboe, 1998; Goodwin & Nacht, 1983; Green & Olson, 2003). Although champions and advocates of internationalization tend to demonstrate positive attitudes towards the value of international perspectives for their work, skeptics and opponents tend to view international learning as extraneous to their personal and professional goals, including their academic objectives for their students (Green & Olson, 2003).

Research indicates that faculty who do not value international learning are less inclined to participate in international education opportunities, as such involvement may "challenge their perceptions of the world and their place in it" (Green & Olson, 2003, p. 73). This position is supported by the earlier work of Goodwin & Nacht (1983), in which the authors found that faculty skeptics and opponents of internationalization prefer to focus on the domestic milieu to advance students' intellectual and social development. As such, these faculty may view the infusion of international perspectives into their course content or pedagogy as diluting the purity of their disciplines (Bond, 2003; Ellingboe, 1998). Therefore, faculty attitudes toward international learning affect their engagement in activities that further the implementation of their institutions' internationalization plans.

Personal knowledge and skills

Faculty who have lacked exposure to and involvement with different cultural perspectives may lack the knowledge and skills for how to engage in their institutions' internationalization (Bond, 2003; Green & Olson, 2003; Mestenhauser, 1996). Specifically, faculty who have neither (a) lived, worked, or traveled overseas nor (b) had significant interactions with individuals from different cultures in the United States may lack an understanding necessary to integrate international and intercultural perspectives into their teaching and research (Bond, 2003; Green & Olson, 2003). To demonstrate the importance of faculty knowledge and skills in enabling their involvement in internationalization, Mestenhauser (1996) noted that faculty without significant international or intercultural experiences tend not to recognize the connections between the increasing importance of international knowledge and cross-cultural communication skills with their professional agendas. Therefore, by supporting faculty members' development of international
knowledge and skills related to their disciplines, institutions can encourage faculty involvement in internationalization.

**Cognitive competence**

Research indicates that even faculty who have had international experiences may lack the cognitive competence necessary not only to see the connections between these experiences and their teaching, research, and service, but to integrate this international knowledge into their work (Ellingboe, 1998; Green & Olson, 2003; Miller, 1992). As Ellingboe (1998) observed, methods of infusing scholarship with international perspectives remain unknown even to some faculty with international experiences. Thus, specific intellectual, pedagogical, and assessment skills, other than those emphasized by faculty members' graduate training or disciplinary associations, may be necessary to enable faculty to infuse international content into their teaching and research (Miller, 1992; Odgers & Giroux, 2006).

In short, the gap in the literature addressed by this study is that although research indicates that significant barriers impede faculty engagement in internationalization, which is at its core an interdisciplinary process, no studies have examined how interdisciplinarity has been used to facilitate faculty involvement in internationalization initiatives.

**Theoretical Framework and Research Question**

This study is based theoretically on Knight's (1994) internationalization cycle, which indicates that institutions proceed through six phases of internationalization, including (a) awareness, (b) commitment, (c) planning, (d) operationalization, (e) review, and (f) reinforcement. As Knight's (1994) framework indicates that a critical mass of faculty supporters is a prerequisite for success in both the planning and operationalization phases, this study examined the following research question: How did the development of faculty engagement affect the operationalization of internationalization plans at two higher education institutions? As interdisciplinarity emerged as a critical factor that encouraged faculty to engage in international scholarship, this article examines in depth the following research question: How did interdisciplinarity serve as a catalyst for faculty engagement in internationalization at two higher education institutions? For the purpose of this study, interdisciplinarity is defined as a value of research and teaching that occurs across two or more academic disciplines in the pursuit of a common goal, which may be perceived as too complex to be solved with the knowledge and methodologies of a single discipline.
Methodology

A qualitative, multiple-case study was selected as the research design for this study to understand poorly understood phenomena and discover thus far unspecified contextual variables (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Merriam, 2002). Specifically, a multiple-case study design enabled the researcher to (a) understand the complexities of each case and (b) identify components that can be compared and contrasted across cases. By addressing the same research question in multiple settings and using the same data collection and analysis procedures, this design allowed the researcher to consciously seek cross-site comparison without necessarily sacrificing within-site understanding (Herriott & Firestone, 1983).

