



AIEA PROVOST PERSPECTIVES

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Global Learning, International Student Enrollments, and Campus Internationalization

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Senior Advisor to the President for Strategic & International Initiatives, Provost Emeritus, and Professor of Anthropology





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Name: Liz Grobsmith

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Time served as Provost: 2002-2012

Liz Grobsmith, Senior Advisor to the president at Northern Arizona University (NAU), served as NAU Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs from 2002-2012. She has enjoyed a successful career in administration, in the classroom and in research. Grobsmith came to NAU from Utah State University, where she was dean of the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Previously she was dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

Northern Arizona University delivers a rigorous, learner-centered education in multiple places, including Flagstaff, online, and at more than 30 statewide locations. Total undergraduate enrollment exceeded 25,000 for the fall 2012 semester. The Northern Arizona University mission is: To provide an outstanding undergraduate residential education strengthened by research, graduate and professional programs, and sophisticated methods of distance delivery.

In the remarks below, she discusses the creation of a Global Learning Task Force that helped advance Northern Arizona University's internationalization, a unique approach to partnerships that helped increase international student enrollments while also providing opportunities for other kinds of internationalization activities, the role of senior leadership and faculty members, and lessons learned.



Given all of the demands and constraints facing higher education today, why did Northern Arizona University decide to internationalize?

NAU has had a long term commitment to some international partners for decades; however, given the global world in which we educate students, it seemed prudent and timely to advance that effort by increasing the number and diversity of international students. The President set a new goal of having 1,000 international students on campus, which we have now exceeded. The globalization of NAU extended far beyond the recruitment of international students, however, in that we began the process of strategic planning for global learning, as described in the establishment of our Global Learning Task Force. Of course the economic pressures on universities to increase their revenue is not an insignificant one: with continuing declines in state budgets, most public universities have looked to recruit out-of-state students as well as international students, with the hope that the latter group in particular will bring significant revenue to the institution. NAU is no exception. Additionally, NAU had the opportunity to enter an international partnership between the China Center for International Educational Exchange (CCIEE) under China's Ministry of Education, and AASCU (the American Association of State Colleges and Universities) in which we developed the Sino-American 1+2+1 Dual Degree program. This brought a significant influx of Chinese students to campus and has resulted in numerous exchanges and programs over the last 7 years.

Has the role or importance of internationalization at your institution changed over the past five years? If so, how?

NAU's comprehensive transformation in the international arena has been nothing short of miraculous. In 2012, we were awarded the prestigious Senator Paul Simon Award in recognition of the myriad ways in which NAU became, for all time, a different institution as a result of its globalization efforts. For example, NAU has not only seen a huge influx of international students—we went from 300 in 2006 to 1000 in 2012 – but went about it in an innovative way with the 1+2+1 program. That program not only increased international student enrollments, but provided opportunities for our students to study in China, and for our faculty to collaborate with Chinese counterparts.

What were some of the main challenges you and Northern Arizona University faced in pursuing internationalization? What are some of assets you and your institution drew on for this work?

Helping to raise the campus' consciousness about global education was the first major step in revamping our profile in campus internationalization. I had benefited greatly from studying the American Council on Education's 2006



Handbook for Advancing Comprehensive Internationalization. As a result, the President, new Vice Provost for International Education, and I created a blue ribbon Task Force on Global Education, to be co-chaired by a senior faculty member deeply engaged in global education, and the Vice Provost for International Education. I believed that having a faculty member provide leadership for this effort would help bring credibility to its acceptance and ultimate implementation. This group met for one academic year, appointing five subcommittees that continued to work through specific recommendations, including curricular innovation and reform. Having a tight timeline to get the work done was essential to bringing the effort to closure and being able to move to acceptance and adoption of the report. Ultimately the report and recommendations (<http://nau.edu/Provost/CIE/About/GL-Report>) provided a blueprint for the campus in how to achieve significant globalization in all areas of the institutions—academic affairs, student life, finance, housing, intensive English language instruction and numerous other areas. Fortunately, faculty as represented by the Faculty Senate, as well as staff from offices all around the campus, embraced the goals, in part because of all the momentum provided by the President, by me as Provost, and by the impassioned perspectives of the new Vice Provost for International Education. Probably the most significant and transformative aspect of the newly adopted framework was laying out the curricular framework known as the “Global Learning Initiative (GLI)”, which led the way for units to engage in curricular reform, aspiring to have all students at Northern Arizona University graduate with a global perspective.

Indeed, the Faculty Senate adopted “global learning outcomes” as one of several outcomes required for all students. Such a deep transformation was to ensure that global learning was not limited to those choosing to study abroad, but was to make certain that all students had “multiple and substantive encounters with global perspectives” in their coursework.

What is an example of an internationalization effort on your campus that was not completely successful? Why was that the case, and what did your institution learn from it?

