

The Global Footprint

A business school must examine six essential components of its program to create an effective — and ongoing — globalization strategy.

by **Ilan Alon and
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Many business schools have added the word “global” to their course catalogs and brochures, but how many business schools have actually developed and implemented a comprehensive global approach to education? And how many are taking a true measure to see how global they really are?

Perhaps far too few, as we found in a survey we recently conducted at the Rollins College Crummer Graduate School of Business in Winter Park, Florida. The survey queried school administrators at MBA programs worldwide about the curricula, students, and faculty in their MBA programs.

Most of the 67 schools that responded to our survey indicated that globalization is a major influence on their programs. They touted the importance of developing global business education and graduating global business leaders. Even so, some also admitted to shortcomings in their current models of global education. Many acknowledged that they were hindered by unsystematic and incomplete reviews of their schools’ globalization efforts; a narrow focus on a single dimension, such as curriculum, exchange programs, partnerships, or student recruitment; and no overarching globalization strategy.

We recognize that even our own survey was limited in its global scope. We were pleased that the 67 MBA programs in our survey represented 19 countries and five continents. However, more than half of the programs, 36, were from AACSB-accredited public universities in the U.S. Even so, we view this survey as a first step in measuring the collective global footprint of business schools. Moreover, the results of this survey can serve as a place to start in developing best practices for globalizing business education.

Drawing on results from this survey, we have established a model to help business schools develop more clear-cut strategies and more effective practices to globalize their programs. We call this multidimensional model the “global footprint.” It includes six primary dimensions of the b-school program: the core curriculum, language study, student and faculty diversity, and student and faculty global experience. By assessing and addressing each of these dimensions, a business school can construct a global strategy that serves its students, advances its mission, and helps it establish a competitive position among international peers.



Curriculum

One of our fundamental questions centered on how survey participants had chosen to integrate international topics and global business into their curricula. We provided space for respondents to give examples of how they have adopted international business—whether they added a core course; created new electives, major concentrations, or degree programs; infused the subject throughout every course; or opened a center of study.

Their responses indicated great variation in how schools are integrating global subjects into the core curriculum. Rather than start a course on globalization, for example, the China Europe International Business School (CEIBS) in Shanghai has integrated a global focus into every part of its core curriculum. Its contention is that its faculty cannot teach subjects such as marketing, finance, or economics without using globalization as a central component. At the Crummer School, we require students to take two courses in international business, one of which may be a study abroad experience.

A school with the resources to “do it all”—establish electives, launch degree programs, open a center, and infuse a broad worldview of business throughout all courses—can be said to have a curriculum that is comprehensively global. But few schools have that kind of funding at their disposal. Therefore, the process requires thorough and thoughtful discussion among administrators, faculty, and students. Through that discussion, a business school can set priorities and determine which options work best within its individual budget and objectives.

Language Study

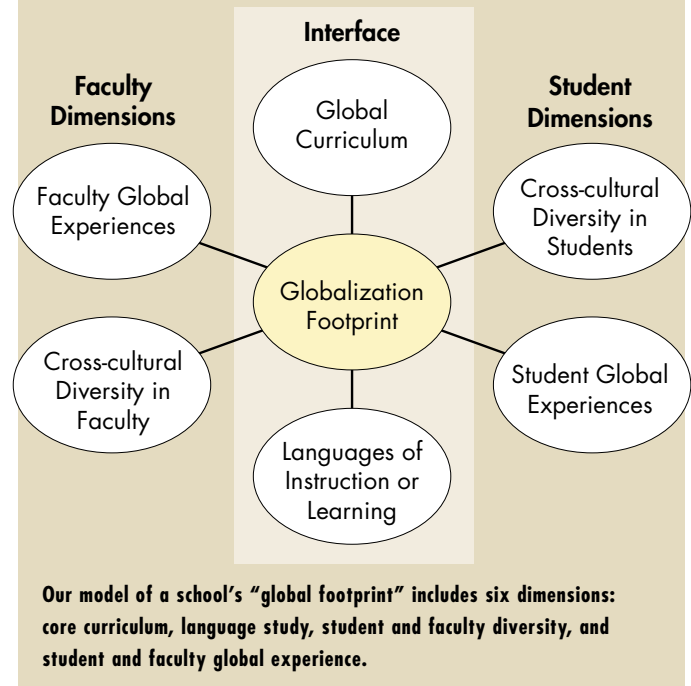
Respondents were asked whether or not they require their students to learn a language other than their own. Most schools rely on the fact that English is currently the *lingua franca* of international business, and that English proficiency automatically provides students with international capability.