Population and Sampling Strategy

The population for this study included the 194 institutional members of the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) (Association of International Education Administrators, 2006). AIEA was selected as the population for investigation in this study, due to these institutions’ demonstrated commitment to internationalization through their AIEA membership. Expert-driven, maximum variation, and criterion-based sampling methods comprised the sampling strategy for this study (see Table 1).
Table 1: Sampling Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expert-driven</td>
<td>Expert-driven sampling involved consulting with internationalization expert Madeleine Green, ACE vice president, for a previous study the researcher conducted with ACE. Green selected 32 out of 194 total AIEA-member institutions, based upon knowledge of their internationalization efforts and participation in ACE's internationalization programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum variation</td>
<td>Maximum variation sampling was employed for the current study to select two institutions from the 31 responding institutions that collectively represented all three types of internationalization plans, based upon an internationalization plan typology, which the researcher developed in a previous study conducted with ACE and included (a) institutional strategic plans, (b) distinct documents, and (c) unit plans for internationalization (Childress, 2009b).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion-based</td>
<td>Criterion-based sampling was used to select institutions that had internationalization committees and plans. From among the 31 responding institutions, 18 institutions had such committees. From among those 18 institutions, five institutions had internationalization plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summation</td>
<td>Thus, five institutions in total met the criteria for inclusion in the study. After invitations were extended to all five institutions to participate in the study, two universities accepted the invitation. These institutions were Duke University and University of Richmond, which collectively represented all three types of internationalization plans on the researcher's internationalization plan typology.</td>
</tr>
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Data Collection

Data collection methods included document analysis, interviews, and focus groups. During document analysis, the researcher reviewed internationalization plans and related documents, e.g. internationalization committee charges, meeting minutes, agendas, reports; mission statements, capital campaign case statements; institutional leader speeches; and tenure, promotion, and hiring policies. The researcher triangulated data obtained in document analysis.
through interviews and focus groups. Interviews were conducted with the AIEA representatives and two non-committee senior administrative leaders at each of the two institutions examined in this study. Focus groups were conducted with internationalization committee members at each of the two institutions examined in this study. The strength of interviews and focus groups in providing in-depth insights into the perspectives of key actors in the phenomenon under investigation complimented the strength of documents in their provision of exact details. The weakness of focus groups in terms of participants' potential political concerns about how their perspectives might be perceived by fellow group members was compensated for through the use of one-on-one interviews. Overall, multiple methods of data collection allowed the researcher to triangulate to maximize the strengths and minimize the limitations of each.

**Data Analysis**

The constant comparative method served as the primary analytical method used to systematically and continually categorize, compare, synthesize, and interpret the data collected (Merriam, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Particular to multiple-case studies, two stages of data analysis were involved: within-case and cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998).

**Within-case analysis**

In the within-case analysis phase, the researcher examined the data of each individual case. Data were gathered so that the researcher could learn as much about the contextual variables affecting each case (Merriam, 1998). After each document was imported into the qualitative data analysis software MAXqda, codes were assigned to segments of text based upon similar key words, phrases, and issues identified in the documents. In first-level coding, the researcher identified codes for emergent themes and text segments that relate to each code. As much as possible, the researcher used "in vivo" codes (Creswell, 2005, p. 238), which are codes that reflect participants' actual wording. In second-level coding, the researcher conducted pattern coding in order to group initial codes into a smaller number of themes (Merriam, 1998). Pattern coding was particularly important for this multiple-case study, as it led to the development of key themes, which laid the groundwork for cross-case analysis.
Cross-case analysis

In the cross-case analysis phase, the researcher built abstractions across cases to generate a theory that fit the cases examined, although the cases varied in individual details (Merriam, 1998). To analyze data across cases, the researcher first relied upon the data collected and organized in the within-case analysis. By examining this data, the researcher was able to compare and contrast findings across the two cases. By conducting “pattern clarification” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 175), the researcher used the conceptually clustered matrices in order to draw conclusions across cases. Through the development of such matrices the researcher organized and analyzed convergent and divergent findings, as well as conducted within-case and cross-case analysis.

To insure that emergent findings matched reality and to further enhance the credibility and dependability of the study, the researcher engaged in member checks (Merriam, 1998) through follow-up interviews with key participants at each institution. Through this process, participants assisted the researcher in fine-tuning her interpretations to better capture their perspectives, and in so doing, further establish the credibility and dependability of the findings.

