

# New Directions in Global Education

Business school international program staff and coordinators are giving—and getting—crash courses in global higher education.

If the last decade was the era of technological advancement for business schools, this may be the decade for global advancement. The farther business schools reach beyond the borders of their home countries, the farther their students and faculty will travel to add an international component to their business educations. With the move toward greater globalization so inexorable, four significant trends are capturing the attention of international educators.

**Trend #1 — Increasing Flexibility.** As business schools develop a larger number of partnerships worldwide, international program coordinators are learning quickly that flexibility—in program details such as scheduling, housing, and budgeting—has become paramount. Policies that allow for differences across dozens of college campuses must be established, explains Robin Jensen, director of international programs for Denmark's Copenhagen Business School.

“Coping with calendars that don't sync is a classic prob-



lem,” explains Jensen. “Often students are finishing their exams at their own schools at the time they’re supposed to start our program. We have to work with our partners to enable students to be here.”

Christian Koenig, associate dean at ESSEC Business School in Paris, agrees. “We have 60 different partners. The quarters in Chicago, the bimesters at Duke, or the semesters at Georgetown are not the same as the quarter systems at the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad,” he says. “But you have to put some measure of flexibility in the process, or you won’t have an international program.”

The scope and types of international opportunities must also be flexible to accommodate students faced with tight budgets. Students from a larger range of schools are now seeking international experience, according to David Harrison of the University of South Carolina at Aiken. He notes that many faculty, especially at smaller regional schools, are faced with the challenge of planning study tours that allow students to fulfill both their educational aspirations and budgetary requirements.

“We often go to the Czech Republic and Slovakia because of the value,” explains Harrison, who arranges fund-raising activities to help students pay for the three-week trip, which costs around \$2,000. “Costs are low there, while the business opportunities are very high. It’s also perfect for the students to see an economy in transition from centrally planned to a market economy. I doubt we would have the resources to get such visitations in countries like German, Italy, or England.”

**Trend #2—Degrees Without Borders.** Simple student exchange programs may become a thing of the past. Increasingly, business schools are partnering to create jointly designed degrees that reflect the best of both cultural contexts. Programs such as the OneMBA program, for instance, are already taking steps in that direction.

The OneMBA program combines the efforts of five schools, including the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo of Fundação Getulio Vargas of Brazil, the Monterrey Tech Graduate School of Business Administration and Leadership

of Mexico, the Rotterdam School of Management of the Netherlands, and the University of North Carolina’s Kenan-Flagler Business School in the United States. The executive degree program requires students to spend one week working face-to-face in each of the regions—Europe, Asia, Latin America, and North America—studying topics that suit each school’s expertise.

“This is the first time that a consortium of schools is offering a truly global program,” explains Julie Yu, director of the OneMBA program at CUHK. “It includes five globally coordinated courses plus four global experiential learning modules over 21 months, so it requires close coordination among all the partners. The five cultures represented have both similarities and differences. Their values, by nature, will also differ somewhat. During the program planning process, the members of the executive committee meet at all five locations to gain an understanding of the various cultures involved in the program.”

Koenig of ESSEC points to the school’s participation in the European MBA—which it developed in partnership with the Warwick Business School of England and the University of Mannheim of Germany—as the future of international management education. “In the future, I think we’ll see a shift from an increase in the number of student exchanges—I send you X students and you send me X students—to an increase in the number of either dual degree or joint degree programs,” Koenig says. Such double degrees, he adds, will be following the lead of the larger corporate arena where companies are expanding their reach into the global marketplace.

“For example, European companies are developing in China and Korea very quickly,” says Koenig. “They have a need for students with double competencies, who know the keys to European business *and* the local environment.”

**Trend #3—One Language.** Business schools are being pulled in two directions when it comes to language requirements. On the one hand, fluency in a language other than one’s native language is of the utmost importance to students who plan an international career. On the other, it can be impractical to expect fluency in a two-year MBA program,

by **Tricia Bisoux**

illustrations by Scott Roberts

“Our staff is building partnerships and relationships,

or even a four-year undergraduate program.

Therefore, many business schools seem to be establishing a middle ground—boosting the language course requirements for their own students, while relaxing them for students visiting from abroad. English is fast becoming the common language of business courses, which allows a campus to open its doors to students from all corners of the world.

“In the early 1980s, all of our instruction was in Danish,” says Jensen of CBS. “But we soon realized that to cooperate with students all around the world, we could not expect them to learn Danish quickly enough to do their academic work. So we began to develop courses in English. It’s taken a while, but now a large number of our programs offer some courses in English. Next fall, we’ll have a full-time MBA program offered in English.”

Koenig admits that fluency in French is ideal for students coming to study at ESSEC, since their experience can be academic and cultural, rather than simply linguistic. ESSEC itself has a rigorous language program, which requires students to speak at least three languages—French, English, and one of their choosing. That requirement, however, is not always practical, he notes.

“Ten years ago, probably less than five percent of our

courses were taught in English. Now it’s more like 20 percent,” notes Koenig. “We need to attract more international students, and the interface among students is valuable. That meant that we needed to lower the language barrier, so that they can share their experiences with each other.”

