

Achieving Global Understanding:  
The Challenge of Liberal Arts Education  
in the Twenty-first Century

Global Partners Presidents' Roundtable  
Cleveland, Ohio  
June 29-30, 2005

# Executive Summary

## **Achieving Global Understanding: The Challenge of Liberal Arts Education in the Twenty-first Century**

This paper is a culminating essay of the Global Partners Strategic Briefing Roundtable series.<sup>1</sup> It outlines a series of challenges that Global Partners institutions confront in strengthening international and intercultural dimensions of a liberal arts education. It also identifies several areas in which collaboration can help these liberal arts colleges meet the challenges of broadening their international and intercultural foundations. The essay is based on a roundtable of nine presidents and three chief academic officers from ACM, ACS, and GLCA member colleges, convened in the summer of 2005 to take account of the prospects and next steps that these institutions might take to strengthen international education through collaboration.

While acknowledging the progress that Global Partners colleges have made in making global and intercultural learning more central to their educational programs, the discussion of these institutional leaders focused on a number of continuing challenges:

- To define more clearly the educational purposes that Global Partners colleges seek to achieve through their programs of international and intercultural education, including on-campus programs and programs of study abroad.
- To create stronger linkages between the learning that students experience in programs of study abroad and the learning that occurs through their engagement with the curriculum and campus programs of their home institution.
- To develop a more robust culture of language learning as an essential component of a liberal arts education, in an age when a nuanced understanding of other nations and cultures has become increasingly important to the functioning of society.
- To ascertain the quality of learning that occurs in study abroad programs, as a basis for approving or denying students' proposed choices of study-abroad programs managed by third-party providers.

Based on the exchanges of the Presidents' Roundtable plenary sessions, in addition to the summaries that emerged from the individual meetings of ACM, ACS, and

---

<sup>1</sup> The Global Partners Project was established in 1998 as a conjoined effort of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS), the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) and their 42 member colleges, with major funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The purpose of Global Partners has been to extend further the opportunities for strengthening global understanding through inter-consortial collaboration.

GLCA presidents, it is possible to identify a set of prospective collaborations that could involve Global Partners institutions and their three consortial associations in greater or lesser degree. Some of these actions could become candidates for targeted fundraising efforts from external sources. The conceivable actions to follow from the Global Partners Project include the following:

**Share information** (requiring comparatively small commitment of institutions to make information broadly available to a consortial or inter-consortial group, although it does entail consistent staff effort to collect, analyze, and distribute such information)  
Among the information to be shared:

- Campus information on student enrollment in study abroad, by country and program;
- A consumer report of study-abroad programs managed by third-party providers, drawing together qualitative reviews from colleges that have sent students to given programs and countries;
- Data on the cost that institutions incur in supporting study abroad;
- Best practices in international/intercultural education: circulation of articles, programs of traveling experts to campuses.

**Build/sustain communities of interest among faculty and students with common interests** (requiring strong leadership centered either in a single institution or within a consortial association, in addition to funding from internal and external sources):

- Continue the support for international learning centers as a locus of support for faculty members pursuing scholarly interests in a given region;
- Undertake a seminar-and-travel approach to faculty development, with pre- and post-travel meetings involving faculty members from several institutions;
- Provide “venture grants” to students for study abroad, which include a requirement for an academic follow-up presentation to peers and faculty mentors of several campuses;
- Host inter-campus forums to strengthen continuity between study abroad and on-campus learning;
- Pursue combined efforts to instill a stronger culture of language learning across campuses – through shared, systematic participation in the kinds of programs exemplified by the Beloit Center for Language Studies;
- Develop programs to provide instruction in less commonly taught languages across campuses using electronic technology.

**Develop models to inform educational and institutional practices for strengthening international and intercultural education** (research projects that would entail substantial institutional engagement, organized and managed by consortial organizations and funded by external sources):

- Models for assessing the quality of student learning in programs of study abroad (combined ACM-ACS-GLCA project currently under way with funding from the Teagle Foundation);
- Models for understanding and containing the cost of international education in general, and of off-campus study in particular.

**Develop partnerships to support faculty development, enrich the quality of student learning, and achieve cost containment in study-away programs** (requiring substantial commitment and cooperation of participating institutions and consortial organizations):

- Undertake “silent” or “in-country” collaboration in the management of study-abroad programs;
- Create a buyers’ cooperative to negotiate price discounts and curricular elements in third-party study abroad programs that enroll significant numbers of students from Global Partners colleges;
- Foster sustained consortial partnerships with higher education institutions abroad that have been founded on the model of the American liberal arts college;
- Create new programs or even a new college in other settings.

