Campus Internationalization Mini Self-Study

Jim Adams

France Wu

Azusa Pacific University
Azusa Pacific University (APU) is a comprehensive faith-based institution offering more than 60 areas of undergraduate study, 26 master’s degree programs, and 7 doctorates. Since its founding in 1899, the university has been actively reaching out to the world with academic and co-curricular programs.

Institutional Commitment to Internationalization

Azusa Pacific University is deeply committed to internationalization. For twenty years, Global Vision Week, a themed week bringing together campus offices and off-campus organizations to focus on internationalization, has successfully advanced global understanding among students and faculty. For forty years, the Mexico Outreach program has sent thousands of short-term participants each year from APU and local communities to Mexico. More recently, in 2005, the university constituents formulated the Academic Vision 2016, establishing Intentional Internationalization as one of its four priorities for academic strategic planning and implementation.

Intentional internationalization emphasizes the pursuit of intercultural and ethnic understanding, both at home and abroad. This desire for global engagement calls for an active exploration of events, institutions, peoples, problems, and issues within and beyond our nation’s borders in order to promote … peace … and to help form culturally competent faculty and students. Together, the diversity and internationalization initiatives refer to deliberate, systematic, and related efforts to integrate an intercultural and international dimension into teaching, research, and service functions of the university (Excerpt from APU Academic Vision 2016).

In 2008, APU chose Intentional Internationalization as one of the four themes on which the accreditation agency, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) would evaluate the university. Currently, the university is conducting research on internationalization in preparation for the 2011 accreditation visit.

Clear and effective administrative structures exist to promote internationalization at APU. The Associate Vice President for Internationalization oversees co-curricular internationalization. The Executive Director of Global Learning and Engagement facilitates academic internationalization. The International Collaboration Committee (ICC) provides oversight for strategic budget, legal issues, and administrative efforts. The Faculty Senate and university Academic Cabinet provide curricular oversight and shared governance.

Despite financial challenges faced by institutions of higher education, APU demonstrated commitment for internationalization by providing a fully-funded faculty position this year, the Global Learning Specialist. This faculty member supports internationalization among all disciplines by providing consultation in internationalizing curriculum and performing research and assessment for student learning outcomes in internationalization.

At APU, internationalization receives support from the board of trustees. Dr. Paul Szeto, trustee, commented, "I truly appreciate the strategic approach and practical steps taken by APU for internationalization over the years. I have traveled to China with the former president, provost, deans and current faculty members. In our latest production of the DVD documentary, Together We Learn and We Dream, which features 20 years of English teaching programs in China, we witnessed eight APU students and several faculty and staff join the team to Urumqi, China, which benefited hundreds of teachers and students from this Muslim community and created a tremendous impact on cultural exchange..."
Azusa Pacific University has entered into agreements with 32 institutions of higher education, including those in mainland China, Cuba, Dominican Republic, England, Germany, Ghana, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Haiti, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Ukraine. These partnerships include sister schools and exchange programs at the school or institutional level.

Each of the eight schools at the university engages in unique internationalization efforts. For example, the School of Business and Management offers five study abroad options to undergraduates, delivers MBA courses in China, and recently introduced a Millennial MBA program, where students study in six countries over the course of the program. The School of Music provides a Heidelberg semester program. The School of Nursing offers the South Africa semester program. The School of Theology offers bilingual courses in English and Korean, and the graduate Hispanic Program.

APU strongly encourages students and faculty to pursue Fulbright scholarships and designates the Vice Provost, a former Fulbright scholar, as the program advisor. In the past three years, 10 to 28 students applied per annum. During the same time period, each year, three applicants have been awarded the Fulbright scholarship.

Faculty Engagement in Internationalization

At Azusa Pacific University, many faculty engage in research and teaching abroad on their sabbatical leaves. A recent example is Dr. Pamela Cone’s Fulbright Scholar experience in Bergen, Norway, where she researched spiritual care among nurses. Faculty present their research abroad to the APU community during weekly lecture luncheons.

APU faculty collaborate with scholars internationally to analyze global challenges such as those facing journalists in parts of the world where truth may be censored by governments in power. An example is Dr. Bala Musa’s collaborative editing with international colleagues of Communication in an Era of Global Conflicts: Principles and Strategies for 21st Century Africa (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009).

