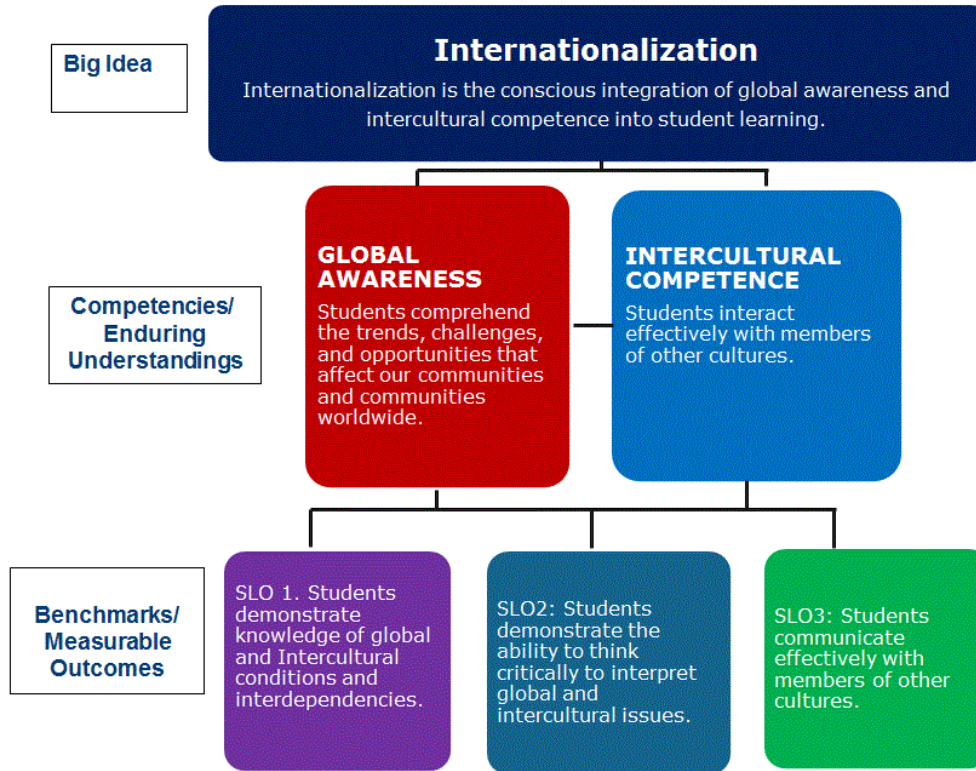


THINK GLOBALLY AND ACT LOCALLY

UF as an International Hub for Exploration, Innovation and Exchange

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* The internationalization diagram was handed out to participants during the UF QEP Forum held on 9/5/12, which was centered on Internationalization.

Why Internationalization? Internationalization is not just a noble goal for the University of Florida to engage in, or - a convenient goal to center on, while going through the process of the SACS re-accreditation. But, moreover, I believe that a deeper commitment to the process of re-imagining and re-defining *Internationalization* are an absolute, urgent necessity for the University of Florida if the university is to remain relevant and competitive in the increasingly interconnected world.

Internationalization at its core is a process that must contain two directions, To and Fro, whereby we go out to the world and the world comes to us. Our role as a university in these changing times is to ensure that international “cross-pollination(s)” is ingrained in our curricular structure. We must welcome and encourage interactions with the world that we all share and in which we all live.

UF ABROAD: Our curriculum(s), teaching and research agendas should and must include an emphasis on going out into the “world” through Study Abroad Program (short and long-terms), International Research Project, and International Engagement Projects using available and emerging communication technology to share ideas with colleagues and peers world wide.

ABROAD COMES TO UF: We must invite and welcome the “world” into our classrooms, labs, lecture halls and studios by sponsoring and supporting exchange visiting scholars, foreign -faculty led “reverse study abroad” programs that will be hosted at UF for short term and semester long study programs. We should also develop and support on-campus international research projects that connect our students and faculty with their counterparts internationally.

Current UF Infrastructure as it Relates to Internationalization:

The university and the UFIC (UF International Center) are set up well for supporting faculty and students needs related to study abroad programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. But, the necessary in-house infrastructure and administrative support for hosting international visiting scholars doesn't exist as of yet. This lack of infrastructure support also effect our ability to offer “reverse study abroad” programs, whereby UF schools may be able to host groups of foreign students led by faculty from their home country and institution. The entire mechanism for hosting international faculty and researchers is not yet supported and/or managed at an adequate level at UF.

Based upon my own experience(s) and the experience of faculty across campus that I have talked to, the UF International Center has been very helpful and efficient with help and guidance regarding planning and managing of Study Abroad programs. UFIC is also efficient, informative and helpful in regards to supporting the lengthy and often-complicated process of obtaining exchange scholars visas (J-1) and other visa types for visiting scholars. However, once the scholars are on campus, UFIC is done with its responsibilities and at the present time there isn't another unit at UF that is equipped to pick up where the UFIC leaves the visitors and sponsoring faculty off. There isn't a clear campus entity in place that can centrally assist the hosting faculty in addressing issues related to visitors' travel reimbursements, honorarium payments, per-diem and other aspects related to hosting international scholars at UF. The fact that the visitors are non-resident aliens- inevitably makes each of the above issues more complex, involved and time consuming.