Limitations

There are limitations, however, to this study's findings. Although the research design included the collection of data from each institution's AIEA representative, two senior administrative leaders (who were not members of the internationalization committee), and several internationalization committee members (six at Duke and four at Richmond), the number of faculty and administrator perspectives included in this study was limited. Interviews and focus groups with additional faculty and administrators would have likely elicited a greater range of perspectives on how support for faculty to engage in the two institutions' internationalization was developed.

Moreover, the qualitative nature of this study posed some restrictions on the data analysis process. In particular, it is possible that participant responses were subject to issues of social and political desirability, as well as others beyond the control of the researcher. Participants may have been concerned with portraying their institutions in the most favorable light through the interviews and focus groups conducted and documents shared. However, the researcher sought to minimize this problem through triangulation of the data collected in interviews and focus groups with a diverse array of documentation from institutional and departmental Web sites, internationalization committee and faculty senate meeting minutes, agendas, and reports, institutional leader speeches and presentations, and external publications.
Findings

Interdisciplinarity emerged as an organizational principle that encouraged faculty to participate in international initiatives at Duke University and the University of Richmond. As such, interdisciplinarity was an accepted code of conduct that guided faculty teaching, research, and service not only across disciplinary boundaries, but across national and cultural boundaries at the two institutions. Findings of how interdisciplinarity served as a catalyst for faculty engagement in internationalization at Duke and Richmond will be discussed in turn.

Duke University

Interdisciplinary collaboration has long been a prominent hallmark of Duke’s institutional culture (Davidson, 2006), and thus has served as a catalyst for collaborations that are both interdisciplinary and international in nature. Specifically, Duke used interdisciplinarity to lead to increased faculty involvement in internationalization through a three-pronged process, which included the following components: (a) emphasis of interdisciplinarity in Duke’s strategic and internationalization plans, (b) development of interdisciplinary faculty seminars conducted on international themes, and (c) development of interdisciplinary and international centers.

Emphasis on Interdisciplinarity in Duke’s Strategic and Internationalization Plans

Commitment to interdisciplinarity has been fortified by the university's strategic and internationalization plans. Duke’s first internationalization plan (Duke University Provost's Executive Committee for International Affairs, 1995) identified, “The University can profit both by assisting development of new courses with international focus or content, and by encouraging new orientations for existing courses. In either case comparative and interdisciplinary studies and methods should be encouraged” (p. 12). To do so, the plan advocated “furnishing multidisciplinary opportunities that are complementary to the University’s own strengths and resources” (1995, p. 16). Such multidisciplinary opportunities for faculty were created through Duke’s international and interdisciplinary centers, e.g. the John Hope Franklin Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies, Global Health Institute, and Center for South Asian Studies, as well as the faculty seminars sponsored by these centers. The implications of such seminars and centers will be addressed in subsequent sections of this article.
Duke University's current university strategic plan (2006) reinforced the importance of supporting faculty involvement in interdisciplinarity:

Many of the most interesting and pressing problems of today, such as environmental pollution or economic competitiveness, human health or cultural understanding, are deeply interdisciplinary at their core . . . . [Faculty] who are equipped to address these issues most constructively will be those who have learned to work in more than one dimension, using the tools of their own as well as other disciplines, who have been trained to grasp the interaction of many parts of the question and bring to bear multiple sets of analytic skills, and who can collaborate as well as work alone . . . . Interdisciplinarity thrives at Duke because faculty tend to be less oriented to a map of the disciplines than to intellectual questions and living human issues, which their knowledge might help to understand. When we are oriented toward challenges of this order, the disciplines are naturally synergistic, since no discipline holds all the pieces of the puzzle to be solved. (p. 15)

Thus, by emphasizing problem-based scholarship rather than disciplinary-based scholarship, Duke's strategic plan encouraged faculty to focus on interdisciplinarity, as well as internationalization, in order to augment their scholarly tool boxes.

Duke's Trinity College of Arts and Sciences' strategic plan (2006) highlighted explicitly the relevance of interdisciplinary scholarship to Duke's global initiatives:

[We seek to] insure that members of the arts faculty are engaged in planning for the Global Health Initiative...[by] amplifying the cross-disciplinary, cross-divisional, and cross-professional conversations that have already begun to make Duke a leader in new models of scholarship designed to study and improve the human condition. (p. 44)

As such, Duke's Trinity College of Arts and Sciences' strategic plan reinforced the same message of interdisciplinarity at the college level that was articulated in the university-wide strategic plan.