While the paper advocates for continued collaboration in helping strengthen international and intercultural education at Global Partners institutions, it also addresses some of the difficulties that arise in pursuit of collaborative initiatives. On the basis of six years experience in the Mellon-funded Global Partners Project, the paper concludes with a series of core recommendations:

- *Continue the work of defining the educational purposes to be achieved through international and intercultural education.* Collectively and individually, liberal arts colleges must revisit and, as necessary, redefine their purposes in educating students for lives of global and intercultural understanding, addressing such issues as the relationship between experiential and curricular learning, the role of language study in a liberal arts education, and the means of assessing the quality and impact of learning in study abroad.
- *Invest in the sharing of information as an essential element of a tri-consortial network.* One of the most valuable effects of the Global Partners Project has been to foster communities of shared interests across 42 participating colleges and their three consortial organizations. The sharing of information – ranging from numerical data on enrollments, campus policies, programs, and costs, to information about international fellowships and the availability of foreign scholars to visit campus as part of a lecture tour – all serve to link these colleges together and extend the range of possibility for enhancing the international dimensions of learning on a single campus.

- *Pursue opportunities to strengthen the quality and impact of international and intercultural education through collaborative initiatives.* The networks that the Global Partners Project has created among the faculty, administrators, and staff of member institutions constitute an infrastructure for continued interaction and pursuit of collaborative initiatives. The Mellon-funded Global Partners Project has demonstrated the value of collaboration among liberal arts colleges in pursuit of shared educational purposes.
- *Create managerial structures that make it easy for individual colleges to participate or not, according to the degree of interest they exhibit in a particular initiative.* Collaborative ventures need to be characterized by agility and resilience – an ability to include interested institutions from across consortial groups, to make decisions and move expeditiously in pursuit of shared goals.
- *Recognize that no single step in itself constitutes a solution to the problem of educating students more effectively for the world they will inhabit.* Individually and collectively, institutions need to guard against becoming too satisfied with steps they have taken to promote international understanding, however important those steps may have been. As the nature of relations between nations and cultures changes, the educational programs and activities that colleges offer to their students and faculty must also reflect these changing realities. Not least among the advantages of collaboration is to help individual colleges guard against complacency.

Liberal arts colleges embody very clearly one of the core values of this country – the value of a deliberative community, committed to reaching decisions through a full engagement of different voices and viewpoints. Finally, the work of liberal arts colleges to provide its students with enhanced understanding of other nations can assist in meeting a national need – that of producing graduates who can demonstrate by example the power of a community to press beyond initial differences, to reach greater levels of mutual understanding, and ultimately to change lives for the better – within the U.S., and across all nations and cultures.

## **Achieving Global Understanding: The Challenge of Liberal Arts Education in the Twenty-first Century**

From the time of their founding in this country, small liberal arts colleges of the kind that comprise the Global Partners Project have worked to preserve and advance a tradition of human knowledge and achievement.<sup>2</sup> While their essential purposes have remained the same, the curricula and learning programs of these colleges have evolved significantly through different generations. In 2005 the tradition of knowledge and understanding imparted to students of these institutions differs in many ways from what it was 1905 or 1955.

One area in which the need for enhanced perspective has been most pronounced in recent years is the domain of international and intercultural education. Changes in societal circumstance as well as new developments within the academic disciplines have given increased importance to the challenge of fostering greater awareness and understanding of different cultures both within and beyond the U.S. More than ever before, the vitality and well-being of this nation depend on the ability of its citizens to forge productive relationships with those of other nations and cultures. Today's college graduates will experience a life in which, as the title of Thomas Friedman's book suggests, "the world is flat." The globalization of markets and cultures has meant that the exchange of goods, services, capital, and ideas now transcends national boundaries to a degree unparalleled in any previous age. There are major issues to be addressed by denizens of the ensuing decades – issues that require shared understandings and collective actions among people of different origins, who speak different languages, and who bring a range of approaches to meeting common challenges.

The challenge of educating students for international awareness and understanding is not new. One of the original purposes that led to the formation of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), Associated Colleges of the South (ACS), and Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) was to provide students of smaller liberal arts colleges with greater opportunities to study abroad and enhance their understanding of other nations, languages, and cultures. By collaborating in the provision of such opportunities, these associations have helped both faculty and students of their member colleges enrich their understanding of different people and settings.