**Trend #4 – A Less Certain World.** It’s ironic that at the very time when international experience has become more important to business school students, it has become more difficult, at least for some, to travel abroad. The *Boston Globe* recently reported that since September 11, 2001, the U.S. has tightened security considerably, creating a backlog of student visas that are awaiting approval. This slowdown has affected some students’ plans to return to the U.S. to begin or complete their studies. For instance, one Jordanian student who intended to start Harvard Business School last fall missed the start of the school year because his visa had not yet been approved. Some students are simply enrolling at other universities in the world to keep their studies on track.

This situation marks a new reality for business schools worldwide, although it has not dampened interest in international study, says Kellie Christie, director of academic programs and student services for Vanderbilt University’s Owen

#### INTERNATIONAL STUDENT REPORT

### Of Growing Importance

#### Karl Nichols

**Home School:** Vanderbilt University’s Owen Graduate School of Management  
Nashville, Tennessee

**Host School:** Vienna University  
Vienna, Austria

An international education was a given for Karl Nichols. As an MBA student at Vanderbilt University’s Owen Graduate School of Management in Nashville, Tennessee, Nichols saw the EU and the emerging economy of Eastern Europe as especially important to the global economy.

“I speak German and wanted to go to a German-speaking nation,” Nichols explains. “Studying the emergence of Eastern bloc countries is especially inter-

esting. What makes certain countries develop faster than others? What regional incentives and attractions can add to a country’s gross domestic product? Struggling with such questions is something that is a more relevant topic in Austria than perhaps elsewhere.”

As the appetite for Western goods in these countries increases and their economies develop, they’ll have more money to purchase Western goods. Eastern Europe is a region of growing importance to the world, stresses Nichols. “This is something that can’t be ignored by Western managers.”

In his courses, Nichols is especially interested in studying the European integration into the European Union



and how this area will be a significant economic, financial, and political force in the future. He learns about the economics of the EU not only from professors who have seen its evolution firsthand, but also through conversations with Europeans. It’s an experience that simply can’t be replicated in an American classroom, he says.

“Twenty years ago, if a German business student didn’t understand and study American business, he or she would have been ignoring a major player in the business world,” says Nichols. “Today, the EU is and will be a huge economic force. If Americans don’t understand Europe, they’ll be missing out as well.”

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—Michele Pekar-Lempereur, ESSEC Business School in Paris

Graduate School of Management, Nashville, Tennessee. It has simply changed the landscape.

"The number of participants in our program from abroad has not declined, probably since Nashville is not considered a dangerous area of the world," Christie says. "We've had some difficulties from areas such as the Ukraine, China, and India, where the embassy refused to give visas to students. Interestingly enough, however, we've had students from countries such as Uzbekistan and Jordan who have had no problem at all."

September 11 has not affected ESSEC's non-American exchanges, says Michele Pekar-Lempereur, the school's director of MBA development. It has, however, had a "strange" impact on exchanges with the U.S., she says. "In some cases, universities have told us they don't plan to send students this year. In other cases, we've received more students than we had expected."

Because U.S. visas are difficult to obtain, many schools in other countries are actually reporting a boom in applicants. "We've been fortunate that many students have seen Denmark as a safe place to go for their international experience," says Jensen of CBS. In the end, however, she sees international education as having an impact beyond business school. "What

it all comes down to is that these international exchanges are the only way we're going to be able to avoid another event like September 11. Through educational exchanges, we can increase people's understanding of what's going on around the world. You're not going to achieve that digging trenches."

## Building Relationships

In the end, business students aren't the only ones clamoring for an international education. Business school staff and faculty involved with coordinating international programs are getting a perpetual education in world culture.

"I've had the pleasure of working with many colleagues at our more than 60 partner universities around the world," says Pekar-Lempereur. "Our staff is building partnerships and relationships, learning how our schools are similar or different, and sharing how we view education and management. It's a very enriching experience for staff as well as students."

With the Internet and real-time interaction becoming the norm, business schools, probably more than other disciplines, realize that globalization is no longer a trend. It's a fact of business life. As a result, the role of international business school programs only promises to become an even more integral part of every business student's education. **Z**

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT REPORT

### Learning to Adapt

#### Madhurima Agarwal

**Home School:** Indian Institute of Management  
Ahmedabad  
Gujarat, India

**Host School:** Copenhagen Business School  
Copenhagen, Denmark

In the few months that Madhurima Agarwal, an MBA student, has been working for a Danish company, she has learned a great deal about European economics and the dynamic of the workplace in a European country. "Most Indian companies have a very hierarchical structure. As an intern, you don't get to interact with the top management directly," explains Agarwal. "Here, you're



free to approach the managers if there are any problems."

As a participant in CBS's internship program, Agarwal has been able to work on the Copenhagen Stock Exchange as well as in corporate offices. Everything is done in Danish, says Agarwal, which has been a difficulty. She wishes she had time to take a more comprehensive course in Danish

during her business studies. "I had a four-day crash course in the language, but I didn't have time to learn the language properly," she says. "I think a language course should be compulsory for all

exchange students, so that everyone can learn Danish."

Even so, people have gone out of their way to help her surmount the language barrier and work effectively within her internship. "If a document is relevant to me, someone will give me a copy in English. Everyone here takes care of you if you're a foreigner and takes the time to explain," says Agarwal.

That sort of interaction has been "the most satisfying part" of her international experience, adds Agarwal. Learning to adapt to new cultural protocols as an "outsider" has become an incredibly important skill in today's business environment, she believes. "I get to see how people in other countries work, learning a new culture and getting used to different ways. I have learned how to adjust and how to adapt in a totally new environment."