Additionally, there is no clear unified process regarding the mountains of paperwork and procedures that must be followed in order to secure visas for international exchange scholars. In some colleges the initiating faculty is expected to deal with all the paper work and forms without any administrative assistance from the school and/or college and in other cases there are human resource staff that is responsible for assisting with the complex process of obtaining exchange visiting scholar visas. It might be helpful to unify the responsibilities of assisting faculty with obtaining entry visas for Visiting Exchange Scholars. However, the most glaring practical issue is the procedures or lack thereof of paying foreign exchange visitors. The current wait time and bureaucratic

nightmare that one has to go through to ensure that visitors get paid on time are almost insurmountable. I believe it causes great embarrassments to the university and puts into question the seriousness of our attempt to Internationalize.

My sense is that the University Tax service office and the human resources parts of the various colleges and schools are not prepared to deal with the complexities of paying alien (non US) legal visiting scholars during their UF visit. In cases when the visitors are at UF for a short period of up to a month, the turnaround time of payments has to be faster than the normal pace of our huge bureaucratic machine. In my case, for example, it meant that for the past two summers I had to personally advance funds to several guest scholars who worked for UF and whose J-1 visa contracts with UF specified a particular time-line for payment. I was simply unable to get the university to pay them on time despite initiating all processes way ahead of time and in some cases up to a year in advance. Being late with honorarium, payroll, or per-diem disbursement in such cases, is not an option because we are dealing with foreign visitors, who don't have bank accounts in the US, who are here for a short time and they might be coming to us from countries with little or no resources, meaning that they need the per-diem payment upon arrival or – they can't eat for a month. It might be interesting to note that despite the perceived impossibility and well documented governmental corruption I was able to get the Chadian government to pay its cost share for our Chadian visitors this summer (on time). The US Embassy to Chad paid our visitors their share (on time), and yet UF did not. This is not a case of "bad" UF personnel, but simply points to a lack of infrastructure or clear procedures to support the vision and mission of Internationalization. It is a structural problem.

If UF is to become the global university that it strives to become, special attention must be paid to creating the interlocking infrastructure(s) needed to support all the complexities of international relations and exchanges including all aspects of such efforts.

My practical solution to this urgent issue is that that the university should consider centralizing all aspects of international programs (those that send students and faculty abroad and those that host students and faculty from abroad on campus) including payments, honorariums, per-diem, travel, taxes and visas to one on campus entity and address. This will enable the centralized UF entity to develop the needed expertise and procedures to deal with all the actual practical aspects of *Internationalization*.

I believe that this centralized role should reside within the UFIC, even if it means creating a special division within the UFIC that will deal with International Exchange Scholars once they are on campus. The UFIC is the unit that is most equipped to handle (with care) International students and scholars and they understand the complexities involved with various visas and various international rules and treaties. Centralizing Internationalization to one UF office will also significantly streamline the byzantine running around that any UF faculty host has to go through when attempting to host international scholars/artists.

The International Center website already features step-by-step information and downloadable forms regarding visa processes and the planning of Study Abroad programs. It will be extremely useful to also post on the UFIC website a clear, "How To Guide" for UF payment procedures to legal non-resident aliens who are eligible to work at UF as part of their alien, non-immigrant status. Those clear procedures should address items such as US travel reimbursements of visiting scholars, per-diem payment needs and honorarium and payroll procedures and forms for non-resident aliens. The website can ideally serve as an information clearing house where one can find all needed information and forms to address issues of hosting international exchange scholars.

I believe that by centralizing all international activities on campus to the UFIC, we will pave the way for improving our ability to host international scholars, scientists and artists on our campus. Attached to this document is an example of "How-To table" that I found on the Princeton University website.

I-FUF (International Focus @ UF): I would like to propose a new faculty award program (similar to the FEO or the Creative Campus programs). The award will be centered on developing innovative approaches to internationalizing UF as it relates to research, teaching and engagement. The focus of such a program should address the two essential aspects of Internationalization: the *Local* and the *Global*. Proposed projects may take place on campus by connecting our campus community to the world in new ways, offering multiple opportunities for students, faculty and staff to engage with visiting scholars, artists, scientists and specialists. Conversely, the new I-FUF program can also be centered on the development of affordable and innovative courses and research project that take students and faculty abroad or enable on-line interactions with peers abroad.

One of the basic requirements for faculty when planning such I-FUF projects should be that all proposed projects must address the goal(s) of *Internationalization* as they are defined by the ITF (International Task Force) and that the project's methodically addresses the Competencies and the SLOs laid out in the Internationalization diagram attached at the top of this document.

I believe that a program such as the proposed I-FUF (International Focus @UF) might produce replicable models of international programs that may assist us in the process of re-imagining what *Internationalization* can and/or should be.