

**Report on Appalachian State University
Participation in the ACE Internationalization Laboratory
By the American Council on Education Peer Review Visit Team
March 1-3, 2009**

I. Introduction

This report is based on a three-day visit to Appalachian State University by an American Council on Education (ACE) peer review team on March 1-3, 2009. This report also draws upon the document that the university provided, The Report to the Review Team, with its nine appendices, including the university's strategic plan. Because of inclement weather and the closing of the university on March 2, 2009, some of the meetings scheduled had fewer attendees than had been planned. The visit included meetings with Dr. Anthony Carey, vice provost for faculty affairs; Dr. Cindy Wallace, vice chancellor for student development; the co-chairs of the ACE Internationalization Laboratory Leadership Team, Dr. Renee Scherlen and Dr. Jesse Lutabingwa; the academic deans (Dr. Nina-Jo Moore of the College of Fine and Applied Art, Dr. Randy Edwards of the College of Business, and Dr. Reiner Ganz of the College of Arts and Sciences); members of the Office of International Education and Development; staff of the Office of Undergraduate and Graduate Recruitment and Admissions; members of the Office Student Financial Aid; staff of the Office of the Registrar; members of the Office of Student Accounts; the ACE Internationalization Lab Leadership Team; staff from the university library; members of the Office of Academic Advising; staff from the Office of Student Development; and representatives from various academic programs (Dr. David Huntley of the Watauga Global Community; Dr. Alexandra Hellenbrand of the Global Studies Program; Dr. Bob Goddard of the International Business Program; Dr. Richard Carp of the Department of Foreign Languages; Dr. Roma Angel of the College of Education, and Dr. Marty Mezner of the College of Business).

The visit is part of the ACE Internationalization Laboratory, a project that builds upon the learning from several earlier ACE multi-campus initiatives, including Promising Practices in International Education and Global Learning for All. In addition to Appalachian State University, other institutions participating in the 2007–2008 Laboratory are City University (WA), Seton Hall University (NJ), SUNY College at Cortland (NY), SUNY University at Albany (NY), University of Kentucky, University of Wisconsin–Stout, and Western Kentucky University.

This is a confidential report to Appalachian State University, designed to assist the institution with its internationalization efforts. We encourage wide internal distribution of the report so that it can assist the university community in these tasks. The contents will not be published or made public unless Appalachian State University chooses to do so or gives ACE permission to do so.

II. Peer Review Team

Barbara Hill, senior associate and director of the Internationalization Laboratory, Center for International Initiatives, American Council on Education, Washington, DC (peer review team leader).

Gil Latz, vice provost for international affairs and professor of geography and international studies, Portland State University, OR.

Susan Buck Sutton, associate vice chancellor of international affairs and chancellor's professor of anthropology, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

III. Overall Strengths

Appalachian State has made great headway in enhancing its internationalization and is at a propitious moment in time to broaden and deepen these efforts. Internationalization has received strong support from the senior leadership—a fact widely acknowledged and appreciated on campus. The University of North Carolina System has made the global readiness as one of the system's strategic goals. During the ACE Internationalization Laboratory campus-wide discussions did important conceptual work that led to the adoption of a common language and understanding about internationalization, and faculty are strongly engaged with international activity in many academic units.

The commitment to internationalization extends to the curriculum, as well. The general education requirements incorporate an international theme focusing on “local to global, and global to local” issues, with many opportunities for faculty to incorporate these themes into their classes and programs. An increasing number of majors are requiring study abroad or an intensive international engagement for their students. Even the library has its own internationalization plan to serve the academic needs of students and faculty alike.

The Office of International Education and Development (OIED) is led by a relatively new, creative and entrepreneurial associate vice chancellor. Both the provost and the associate vice chancellor use incentives to engage faculty with internationalization, especially important during difficult economic times. The OIED has a community outreach director, a position that team members have not encountered on other campuses. The OIED takes academic advisors on trips to assess programs abroad; while the literature on international education encourages such staff involvement, at most

institutions this is just aspiration—Appalachian State is actually achieving this. The OIED has also been effective at collaborating with other offices on campus, for example, in setting standards for safety and crisis management and in co-sponsoring program with the office of diversity initiatives.

During the Lab the Office of International Education and Development reviewed all of the university’s partnerships with institutions abroad. This led to setting policies for consistency among the agreements and, furthermore, established strategies of interdisciplinary engagement and opportunities for study abroad for new partnerships.

We also commend the OIED’s successful efforts in seeking external funding to bring international groups to Appalachian State. Over the last two years, these grants have brought in nearly \$500,000. The groups of educators who visited Boone from Pakistan and Egypt provided valuable international perspectives to both the university and the local community. Moreover, the indirect costs of these grants supported other international initiatives of the university.

All these individual strengths combine to suggest that Appalachian State is at a moment of important institutional and cultural change, all the more significant because many of those involved have been at the university for a long time and still have been able to have a new vision of what the institution can accomplish. During the peer review visit, the meetings involved a wide spectrum of the campus community, including high-level academic officers and representatives of important administrative offices. The conversations we had during the visit suggested that internationalization can shape everything the university does, and clearly a committed core of faculty and staff are willing to work to achieve that vision. In general, we observed that many administrators, faculty, and staff of Appalachian State expending productive energy on internationalization.