Likewise, the School of Law's strategic plan (2006) emphasized the importance of faculty involvement in scholarship that is both interdisciplinary and international:
The international and comparative law faculty routinely engage in scholarly collaboration, faculty workshops, and conferences across schools and departments across campus. Among the most active ongoing collaborations are those with the Political Science Department, the Sanford Institute of Public Policy, the Fuqua School of Business, and various area studies programs. Much of Duke's distinction in [international and comparative law] can be credited to the interdisciplinary character of the University overall. (p. 14)

Thus, Duke Law School's strategic plan explicitly drew connections between the benefits of interdisciplinarity to faculty engagement in internationalization. As interdisciplinarity emphasizes comparative approaches, this organizational principle has served as a launching pad for faculty to advance their interdisciplinary scholarship through the integration of international and cross-cultural perspectives.

**Interdisciplinary Faculty Seminars Conducted on International Themes**

In particular, interdisciplinary faculty seminars emerged as academic activities that provided useful forums for faculty to explore international dimensions in their teaching and research. These seminars and research clusters have given faculty teaching release time to discuss a particular international theme with colleagues from numerous disciplines. A university administrator explained that such seminars "bring faculty together to [ask] 'What are our points of comparison?' And, there are resources to do that here [at Duke]." (personal communication, interview, May 8, 2007).

Another senior administrative leader added,

Out of those seminars come curricular ideas, collaborative research grants and other things. At least what you get is an enhanced personal research agenda... [The seminars] are places where faculty who might have only thought of themselves as tangentially interested can become much more deeply interested in these issues. (personal communication, interview, May 8, 2007)

Thus, faculty have been enabled to enhance their research agendas through seminars that were both interdisciplinary and international in focus.

Examples of these seminars that supported faculty to enhance their international scholarship include the Franklin Humanities Residential Seminar,
Social Science Research Institute Faculty Fellows Seminar, South Asia Faculty Development Seminars, Symposium on Transcultural Humanities, and the Sawyer Seminar Program (Duke University Office of the Dean of Humanities, 2005; Duke University Trinity College of Arts & Sciences, 2006; NC Center for South Asia Studies, 2007). Outcomes of Duke’s faculty seminars frequently include newly developed international curricula and collaborative research grants (Senior administrative leader, May 8, 2007). The Sawyer Seminar Program, for example, prompted faculty to develop international, interdisciplinary research projects, such as, “Human Being, Human Diversity and Human Welfare: A Cross-Disciplinary and Cross-Cultural Study in Culture, Science, and Medicine,” “Global Health and Social Justice,” “HIV-AIDS in Africa, Haiti, and North Carolina; Portents and Dilemmas: Public Health and the Environment in China and India” (Davidson, 2006). Hence, such seminars provided infrastructural support through which faculty could explore international dimensions of their research and teaching.

Interdisciplinary and International Centers

Support for faculty to build international components into their interdisciplinary teaching and research agendas has been provided by centers, such as the John Hope Franklin Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies and the Global Capital Markets Center, which is a collaborative undertaking of Duke’s Law School and Fuqua School of Business that promotes interdisciplinary teaching and research on world capital markets (Duke University School of Law, 2006; John Hope Franklin Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies at Duke University, 2007).

Furthermore, Duke’s seven Title VI national resource centers awarded by the U.S. Department of Education and over a dozen additional international and area studies centers have served as focal points for faculty to engage in intellectually stimulating research and teaching initiatives across disciplinary boundaries and world regions (Duke University Office of the Vice Provost for International Affairs & Development, 2005a, 2005b; John Hope Franklin Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies at Duke University, 2007). Title VI national resource centers were established at Duke through grants from the U.S. Department of Education to support teaching and research in particular world regions (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Duke’s Title VI and other international and area studies centers have provided faculty support in the form of research grants, curriculum development awards, working groups, research clusters, exchange programs, and conferences at Duke through which faculty can expand their international foci or connections (Duke University Office of the Vice Provost for International Affairs & Development, 2005b).
These centers have provided resources for faculty to incorporate international content into their courses and research agenda. For example, the Asian/Pacific Studies Institute (2007) has sponsored faculty workshops and research on environmentalism, gender, and rural development in transitional economics in the Asian/Pacific region. In addition, the John Hope Franklin Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies (2007) has provided videoconferencing technology for faculty to incorporate into their curricula real-time discussions with scholars overseas. Above all, the centers have supported faculty engagement in international initiatives by incubating interdisciplinary collaborations in various world regions (e.g. Asian/Pacific Studies Institute at Duke University, 2007; Duke Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 2007; 2007).

