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ACE-Internationalization Laboratory
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UNE Institutional Report on Goals and Activities for the Laboratory

How internationalized is your institution?

Introduction:

The Universidad del Este which is part of the Ana G. Mendez University System of Puerto Rico has had a strong commitment to the concept of internationalization since 2006. In that year, UNE’s Chancellor, Alberto Maldonado Ruiz, included internationalization in UNE’s Vision statement and as a priority program in UNE’s strategic plan which he officially presented to the Board of Directors of the Ana G. Mendez University System at their 2006 annual meeting in Buenos Aires Argentina.

At this meeting our Chancellor addressed the importance of international learning in the 21st Century and the need for higher education institutions to prepare and train students to become global citizens who can live and work in a globally interdependent world.

However, earlier, in 2002 in Lisboa, Portugal, the Board of Directors of the Ana G. Mendez University System, signed an official Declaration – called the 2002 Portugal Declaration, to advance the university’s mission to establish a solid internationalization program, as an integral component of its 2005 strategic plan, which subsequently became part of the AGMUS 2015 strategic plan, called “Vision 2015”.

In signing the Portugal Declaration, President Jose F. Mendez stated that the AGMUS (and I quote) “took on the important task of preparing citizens for a global economy by creating the curriculum options, learning experiences, and activities that would impart an international perspective on our students, faculty and staff members”.

The AGMUS VISION statement endorsing internationalization that the Universidad del Este adopted in 2006 states that UNE (and I translate from Spanish):

“*Aspires for its students to have international experience in order to play a proactive role as citizens of the world;*

*Recognizes the important role played by the Administration, faculty, and support personnel to convert this aspiration into an integral component of the academic (idiosyncrasy) life and experience of the student; and,*

*Will provide its students with the highest level of international education as well as professional development for its faculty in international matters.***

To implement this Vision statement, UNE adopted 5 strategies for internationalization and outlined various goals, objectives and activities to achieve those goals. However, the Internationalization plan adopted by our institution in 2005 and again in 2007 was not fully integrated into the individual academic work-plans of each school.

Our challenge now is to update, revise, integrate and implement UNE’s previous internationalization plans into a strategic plan that is fully endorsed and supported by our institution. That is why we have joined the ACE Internationalization Laboratory.

1. How Internationalized is the Universidad del Este?

Our institution is not very internationalized at this point in our institutional development.

In discussing the answer to this question with my colleague, Dr. Wilfredo Colon, Dean of UNE’s School of Science and Technology and Co-Chair of our Internationalization Committee at UNE, who has had more than ten years experience in observing UNE’s internationalization efforts, we both agreed that UNE has a strong commitment to internationalization which has been outlined
in various official declarations, vision statements and strategic plans. And, due to our Chancellor’s leadership and his personal commitment to internationalization we are here with you today as members of the 2009-2010 ACE Internationalization Laboratory.

However, when we speak of the internationalization of our university as a whole, of institutionalizing internationalization, we have not yet put in place the administrative structures, organization, programs nor adopted the specific institution-wide policies or provided the necessary funding that will enable us to implement the Universidad del Este’s articulated commitment of our mission, goals and vision for internationalization.

However, we have made some very important steps.

Our internationalization efforts:

Have mainly been “from the top down” -- that is, that Chancellor has been driving the institution’s commitment.

Because of the Chancellor’s commitment however,

Several of our Schools, such as the International School of Hospitality and Culinary Arts and our School of Science and Technology have initiated and undertaken several important international initiatives and exchange activities.

For Example our School of Science and Technology has a collaborative project with universities in BRAZIL under the U.S. Department of Education’s FIPSE program. And,

Our School of International Hospitality and Culinary Arts has active exchange agreements with universities in Chile and Peru and every summer faculty and students participate in special academic and training tour programs in Europe.

We have more than ten years of various international projects, conferences and activities that UNE has undertaken in countries throughout Latin
America and in Spain but these activities have all been undertaken individually by a School or professor or Dean and not integrated as part of a specific internationalization strategic plan.

**What are the measures of success when you ask the question of how internationalized is your institution?**

**Students:**

In terms of Students for example,

- we had 166 students who participated in internships this past summer, outside of Puerto Rico, but half of these internships were in the United States and only 2 students went abroad – one to Chile and one to Spain.