In fact, 57 of the 67 schools in our sample offer classes exclusively in English. The MIB School of Management in Trieste, Italy, for example, is among the first MBA programs in Italy to provide courses in English only. Very few schools in our survey provide more than one language of instruction, although some do place an emphasis on multilingual ability. HEC Montreal in Canada, for instance, instructs its MBA students in English, Spanish, and French.

Student Diversity

Admitting a diverse student body is still a challenge for many schools in our sample. For example, one reported that the

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nationality of its student body was completely homogeneous. Other schools are doing better, if only a little. Thirty-one of the 67 schools reported that fewer than 20 percent of their students came from another country. Fourteen reported that 20 percent to 39 percent of their students were international. Eighteen schools reported that 40 percent to 60 percent of their students were international.

Only three schools have developed very strong showings in student diversity: They reported that no single nationality dominated their student populations.

Students' Global Experience

We also wanted to know how many business schools required their MBA students to supplement their coursework through study or consulting projects in other countries. While 38 schools offered students the opportunity to take international study trips ranging from one to three weeks, only 11 schools in our sample made international study a requirement.

At 38 schools, international internships and work experience are not offered. International student consulting projects were even more of a rarity; 44 of the 67 schools did not make international consulting opportunities available.

Most business schools want to offer their students an international perspective; but if their own faculty members rarely travel, they are essentially asking their students to “do as they say, not as they do.”

Faculty Diversity

We asked our survey participants to describe the cultural makeup of their faculties, as well as the experiential backgrounds of their faculty members. Most schools—about 50 percent—reported that between 1 and 39 percent of their faculty have been recruited from outside the school’s home country.

Creating an ethnically diverse faculty is yet another challenge among survey respondents. Among the 67 respondents, all report that a majority of their faculty share a single nationality. Ethnic minorities make up fewer than 20 percent of the faculty at 43 of the schools in our survey.

Faculty International Experience

Finally, we asked survey participants about the international experience of their faculties. Most business schools want to offer their students an international perspective; but if their own faculty members rarely travel, they are essentially asking their students to “do as they say, not as they do.” Such a discrepancy may send the wrong message, especially if a business school wants to present a global character, not only to students, but to peer schools.

Although faculty at most of the 67 business schools in our survey travel internationally for conferences or presentations, not nearly as many make efforts to travel and teach abroad. That is, few volunteer to lead international student trips, teach at partner schools, or consult for international companies. Among our sample, 51 of 66 schools reported that fewer than 20 percent of their faculty regularly lead international trips. In addition, 38 of 66 reported that fewer than 20 percent of their faculty regularly teach or consult abroad.


Moving Toward Best Practices

Of course, business schools that post high marks in all six of these dimensions can confidently claim a large and comprehensive global footprint. However, 100 percent success in all six dimensions is not necessarily the desired objective for an individual business school. The level of internationalization within each dimension depends on a school’s strategy, budget, human resources, competitive environment, institutional context, and student demographic.

While one size won’t fit all, however, respondent schools generously shared their best practices for adopting and integrating globalization into their programs. For example, a few schools, such as the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, have appointed “czars of internationalization” to oversee their university’s globalization efforts. Such positions not only formalize the globalization process, but also

assign someone direct responsibility for implementing best practices and evaluating the results. Other schools have launched initiatives that include:

- Developing and leveraging international partnerships to create new opportunities and extend reputation.
- Creating MBA programs targeted specifically to international students.
- Integrating a thematic core curriculum involving teams of faculty.
- Requiring students to achieve proficiency in multiple languages.
- Establishing a center for the development of international research, courses, and training.
- Participating in faculty and student exchanges.
- Creating joint programs with organizations such as the Peace Corps or the World Bank.
- Requiring students to create international business plans for companies.
- Requiring students to travel overseas.
- Integrating cultures in the classroom.
- Involving students in joint programs with business students in other countries.
- Encouraging students to complete part of their studies at a school in another country.
- Actively recruiting international faculty.
- Providing funds for faculty to travel to other countries.
- Encouraging faculty exchanges with schools in other countries.
- Including international study trips, consultations, and research in faculty development activities.
- Assigning an administrator to track, evaluate, and adopt global best practices.

As our survey shows, even though globalization is labeled a priority at many schools, it often still does not receive the same strategic attention as other aspects of the business program. By assessing the six dimensions of its global footprint, a business school can devise mission-based objectives more wisely, allocate funding more effectively, and integrate global topics into its curriculum to its best advantage. Only then can a school know if its global footprint is sufficient for its purposes—or far too faint to make a mark in the global business education market. 

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