University of Richmond

Interdisciplinarity similarly served as an organizational principle that opened the doors to international engagement for many faculty at the University of Richmond. Richmond's 1986 internationalization plan served as a springboard to develop interdisciplinarity at Richmond, as the plan cautioned “the examination of international issues is done mostly on a discipline-specific basis, with little attention to cross-disciplinary dimensions or perspectives” (University of Richmond Ad Hoc Committee on International Studies, 1986, pp. 20-21). That admonition laid the groundwork for the development of a three-pronged process through which interdisciplinary programs prompted faculty engagement in internationalization through the following three components: (a) interdisciplinary faculty seminar abroad, (b) international studies program, and (c) Richmond Quest program, which each will be discussed in turn.

Faculty Seminar Abroad

Richmond's nationally acclaimed faculty seminar abroad (Institute of International Education, 2002; NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2006b) has stimulated faculty to focus on the nexus of international and interdisciplinary education in numerous ways. The faculty seminar abroad, administered by Richmond's Office of International Education, provided a centralized infrastructure through which a different group of faculty from various departments have convened every two years to study a world region for several weeks together on campus, followed by a three week group sojourn overseas to meet with national leaders, business people, academic colleagues, and
local artisans to gain an understanding of the region (Gabara, 1994; University of Richmond Office of International Education, 2007).

In explaining the rationale for developing the faculty seminar abroad, Richmond’s dean of international education Uliana Gabara described, “Internationalization in my mind is very strongly linked with interdisciplinarity. So, I felt we need to have [faculty] conversations across academic disciplines” (personal communication, interview, May 3, 2007). Accordingly, the seminar goals have been to create opportunities for faculty to gain new international, interdisciplinary knowledge about a region or a country and involve faculty in interdisciplinary dialogues (University of Richmond Office of International Education, 2007). Starting with the seminar application, faculty are encouraged to reflect on their involvement and interest in interdisciplinary and interschool research and teaching (University of Richmond Office of International Education, 2007). In the pre-departure meetings, faculty are stimulated to discuss their disciplinary-based perspectives on the countries that will be visited. In demonstration of the interdisciplinary nature of the pre-departure meetings, Gabara explained,

The seminar is preceded by at least ten meetings [in which faculty] are presenting to each other about the country or region they are going to [visit] from their disciplinary perspectives. So, what they are learning from these sessions is...about the difference between what a historian will say about China and what an economist will say about China. (personal communication, interview, May 3, 2007)

Thus, an interdisciplinary foundation is built into the faculty seminar abroad even before faculty step foot off campus.

While on the seminar abroad, faculty are prompted to continue to engage in cross-disciplinary conversations, which have frequently resulted in the development of interdisciplinary teaching and research endeavors. Gabara pointed out,

When you get a group of [faculty] from business to philosophy to art history various departments [who] are constantly talking to teach other [during the seminar], they stimulate each other's interests... both about what they see and about the pedagogy of what happens on campus. Then they come back and the conversation continues. (personal communication, interview, May 3, 2007)

As this comment exemplifies, Richmond’s faculty seminar abroad has incubated faculty involvement in scholarly conversations beyond both
national and disciplinary borders, and in so doing, has engaged faculty in internationalization through its emphasis on interdisciplinarity.

**International Studies Program**

The international studies program is inherently interdisciplinary in nature, and, as such, has promoted the collaboration and networking of faculty from a wide range of disciplines. The interdisciplinary focus of Richmond’s international studies programs grew out of the 1986 internationalization plan: this plan cited the importance of “designing an interdisciplinary curriculum in international studies” (p. 12), which would “require the contributions of faculty from several disciplines” (p. 18) and “contribute to an interdisciplinary exchange of approaches or methodologies” (p. 21). Through the development of the international studies program, a faculty member explained, “We started an interdisciplinary movement where we choose to proclaim that we did want to support people working at the margins of two different fields. International work is particularly amenable to that” (personal communication, focus group, May 3, 2007). As such, the international studies program has provided an infrastructure for faculty to engage in interdisciplinary teaching and research.

