

Keynote Address, Global Symposium  
Appalachian State University  
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The University motto is “esse quam videri” – “To be, rather than to seem.” It was in that spirit that we developed the QEP. Implemented in 2013, as a university we decided to concentrate upon improving global learning here at Appalachian State.

Our vision was to provide multiple & varied global learning experiences at home & abroad to help students improve their global competency

We defined global competence as: “The *knowledge, skills, and attitudes* that students acquire through a *variety of experiences* that enable them to **understand** world cultures and events; **analyze** global systems; **appreciate** cultural differences; and **apply** this knowledge and appreciation to their lives as citizens and workers.” (AAC&U)

**Today, more than ever, we need to work on fostering global learning even though the task has become harder.**

Why is it harder?

We face increasing barriers.

After the presidential election, there are practical obstacles and concerns. Will international students be willing to come to the US and to Appalachian State to study? How will our students be received in other countries? Will there continue to be support and assistance for international education?

More significant are the intangible, invisible challenges to the task of global learning.

**(1) Public hostility to global perspectives**

The phrase “build a wall” is anathema to the vision of global learning since walls are solid structures that block interaction across borders. Its symbolism speaks to an inward focus that longs for a return to a past that never really existed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where “closing ourselves off from others” is counterproductive to the achievement of peace & prosperity.

**(2) Public denigration of the value of knowledge & competency.** We work in an institution whose core values are knowledge & education. Rejection of knowledge is not only counter to our mission; it is dangerous to our society. I saw a t-shirt that said “Science doesn’t care if you believe in it or not.” That’s the

bottom line. Ignoring information you don't like and refusing to develop competencies won't change reality; it will make it harder for people to succeed.

(3) **Fear of others.** I believe that at the heart of bigotry, prejudice, and anger is fear. Fear immobilizes us; it makes it impossible for us to open ourselves up to learning, to appreciate differences, to change our minds. Fear is the antithesis of enlightenment. If we live and work in a realm of fear, when we try to reach out & teach to those who are fearful, we confront a wall within minds that is as substantial and debilitating as any physical wall could be.

Yet, as I noted at the beginning, the task of helping students gain global competency is especially critical today. Why is our work even more necessary?

(1) **In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our greatest problems and our best prospects transcend state borders.** We are members of the global community and we are connected by thousands of strands to others around the world.

(2) **Fear can only be defeated by knowledge and understanding.** We combat ignorance with information; we push back against prejudice with knowledge; we overcome adversity with learning.

Remember our QEP's three student learning outcomes:

**We want students to develop globally competent knowledge;**

**We want students to cultivate intercultural competencies; and,**

**We want students to be globally competent citizens**

Today, tomorrow, next year and the years after, it is imperative for the US to have more and more people who are globally competent and can lead the country forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, confident in their skills, knowledgeable about others, and committed to making the world a better place than it was when they were born. Now, more than ever, we need to live up to the goal Appalachian State University has set for us - "to prepare students to lead purposeful lives as engaged global citizens who understand their responsibilities in creating a sustainable future for all." (Appalachian State University webpage)

"Esse quam videri" – "To be, rather than to seem." – Let global learning **be** the center of our mission at Appalachian, shining a light to lead our students and ourselves into a better future.

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