Some faculty participate in academic exchanges which build contacts with international scholars. For example, after the publication of Dr. James Willis’s book, The Human Journalist: Reporters, Perspectives, and Emotions (London: Praeger, 2003), scholars in Germany invited him to lecture on the trauma journalists may feel when reporting on such tragedies as the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. In 2009, Dr. Carole Lambert travelled to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany with other Holocaust scholars from around the world on a research tour sponsored by the Holocaust Education Foundation.

Dr. Alexander Jun, professor in Doctoral Higher Education, leads doctoral students to international destinations to investigate education issues in those parts of the world as part of a course. In addition, he and his doctoral students are actively engaged in research on Cambodian higher education, which resulted in his efforts to help build the higher education system in Cambodia.

APU nurtures international research among faculty. One example is the highly supportive policy for faculty receiving Fulbright scholarships. APU faculty are allowed to take a sabbatical leave off-cycle if awarded a Fulbright scholarship. The administration’s support in allowing time away from the university site, funding travels, and formal recognition continue to encourage faculty to engage in international research.
The short-term director-in-residence position at APU’s Oxford study-abroad location enables faculty to strengthen their global experience. These faculty are invited to become University of Oxford visiting fellows at Regent’s Park College.

The university provides faculty with opportunities to teach abroad through programs such as Operation Impact (OI). Over 150 faculty have taught in the program. In a study conducted by APU professors, faculty having taught abroad in OI reported strong connections between that experience and intercultural competency. In addition, they reported teaching abroad produced lasting changes in the way they approach their classroom preparation, presentation style, class structure, and interactions with their students.

The university encourages the hiring of international faculty and faculty with international expertise. The number of international faculty at APU has grown dramatically over the past ten years. Additionally, APU’s various schools and departments enthusiastically sponsor international visiting scholars to conduct research and teach at the university.

Curricular and Co-curricular Evidence of Internationalization

Several academic programs at Azusa Pacific University have internationalization as their focus. The Global Studies undergraduate program requires students to study the economic, social, religious, intellectual, and political environment of a foreign country while living there. The Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) incorporates a three-week teaching abroad component. In addition, the online version of the program enrolls domestic, international and expatriate students.

The new Master of Arts in Transformational Urban Leadership (MATUL) exclusively focuses on the world's burgeoning slums and shantytowns, with a primary purpose to improve opportunities for the urban poor. It is an entirely field-based program that prepares students to implement socioeconomic, political, spiritual and environmental change throughout the world. Residence in or near slum communities in Asia, Africa, North America, and South America enables students to combine living and learning in an integrated approach to leadership development.

The mission of the Operation Impact (OI) program is to serve as a catalyst for the development of transcultural and transformational leaders worldwide. For almost 35 years, OI has delivered the Master of Arts program in Organizational Leadership to nationals and expatriates in dozens of countries through a hybrid format, including both face-to-face and online components. The largest single location is Ethiopia, with over 400 graduates. Institutional commitment is strong with longstanding tuition support. Currently, a 75% scholarship supports nationals and expatriates living outside the U.S. Student feedback indicates OI provides a transformational learning experience for many of them who would not otherwise earn a graduate degree.

As part of the undergraduate graduation requirements, students fulfill 120 Ministry and Service (MAS) credits. Many opportunities to receive such credits involve international and intercultural experiences. Recently, the General Studies Council at APU proposed new general studies requirements, which include an international experience for all APU undergraduates.

APU recognizes knowledge of a foreign language as an integral part of a liberal arts education. To fulfill the foreign language requirement for General Studies, two semesters for a total of eight units of the same language are required.
Study abroad is a crucial component of internationalization efforts at APU. The Center for Global learning and Engagement (CGLE), a clearinghouse for coordinating all education abroad opportunities, works with university constituents to promote intentional internationalization throughout the university. Offerings include our island programs (South Africa, Heidelberg, Oxford, Guadalajara), as well as about 40 faculty-led, approved third-party partnership, and internship abroad programs. In a recent survey of 1121 students, 89 percent believed APU offers an adequate number of study abroad programs, 76% considered study abroad opportunities an important part of their overall education, and 81% would like to study abroad. The CGLE will serve approximately 500 students in the 2009-10 academic year. Although most of the study abroad participants are undergraduates, some Master’s students, such as those in the psychology, theology, and TESOL program, as well as doctoral students in psychology, study abroad.