**The Richmond Quest**

In addition to the faculty seminar abroad and the international studies program, the “Richmond Quest” program has fueled the connection between faculty engagement in interdisciplinary and international scholarship (University of Richmond, 2007b). Every two years, Richmond’s “Quest International” program has provided a new platform to reinvigorate faculty involvement in interdisciplinary and international scholarship (University of Richmond, 2007a). Through Quest International, faculty have been awarded grants to develop interdisciplinary, international courses and research that reflect the current Quest theme. In fact, the purpose of this well-endowed campus-wide initiative is “to explore and create unique synergies across our disciplines of arts and sciences, law, business, and leadership studies” (University of Richmond, 2007b, para. 4). Thus, through the Quest program, faculty have been presented with a structural and funding mechanism through which to operationalize Richmond’s interdisciplinarity, as well as internationalization.
Discussion

At both universities, faculty members' value of interdisciplinarity created a foundation that stimulated their involvement in international teaching and research. As interdisciplinarity emphasizes comparative approaches, this organizational principle served as a launching pad for Duke and Richmond faculty to advance the complexity and comprehensiveness of their scholarship through the integration of cross-cultural perspectives. Notably, supportive infrastructure has served as the foundation for supplying Duke and Richmond faculty with organizational and programmatic resources through which to explore both interdisciplinary and international perspectives in their teaching and research agendas. This infrastructure has included faculty seminars, international degree programs, and institutional grant programs.

Infrastructural support was critical in that it provided intentional, systematic opportunities for faculty to step out of their disciplinary contexts and engage cross-disciplinary issues with colleagues. But, why were the interdisciplinary faculty seminars particularly effective in developing faculty engagement in internationalization? As Biddle (2002) noted, "The vertical organization of universities by schools, colleges, and departments...works against the horizontal coordination and collaboration called for by efforts to internationalize the university" (p. 15).

Thus, the findings of this study suggest that infrastructural support must be created to address the inherent challenges posed by institutional organization, and such an infrastructural model must provide three essential components to develop faculty engagement in a particular institutional initiative, i.e. internationalization: (a) time, (b) place, (c) financial resources. Table 2 demonstrates how Duke and Richmond’s faculty seminars provided these three components.

Table 2: Infrastructural Model Example: Faculty Seminars

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<tr>
<th>Infrastructural Component</th>
<th>Duke University</th>
<th>University of Richmond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Provided teaching release time</td>
<td>Held during summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>Off campus (abroad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Resources</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary centers</td>
<td>Provost's Office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated, seminars carved out the time, place, and financial resources for faculty to discuss and collaborate on an international theme with colleagues.
across disciplines. Specifically, Duke provided the time for such faculty engagement by providing teaching release time for faculty who participated in on-campus interdisciplinary seminars that addressed international themes. Richmond, alternatively, provided time for faculty engagement in interdisciplinarity and internationalization by holding interdisciplinary faculty seminars abroad during the summer.

As many of the interdisciplinary seminars were conducted on transnational topics, they promoted intellectually stimulating conversations among faculty from diverse disciplines to discuss their points of comparison on international themes. Thereby, the interdisciplinary focus of the faculty seminars provided avenues for faculty who had not considered integrating international perspectives, but had considered integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, to explore both the cross-disciplinary and transnational dimensions of their teaching and research agendas. As a result, faculty seminar participants tended to develop new internationalized curricula and interdisciplinary research grants, as such expectations were built into the seminars. Furthermore, many faculty said participation in the interdisciplinary seminars changed their perspectives of what was possible in their teaching and research. Thus, the seminars served as stimuli for faculty to recognize the value of viewing their scholarship through various cultural lenses and transform their professional agendas accordingly.

In addition to faculty seminars, both institutions had well-established interdisciplinary, area studies centers that supported faculty engagement in internationalization. Such centers offered significant resources for faculty across disciplines to collaborate on international teaching and research agendas. These centers offered faculty funding to pursue scholarship on interdisciplinary and international topics, thereby serving as a significant incentive for faculty involvement. Because an important dimension of faculty engagement in internationalization is the development of clusters of scholarly interest around pressing global issues, Duke and Richmond's interdisciplinary centers, as well as faculty seminars, created institutional networks that provided the communication channels necessary for faculty to become informed about resources with which to participate in interdisciplinary, international scholarship.

