

IUPUI Office of International Affairs

Four years ago, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) embarked upon an innovative, campus-wide program that places a select and strategic set of partnerships at the heart of its internationalization efforts. IUPUI, like most large, public universities, has a good many international partnerships, but several have been elevated to strategic status and now drive its internationalization. These strategic partnerships go far beyond the occasional exchange of faculty and students that characterize standard institutional linkages. These partnerships emphasize transformation over transaction, collaboration over exchange. They are dynamic bi-national academic communities, which develop collaborative programs and initiatives far beyond what either institution could do on its own. They reflect an articulated philosophy of partnership, thrive on broad institutional engagement, and generate a wealth of new activities and collaborations, the impact of which spreads across both institutions.

IUPUI's move toward internationalization through partnership resulted from widespread campus discussions that produced a foundational document approved unanimously by the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Council of Deans, and faculty-based International Affairs Advisory Council in 2004. Since that time, the campus has moved forward on three core partnerships: Moi University (Moi) in Eldoret, Kenya; Sun Yat Sen (SYSU) in Guangzhou, China; and the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo (UAEH) in Pachuca, Mexico. These choices resulted from wide-ranging discussions among several hundred faculty and administrators, and reflect the importance of each region for international learning, existing or potential ties between Indiana and these countries, and the goodness of fit with IUPUI's areas of excellence. This selection also, of course, reflects intensive conversations with these institutions themselves. In the ensuing four years, each of these core partnerships has developed in quite dramatic ways.

The growth and impact of these strategic partnerships rests on their role as platforms for deep, cumulative learning, research, and engagement, such that new projects build on previous ones, students encounter these partners in a variety of courses and co-curricular activities, and a broad spectrum of faculty collaborate across national boundaries. The result is an integrated set of activities that cuts across both institutions, enhances the capacity of each for international work, and is sustained over a long period.

These strategic partnerships are creating bi-national communities of collaboration and dialogue, pulling each institution into ever deepening relationships of mutual benefit. They focus and prioritize campus internationalization, creating economies of scale and synergies of effort. They establish explicit concentrations of activity that attract attention and support from external sources. They lay foundations whereby new projects build on existing ones, and new faculty, students, and staff become involved, including those with little previous international experience.

IUPUI's program of internationalization through partnership also reflects a theoretical position that internationalization in the 21st century must be more than a process of infusing international resources and perspectives into our institutions (as important as this is). It must also be a process of drawing our institutions out into something larger than themselves. It must take off from the recognition that international understanding requires international dialogue. Seen in this light, internationalization very much rests on an institution's ability to connect with the broader world,

to engage in the global construction of knowledge, and to do so with cross-cultural skill and wisdom. It rests as much on external networks as internal expertise.

Placing partnerships at the heart of internationalization thus reframes what universities are doing. We are knocking down academic silos to join in dynamic networks of exchange, engagement, and discovery. We are developing academic communities larger than our own institutions. We no longer need to hire dozens of new faculty to teach international courses because we can exchange courses and teach collaboratively with our partner institutions (both virtually and face-to-face). We identify skill at international dialogue and interaction to be key learning objectives for our students, and faculty model these in their relations with colleagues abroad. Disciplines that have not traditionally had an international perspective are assisted in developing one by networking with colleagues overseas. International respect, reciprocity, and resource-sharing become the new “Three R’s” of higher education.

IUPUI’s shift to internationalization through partnership has not required massive amounts of new funding but rather a focusing of existing activities and funding. It has also reframed the work of the IUPUI Office of International Affairs (OIA) which supports and frames these partnerships by developing programs that draw faculty into them; working with schools, departments, and first-year programs to incorporate teaching on partner countries across the curriculum; working with Student Life on co-curricular programming; piloting innovative ways to use partnerships for both research and curriculum development; maintaining a continuous stream of communication; and developing structures that facilitate a coordinated, campus-wide approach. IUPUI has, for example, piloted the use of a professional networking web-platform (Epsilon) that enables faculty at both institutions in each partnership to share information and communicate regularly, even if one side only has dial-up internet connections.