IV. Strategic Issues: Observations and Recommendations

STRATEGIC PLAN

Appalachian State’s strategic plan refers to internationalization or global readiness in four areas, in addition to stating that the university “will be an influential world citizen.” In Priority 1, Initiative 1, the 5th Principal Accountability Indicator states: “Increase the percentage of underrepresented and international student enrollment to 15 percent.” In Priority 1, Initiative 2, the 3rd Principal Accountability Indicator states: “Achieve participation by all students in at least one experiential learning program (international experience, internship, research, service-learning, creative activities, field experiences).” In Priority 1, Initiative I, the 4th Principal Accountability Indicator states: “Increase student participation in study abroad programs by 25 percent.” In Priority 4, Initiative 2, the 4th Principal Accountability Indicator states: “Expand K-12 outreach activities.” The document has already been approved by the Board of Trustees, and we strongly urge the senior leadership to use this contextual framework that acknowledges the importance

of internationalization to the institution and is congruent with the strategic goals of global readiness articulated in the strategic plan of the University of North Carolina System.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LABORATORY LEADERSHIP TEAM

The peer review team endorses the recommendations included in the report of the Internationalization Laboratory leadership team. It is important that the university now begin the complex and intricate task of prioritizing the objectives laid out in the plan. Internationalization is certainly not a linear process, but in tough economic times, it is important that priorities are clearly in place to make certain that the difficult choices arising in the future turn into desirable decisions. We believe that the International Education Council, augmented by some administrators with additional expertise, is an appropriate group to do this work.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The low number of international students at Appalachian State is at odds with all the emphasis on internationalization. The recruitment plan is a step in the right direction, and a high priority for the university should be improving the financing of international students. The university should also try leveraging international graduate students from the current undergraduate programs in education and business, which seems to draw international students.

In our conversations the peer review team often heard that Appalachian State's location was a limitation in the recruitment of international students. We do not think that a limitation is deterministic. The university has a number of assets aligned with location, namely a beautiful setting and the possibility of immersion into American Appalachian life. Even the general education curriculum with its "local to global" focus should be emphasized as a positive feature of studying at Appalachian State. A more positive approach to Appalachian State's niche could yield more international students.

STUDY ABROAD

To increase the number of students who study abroad, the OIED can develop some white papers for both academic advisors and the parents of Appalachian State students about how study abroad is an investment in a student's future, not just a frill. Similarly, if a student is on financial aid, a loan for a study abroad program should not be considered a burden but a means of giving a student a competitive edge in a globally competitive world. Changing perceptions about the value of study abroad is a challenge worth addressing.

CENTER FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

This Center, recently reorganized, can be an active player in both the development of general education courses and internationalizing majors and other programs. Workshops should be created to assist faculty in this important work.

FACULTY WORKING GROUPS

Faculty members across campus are interested in different areas of the world. To capitalize on this interest, Appalachian State should continue to develop working groups

on these countries or regions should be organized so that faculty can work together to create interdisciplinary and synergistic projects or partnerships. This work should intersect with the OIED and the International Education Council.

Another technique to boost faculty involvement in international education efforts is to put technology to greater use. We already know that several units in the university are already doing so, such as telemedicine. At a much lower cost than faculty travel, technology offers faculty and their students the opportunity to engage with colleagues overseas. Co-teaching courses with faculty from abroad using video/Internet technology, for example, can help fill gaps in international expertise and enhance the internationalization of the curriculum. Some such collaborations already occur and the university should build on such interactions and encourage their imitation in new areas of campus. To do so, the senior administration should devise a communication plan to inform the university community of faculty achievements in international activity. A bi-annual e-bulletin might be helpful, as well as inclusion in any regular convocations or faculty orientations.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The peer review team found the inability of the foreign language department to respond to student demand to be troubling, and we are glad that the university is taking steps to address it. We recommend that the department work to change its pedagogical paradigm. Many model programs are available, including some that use technology, such as the one at Portland State. We also encourage the department to take a greater interest in encouraging students to study abroad.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT GLOBAL LEARNING

Appalachian State is developing systems to assess student learning, and we commend the university for this. In terms of global learning, many materials are already available, and the ACE Center for International Initiatives web site lists some of them. We urge the institutions to beware of those instruments that only seek to measure student attitudes but not knowledge and skills. We recommend that the university imagine itself five years hence and to determine what kind of assessment information it might need to achieve that vision.

ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF GRANT-SEEKING

During campus conversations the peer review team heard that some administrators had, in the past, actively discouraged faculty from seeking external funding for projects. The current administration should counteract this practice and give support to faculty who are willing to be creative enough to seek grants and contracts.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUNDING IN THE CURRENT ECONOMY

While the state budget shortfall is dismaying, the faculty has shown itself to be nimble in addressing both general education and internationalization, much of which will not require additional revenue. In addition, the economic stimulus package offers opportunities for creative projects deserving of funding. We encourage the programs for sustainable development and applied technology to work together so that they do not

miss this possibility of support for their work. Finally, recruitment of more international students can bring additional revenue to the institution.

ANNUAL REPORTS OF FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT CHAIRS AND DEANS

In order to have up-to-date information about the internationalization of Appalachian State, we urge the university to ask for appropriate information in all annual reports—for faculty, department chairs, and deans. Establishing an open data base so that the entire campus community can learn about the international activities of faculty and staff will encourage others to engage in the work of internationalization.

V. Conclusion

Appalachian State University is clearly fortunate to have support for internationalization from many faculty and administrators. Of course, conversations about internationalization must continue, in order to widen this base of support so that the university can effectively reframe its vision and mission in terms of internationalization.

Appalachian State is well positioned to continue its work in internationalization because it has all the key ingredients: leadership, energy, and systems for establishing learning goals and assessing their outcomes. The leadership team of the Internationalization Laboratory has demonstrated that it can engage faculty members and influence faculty processes; these leaders should continue to do so. Internationalization is a long-term project that requires commitment from the top administrators who regularly provide reasons why the campus and programs (like all of higher education) must become more fully internationalized. This requires adequate resources and regular evaluation and assessment. By developing and continuing an intentional process, Appalachian State will make its internationalization goals part of its everyday operations.

Submitted April 10, 2009