Consequentially, a value of interdisciplinarity prompted faculty who were "latent supporters" of internationalization (Goodwin & Nacht, 1983; Green & Olson, 2003) to examine their scholarship from not only cross-disciplinary but cross-cultural vantage points, so that they could develop as comprehensive an understanding of their subject areas as possible, and in so doing engage in their institutions' internationalization. As such, the pervasive principle of interdisciplinarity enabled Duke and Richmond to address the challenge found
in previous studies (e.g. Bond, 2003; Ellingboe, 1998) that divisions between disciplines can preclude faculty engagement in internationalization. Thus, interdisciplinarity was critical in breaking down cognitive barriers for Duke and Richmond faculty to pursue their scholarship from multiple disciplinary and cultural perspectives in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex questions they are addressing in their teaching and research.

Thus, this study confirms Kline’s (1995) findings that by engaging in interdisciplinary scholarship, faculty are enabled to understand their own disciplines more comprehensively. This study extends Kline’s findings by noting that interdisciplinarity provides a platform for faculty to recognize that just as they can produce innovative theories and methodologies to open up their disciplines, colleagues, and students to new perspectives through interdisciplinary scholarship (Moran, 2002), they can do the same by pursuing scholarship through diverse national and cultural lenses.

Conclusion

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the infrastructural support and networks that facilitated faculty engagement in internationalization, institutions with an ethos of interdisciplinarity may be at an advantage to develop a foundation for faculty engagement in internationalization. In essence, an international mindset (Paige & Mestenhauser, 1999) can be facilitated through an interdisciplinary mindset. As Paige and Mestenhauser emphasized, to develop an international mindset, it is critical for faculty to synthesize, connect, and integrate knowledge from diverse settings. As interdisciplinary approaches train faculty in transferring concepts between disciplines to advance their scholarship, interdisciplinarity creates a springboard for faculty to recognize and incorporate the benefits of integrating various cultural perspectives in order to generate new understandings of scholarly problems. Thus, interdisciplinary approaches can help academicians and practitioners from a variety of fields develop solutions to complex global challenges.

Collectively, the two institutions provided opportunities for faculty to develop awareness of, capacity for, and community around internationalizing their teaching, research, and service both on and off campus. To develop faculty members’ skills and knowledge necessary to internationalize their scholarship, Duke and Richmond used specific academic activities and organizational practices, e.g. interdisciplinary faculty seminars, centers, degree programs, and institutional grant programs. Hence, Duke and Richmond created opportunities for faculty to cross disciplinary boundaries, and in so doing open their eyes to the benefits of crossing national and cultural boundaries in their scholarship.
Through such collaborative efforts at various institutional and subunit levels, Duke and Richmond's strategies supported faculty to internationalize their curricula, pedagogy, and research, through creating alliances and marshalling resources across disciplines.

Therefore, this study suggests it is important to provide structured opportunities for faculty to step out of their own disciplinary or cultural contexts and engage the issues with each other. Whether faculty step into another context far away from campus, as was done in Richmond's faculty seminars abroad, or into another space on campus, as was done in Duke's residential interdisciplinary seminars, it is critical to provide opportunities for faculty to challenge each other's thinking across disciplinary, national, and cultural boundaries. As such, it is important for higher education institutions interested in developing faculty engagement in internationalization to consider in what ways existing interdisciplinary faculty programs can be strengthened through the incorporation of international dimensions. Moreover, it may be useful for institutions to consider new seminars and centers that can be developed to provide structural support for faculty engagement in important global issues at the institution, e.g. global health, environment, and security.

Ultimately, Duke and Richmond's interdisciplinary programs prompted faculty to use their telescopes to look broadly, microscopes to look deeply, and kaleidoscopes to integrate and synthesize diverse perspectives (Grove, 2005) in order to gain holistic understanding of their scholarship. In so doing, such interdisciplinary programs provided a platform for faculty to recognize that just as they can advance the frontiers of knowledge through the examination of their topics through multiple disciplinary lenses, they can do the same through multiple national and cultural lenses. Through awareness of the power of interdisciplinarity as a catalyst for faculty engagement in internationalization, institutions are just beginning to unlock the potential of new waves and dimensions of knowledge to fulfill a seminal higher education goal of the 21st century: the development of globally competent students who are equipped with foundational skills to understand, synthesize, and analyze topics from multiple vantage points.

References


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