To facilitate our student’s study abroad opportunities, we will become a member of ISEP – the International Student Exchange Program – this coming year 2010.

**Schools:**

In terms of our University Schools international activities, as noted above,

- only 2 or 3 of our Schools or @ 5% of our schools are actively engaged in meaningful international activities, such as student or faculty exchange and collaborative projects.

**International Student Activities:**

We have had a number of special international activities at UNE over the past 10 years, such as Ambassadors who have come to speak annually at the university, or special international nights or weeks featuring a particular country, but again there are very few organized international activities for the students...only @ 5%...and these have not been integrated into the curriculum or the academic programs of the students.
So our commitment and intentions are strong, but we now need to adopt an explicit internationalization plan with specific programs and activities that will be endorsed by the entire institution with an agreed upon action plan that will integrated into the academic priorities and curriculum of the institutions. Not an easy task!

2. What are the Goals for your Lab Participation?

As stated above, we want to:

1. Develop a “road-map” or an internationalization strategic plan that will institutionalize our internationalization efforts so that they come from “the bottom up” rather than “top down”.

   [And, at the same time, we want to ]

2. Identify and implement strategic opportunities that can enable our institution to move “quickly” in providing international education opportunities for our students and faculty to move into the global education arena.

3. Involve all of the stakeholders at UNE in the internationalization process to develop an internationalization strategic plan which they will agree to implement, enthusiastically.

4. This process – and internationalization is a process--- not a single set of activities – will involve many steps. Some of our priorities are:

   a. Implementing a study abroad program by next year (2010) – we are now in that process. But that includes developing the administrative and academic structures and financial support to facilitate the program.

   b. Participating in International Student Exchange programs – but this involves solving the housing issue on our campus as we do not have dormitories for international students and now we must work on a “case-by-case” basis
c. Revising the curriculum to include internationalization in the various academic programs offered by our the Schools as well as foreign language instruction.

d. Increasing the participation of our faculty and deans in writing and preparing international grant proposals which can help fund international programs, study abroad, strengthen our under-graduate international curriculum and foreign language instruction programs and other international activities.

e. This involves adopting special and concrete policies or providing special incentives –such as faculty release time and additional financial compensation—to stimulate and provide incentives for the faculty and deans to participate, given their already busy schedules.

f. Developing strategic partnerships with U.S. institutions that can help to internationalize our university.

g. We would like to examine and learn from internationalization strategies that have been successfully implemented at other institutions.

3. What work do you plan to do in the coming year?

For the ACE-Internationalization Lab:

1. We have already established our Internationalization Committee at the Universidad del Este and appointed Co-Chairs for participation in the the ACE-Lab Review.

2. We have also established a group of 5 Subcommittees which will address each of the key areas of the ACE-Internationalization Lab Review have appointed a group of key administrators and faculty members to serve on each of these subcommittees.
3. We held our first meeting of the whole Internationalization Committee in May and we will commence monthly Committee meetings and bi-monthly Subcommittee meetings in September.

- The Subcommittees we established include for example:

  1. Articulated Commitment (to Internationalization): Mission, Goals and Vision. The Local State and Broader Environment for Internationalization.
  3. The Curriculum and Co-Curriculum
  4. International Students, Study and Internships Abroad; Engagement with Other Countries
  5. Campus Culture, Synergy and Connections among Discrete Activities
  6. Conclusions and Recommendations.

2. Along with the ACE Lab Review and Assessment, we will implement various internationalization priorities that are in the annual work-plan of the Vice-Chancellor for International, Federal and Corporate Affairs, which have been endorsed by the Chancellor and various Deans to continue our internationalization efforts and the work of our Internationalization Committee which was established in 2008.

For example, we will be implementing projects that will:

- Strengthen our study abroad program opportunities at UNE by signing the ISEP agreement and increasing student participation in federally funded study abroad scholarship opportunities.

- Expand and strengthen UNE’s participation and competitiveness for federal and external grants to support international education programs

- Develop strategic partnerships with U.S. and international universities to strengthen our internationalization efforts, including student and faculty exchange.
• Review and strengthen our existing international agreements and collaborations with universities in Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe.

• Many others.

We have high expectations to moving forward with our effort to internationalize UNE in the coming year. We especially look forward to meeting and working with other members of the ACE-LAB and learning from their experiences as well as the experience of other universities that have participated in the Lab.

Thank you.