One challenge we face is student performance in classes, with some faculty believing that due to language constraints, international students are less prepared to grasp difficult concepts and vocabulary. Despite the fact that international students at NAU continue to out-perform domestic students in terms of GPA, retention, and time to graduation, there is still the issue of faculty time in mentoring students, and the expectation that these students’ success is, in part, related to faculty investing additional time to make sure international students are learning as much as domestic students. Faculty development activities can provide necessary support to faculty who must grasp



philosophical as well as pedagogical issues of teaching students of different cultures, even as small as understanding how idiomatic expressions in English can be overwhelmingly perplexing to international students. Some of the areas of graver concern have been academic preparation, attention to plagiarism and students' lack of understanding of how to use the internet for research and citation, subtle nuances of different learning styles (e.g. some international students' reluctance to speak publicly in class and to debate with other students or the professor), cultural expectations about meeting with professors outside of class, etc. Issues also arise with respect to who provides support for students experiencing difficulty in the classroom—is it the burden of the professor and dean to provide extra tutoring or sections of supplemental instruction, or should it be the burden of the international office? One very important distinction here is what our Vice Provost, Dr. Harvey Charles, has maintained since international student enrollments began to increase—that the students are not “his” (international) students, but NAU students, meaning that the burden of providing academic support to ensure their success belongs to faculty and college administrators, not the international office. This has not been an easy concept to get across nor has it been fully embraced.

Conversely, please discuss an example of an initiative that did work, and why.

Some of the areas that require direct provostial support include such things as institutional support for Fulbright awards. While these awards are highly desirable and sought, applicants' home institutions have to decide whether they'll provide a salary differential to make it financially feasible for the applicant to accept a Fulbright. What incentive would a faculty member have to seek a Fulbright if s/he were to lose income during the year of the Fulbright? A philosophical position of supporting all such awards provides a critical message to the campus of high level endorsement of the value of seeking a Fulbright award, and I adopted a policy of uniformly topping off awards so as to preclude any reduction in income. As more and more Fulbright awards were received by NAU faculty—and more Fulbright scholars came to NAU and developed relationships with faculty—interest in the program continued to grow, resulting in NAU's being named for the second time in three years by the Institute for International Education as one of the leading recipients of Fulbright scholar awards, both U.S. and non-U.S.

Who are the most important stakeholders you work with regarding internationalization at your institution?

It's critical that the Provost ensure that the senior international officer (SIO) plays a central role in communication in academic affairs. If this individual is isolated and works in a silo, the global education effort is doomed to failure.



Just speaking about international collaboration at every opportunity put the idea of internationalization into everyone's minds—the Board of Regents, the President's Cabinet, the Provost's Academic Leadership Council, the Faculty Senate, the campus Strategic Planning and Budget Committee, and other areas of opportunity for institutional infrastructure.

However, the largest stakeholder in any campus internationalization effort is, of course, the students. The end goal of campus internationalization at Northern Arizona University is to produce globally competent graduates, and these students must be utmost in everyone's minds when going about the process of internationalization.

What are some of the key ways in which senior international officers can help individuals in your role advance internationalization at their institutions?

Several years ago at an internationally-focused conference, I attended a session organized by SIOs on how to get their provosts on board with the international agenda. This was a true wake-up call for me because it seemed to me that the challenge was how to get one's institution to fully embrace an international agenda! But at many universities, presidents and provosts may not be deeply committed to global education, and where a provost does not enjoy presidential endorsement, I see efforts to truly internationalize as doomed to failure. Senior leadership is essential for success.

Is there anything else you would like to share with senior international officers or fellow chief academic officers?

As with any leadership position, the most important thing is to hire great people and then get out of the way and let them do their job! One lesson for me during my term as Provost was that because I lacked a comprehensive understanding of all things international, it took a while to be able to provide leadership. Hiring the very best person was fundamental to NAU's success—however, my limited perspective led me to often question or look disparagingly at initiatives that seemed risky and perhaps over-venturesome. Of course as Provost I was exceedingly conscious of my own accountability, with regard to setting new precedents, pushing the envelope, going down paths previously untraveled, and endless worrying over expenditures that might be deemed unworthy by legislators. But hiring an individual who did know the critical steps to success was the best decision of all, and one that I would wholeheartedly endorse for other provosts.

One final reflection in a provost's life of supporting globalization on one's campus—and that is, no office alone, including the Provost's, can achieve internationalization goals if the entire campus is not rowing in the same



direction. There is great truth to the notion that “it takes a village” (or a campus) to bring about the kind of transformational change that global education can bring. The rewards? Well, as they say, “the rest is history.”



The **Association of International Education Administrators** (AIEA), a membership organization formed in November 1982, is composed of institutional leaders engaged in advancing the international dimensions of higher education. The purposes of the Association are to:

- Provide an effective voice on significant issues within international education at all levels,
- Improve and promote international education programming and administration within institutions of higher education,
- Establish and maintain a professional network among international education institutional leaders,
- Cooperate in appropriate ways with other national and international groups having similar interests.

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