It is APU’s goal, as expressed by President Jon Wallace, to provide every undergraduate a study abroad experience. The university publicly communicates to prospective and current students they are able and expected to study abroad. One challenge in providing study abroad to majors such as nursing and music has been that additional requirements such as licensing and practice make it very difficult for these majors to leave the institution for a semester. However, APU has successfully worked out curricula enabling these majors to study abroad without adding additional time or semesters to their graduation plans.

The university’s supportive financial policy allows full financial aid package to be carried abroad. For the South Africa program and the Heidelberg program for music majors (and the upcoming China semester program for business, international business, and economics majors), APU pays for the flights, which enables participation of many students who would not otherwise afford the trip. Study abroad participants are diverse in socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, largely because APU provides minority students with scholarships, which can be carried to the study abroad programs.

The Career Center, Counseling, Health Center, and Residence Life work collaboratively to facilitate study abroad and reentry. To assist students in reentry, the Office of International Programs place them into small groups and peer/faculty mentoring relationships. Study abroad is often a first step toward such opportunities as Fulbright and Peace Corps.

In 2009, APU was named the top producer of Peace Corps volunteers among California colleges of similar size, with 13 volunteers currently serving. Since the inception of Peace Corps in 1961, 46 APU alumni have served.

For students who are unable to study abroad, numerous courses are available to enhance their knowledge of global issues. Peoples and Places, Global Engagement in the 21st Century, Human Diversity, Modern Africa, and Comparative Economics are only a few examples at the undergraduate level. At the graduate level, examples include Leading across Cultures, International Higher Education Policy and Practice, International Social Work Policy and Practice, and Management for the Worldwide Organization.

A variety of co-curricular programs engage students in internationalization. The Office of World Missions (OWM) facilitates global awareness opportunities for the APU community. OWM’s Focus International program provides short-term service opportunities in 20 countries. Each year, more than 200 APU students, faculty, staff, and alumni travel across the United States, South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, offering medical, educational, sports, hospice and construction services.
The Office of International Student Service creates a supportive environment for international students and scholars and their families, who report the office is their “home away from home.” Through this office, the American International Mentoring (A.I.M.) program provides the opportunity for international and U.S. students to learn about one another’s culture while developing lifelong friendships. As a result, students better understand and celebrate cultural diversity, enhance global awareness, and experience personal and spiritual growth.

The American Language and Culture Institute (ALCI) provides English training for international students needing to increase their English language skills. The ALCI does not require a TOEFL score for entry, allowing students to start at their own level of English proficiency. ALCI offers peer-mentoring, advising, and small class sizes, as well as integrating international students in the overall university community.

Outreach within the Local Community

Three examples of service-learning courses having an international focus are worthy of note. In International Business, APU students develop international business plans for nonprofits and businesses providing entrepreneur training to developing countries. In the International Marketing course, students design and implement a fundraising event for the United Nations for global development purposes. In the Principles and Practices of Global Community Building course offered in South Africa, students join in off-campus service-learning and field research projects in surrounding communities, such as serving with an HIV/AIDS health program, and teaching at an orphanage. This course integrates students’ academic and career plans with the world’s deepest needs.

An example of programs offered through the Office of Ministry and Service with an international dimension is a forum in October 2009: The Impacts of Immigration, which focused on the historical and current landscape of immigration in the United States. In addition, APU students serve the immigrant population in the local community through such activities as tutoring school students. The office also provides opportunities to integrate students’ study abroad experience into community service upon their return from abroad.

Examples of internationally-focused alumni chapters include the Europe chapter, Multi-ethnic programs chapter, and the Military chapter for those stationed around the world. The Alumni Office organizes international trips, such as the Israel trip, in which alumni join. Often times, contacts for programs in new international destinations start with alumni residing in those countries.

Conclusion

At Azusa Pacific University, we are proud of our entrepreneurial spirit. We have been and will continue to learn from best practices and experiment with new approaches to promote internationalization, which we value as core to our institutional ethos. We have a great deal of work to do, however, we believe with the administration’s unyielding support and enthusiastic faculty and student participation, we are moving rapidly toward the goals of intentional internationalization we set for ourselves.