

Developing a New Paradigm at Louisiana State University (LSU) for International Programs ~ Engagement and Initiatives

Issue(s): Slightly different approaches and cultures for international engagement by the university exist at two of the key campuses (LSU A & M College, and the LSU Agricultural Center) of the LSU System. In mid 2008, the Chancellor of the LSU Agricultural Center and the Provost from the LSU A & M campus began a dialogue to combine the international programs offices from the two campuses into a single entity. The challenge was to combine different cultures, attitudes, procedures, and initiatives into a single entity that would foster and promote internationally interested, informed and engaged graduates; and promote and support intellectual engagement of faculty with international peers.

What has been done: The offices of International Programs (IP) at the two referenced campuses were merged into a single unit serving both campuses under the direction of the Associate Vice Chancellor, International Programs. The student services, study abroad and outreach/projects functions have been organized into four units: 1) Business and Administration; 2) International Services (IS); 3) Academic Programs Abroad (APA); and 4) Development and Outreach (D & O). A fifth unit known as the International Cultural Center (ICC) was also included in this merger. A campus-wide internationalization Task Force was established; a combined website is being finalized; a combined office space with conference and other facilities designed and space designated at a single campus location; and additional staff hired to strengthen functioning of the Development and Outreach unit. These actions can be summarized as follows:

- a. Reorganized programmatic/personnel structure – focus on outreach
- b. Single portal website design
- c. Review of international student recruitment
- d. Harnessing participation of deans/colleges
- e. Formulation of Task Force /International Programs activity matrix/Strategic planning

To initiate the planning process, International Programs has launched a series of meetings/initiatives. To facilitate this process, the staff has been preparing briefing materials based upon an International Programs Activity Matrix that will frame the discussions. Staff have also identified key faculty on campus who have significant international experience; expertise and programming experience to serve on a Task Force.

Impact:As a result of the above referenced actions, much enthusiasm was noted for what the future holds for the new combined office staff, as many expressed an appreciation of the programs at the LSU AgCenter and how they dovetail into the programs on the LSU and A & M campus. This dovetailing essentially will drive the internationalization process for the future. The staff now share the vision that outreach driven programming complements internationalization on campus and adds new dimensions and opportunities, including strengthening activities abroad for teaching and research. Additionally, deans have been enthusiastic about the merger and have pledged support. Key among these discussions was the designation of a liaison person for the Colleges.

There are challenges ahead in this process; and to make it a part and parcel of the culture, mindset and policy in the future. Key among these include: cultural changes brought on by the merger; making IP a part of the university strategy and structure, including as an essential part of the Flagship Agenda process; Undergraduate Admissions and the Graduate School- critical links with IP; dual degree discussions; and areas key to LSU's participation in the global economy and the knowledge community.

Funding Sources, Cooperators, partners, Mentors, etc:

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