The success of the core partnerships developed thus far is testimony to the effectiveness of this strategy for internationalization. The selection of Moi as IUPUI’s first such partner was easy, as this builds on an eighteen-year collaboration between our two medical schools and promotes deep understanding and engagement with a continent whose history is intertwined with our own. While the IUPUI-Moi medical collaboration began as a standard exchange of a few faculty and students, over the last ten years it has transformed into a significant team effort to fight HIV/AIDS in western Kenya, resulting in the building of two hospitals, a dozen outreach clinics, and a series of model farms and workshops for recovering patients. This truly bi-national medical collaboration now serves over 70,000 patients a year and was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. As IUPUI moved toward internationalization through partnership, Moi was the obvious first choice, and in 2006, both Chancellors signed a new Memorandum of Strategic Alliance aimed at expanding the partnership across the breadth of both institutions. This expanded alliance has not only brought all our mutual resources to bear on the pandemic. It has also facilitated entirely new curricular and research collaborations in education, social work, informatics, engineering, library science, business, tourism management, nursing, dentistry, allied health fields, physical education, and the arts and sciences. As each new endeavor begins, it is informed and encouraged by what has already happened. U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Michael Ranneberger has publicly stated that the IUPUI-Moi partnership is the most comprehensive anywhere in Africa (see <http://ium.epsilen.com>).

As the IUPUI-Moi partnership has grown, so has the involvement of IUPUI faculty, students, staff, and even the Indianapolis community. Over the last three years, over 50 IUPUI faculty

have traveled to Moi to work on partnership activities, including many who had never set foot in Africa before, while over 20 Moi faculty have gone in the reverse direction. Similar levels of students have made such journeys. A student-run Impact Kenya organization has arisen. Moi faculty have taught at IUPUI, and IUPUI faculty have taught at Moi. Email partnerships have been fostered between IUPUI and Moi students as key mechanisms for learning in courses at both institutions. An active Social Science Research Network has emerged between the two universities, developing such new projects as an upcoming symposium on harmonization in the aftermath of the post-election violence in Kenya this year. The cross-campus Moi Partnership Steering Committee coordinates and promotes these activities at IUPUI, and is currently developing an adaptable platform for Moi faculty to provide the cultural, historical, environmental, political, and economic framework for IUPUI study abroad programs in disciplines from ranging from Liberal Arts to Engineering.

The IUPUI-Moi partnership has also stimulated interest in Kenya within the Indianapolis community. A host of religious, fraternal, and social service organizations have recently become involved in working with their counterparts in the Eldoret area. Two weeks ago, the partnership was given the International Citizen of the Year Award by the International Center of Indianapolis. This is the highest award for international work in the state and has previously been given only to prominent individuals.

While the IUPUI-Moi partnership is certainly the oldest and most fully developed of the three strategic partnerships, the other two are advancing rapidly. Conversations with these two universities began only a few years ago, but the philosophy of strategic partnership guiding these collaborations has enabled much to happen. There are already strong collaborations with SYSU in medicine, liberal arts, informatics, business, education, and public administration, once again drawing in faculty not previously been engaged in international work. These collaborations have proven so fruitful that SYSU and IUPUI worked together to create a Confucius Institute at IUPUI, which now serves as the hub for spreading Chinese language and culture not only across the university, but out into the Indianapolis community. This summer, for example, the Institute operated a Chinese language-and-culture day camp for local children that attracted 50 students per week, while also establishing a fully subscribed study abroad program for IUPUI students at SYSU and collaborating with the Mayor to hold Indianapolis' first-ever Chinese Festival.

The strategic partnership with UAEH is an organic outgrowth of the increasing migratory ties between this heartland area of Mexico and the heartland state of Indiana. Together we are working to understand this new phenomenon and improve the lives of individuals and communities connected to it. The IUPUI Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, and Social Work have engaged their students in working with UAEH faculty and students to deliver basic health care in the rural communities of Hidalgo. In 2006 this work spawned a new IUPUI Signature Center of Excellence – the Bi-national Center for Community Health. This, in turn, has brought in faculty from liberal arts, education, engineering, and law, all of whom are now working with their counterparts at UAEH. The Spanish Department is relocating its intensive Spanish study abroad program there. The momentum of this growing partnership has also been carried along by a series of videoconference symposia in which faculty and community leaders from both Hidalgo and Indianapolis discuss the complex issues of Mexican-U.S. relationships.

What lies ahead for these strategic partnerships cannot be known at this point. Nor should it be. As with all true collaborations, these alliances will take us to unexpected places, and this is, of course, is the point of moving partnerships to the center of internationalization.