This paper is a culminating essay of the Global Partners Strategic Briefing Roundtable series. It outlines a series of challenges that Global Partners institutions confront in strengthening international and intercultural dimensions of a liberal arts

---

<sup>2</sup> The Global Partners Project was established in 1998 as a conjoined effort of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS), the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) and their 42 member colleges, with major funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The purpose of Global Partners has been to extend further the opportunities for strengthening global understanding through inter-consortial collaboration.

education. It also identifies several areas in which collaboration can help these liberal arts colleges meet the challenges of broadening their international and intercultural foundations. The essay is based on a roundtable of nine presidents and three chief academic officers from across these three consortial groups, convened in the summer of 2005 to take account of the prospects and next steps that these institutions might take to strengthen international education through collaboration.<sup>3</sup>

## **Identifying the Issues**

While acknowledging the progress that Global Partners colleges have made in making global and intercultural learning more central to their educational programs, the discussion of these institutional leaders focused on a number of continuing challenges:

- To define more clearly the educational purposes that Global Partners colleges seek to achieve through their programs of international and intercultural education, including on-campus programs and programs of study abroad.
- To create stronger linkages between the learning that students experience in programs of study abroad and the learning that occurs through their engagement with the curriculum and campus programs of their home institution.
- To develop a more robust culture of language learning as an essential component of a liberal arts education, in an age when a nuanced understanding of other nations and cultures has become increasingly important to the functioning of society.
- To ascertain the quality of learning that occurs in study abroad programs, as a basis for approving or denying students' proposed choices of study-abroad programs managed by third-party providers.

The discussion of these issues that occurred in the Presidents' Roundtable provides an important framework for considering next steps that colleges within these three consortial groups might take to further their progress in meeting common challenges through collaboration.

---

<sup>3</sup> In preparation for this Global Partners Presidents Roundtable, all participants reviewed the working papers to emerge from three previous Strategic Briefing Roundtables in the series; the participants of those earlier roundtables had included chief academic officers, faculty members, and international program leaders from across the three consortia and 42 colleges of the Global Partners Project. One of the products to emerge from those earlier roundtables was a summary of proposals for continued collaboration among Global Partners institutions to strengthen international and intercultural education. That summary is included as Appendix A to this document.

## Defining Educational Purposes

A fundamental step in advancing the quality of international and intercultural education is to define the purposes a liberal arts college seeks to achieve through this means. A changing model has come to inform the work of international and intercultural education – a model that has expanded beyond an earlier conception of “area studies,” which sought to provide students with enriched perspectives on their own culture through intensive study of another nation and language. The growing conviction is that in the twenty-first century, college graduates need the ability to engage constructively with people of many nations, languages, and cultures. As global systems of knowledge,

A changing model has come to inform the work of international and intercultural education – a model that has expanded beyond an earlier conception of “area studies.”

economic exchange, and technology transcend the boundaries of nations and cultures, the ability to understand and function within interweaving systems becomes increasingly important. Two decades ago, it was possible to conceive international studies as entirely separate from the study of multicultural issues in the U.S.; in 2005, there is much greater recognition of the overlap between these two educational challenges.

In the course of addressing the educational purposes that these liberal arts colleges seek to achieve through programs of international and intercultural learning, the Presidents’ Roundtable came to identify a three-stage process of educational development: In the *first stage* a student, as a result of learning encounters in the undergraduate curriculum and/or study abroad, comes to recognize and confront a disposition to regard his or her own culture as superior to those of others. This perspective in turn makes it possible to reach a *second stage*, in which the student makes successful efforts to overcome his or her inherent chauvinism with regard to people of different national and cultural origins. A student who reaches the *third stage* is one who has reaped the full educational benefit of the two preceding steps – one who has developed the intellectual and experiential foundations to serve as an effective broker in complex dynamics involving members of groups representing different cultures, ethnicities, and/or nationalities.

While this conception certainly does not provide a full or nuanced accounting of educational purposes, it represents a workable framework for defining what results a liberal arts college might reasonably seek to achieve for its graduates. One definition of educational purposes is to say that graduates of these Global Partners colleges should ideally attain all three stages of global development in the course of their undergraduate studies.



Some formulations would cast the educational goal more strongly as an attempt to “deprivilege” the concept of American identity and culture in future college graduates. The objective as conceived in this Roundtable, however, is not to deprivilege American culture; it is rather to develop the capacity to see the U.S. as a nation within the world of nations as a whole. Today’s college graduates will be called on to address complex societal problems that involve questions of environmental, economic, and political sustainability. The educational challenge is to prepare students to understand the systems that cross national boundaries and engage people of diverse backgrounds in collaborative endeavors. Such understandings are the conceptual tools students will need to make responsible judgments in an increasingly global society.

In the broadest sense, a program of learning that combines educational breadth with intensive study in the major continues to provide a solid foundation for the world that today’s young people will face. As small, residential learning communities Global Partners colleges are well disposed to exhibit national leadership in developing programs and practices to provide future graduates with the academic and experiential grounding to meet global challenges. Collaboration among groups of such institutions increases the scale and the momentum of progress in forging answers to these questions.

### **Coherence of Learning**

A recurrent theme through both the Presidents’ Roundtable and the preceding Strategic Briefing Roundtables is that students of Global Partners colleges should have continuing opportunities to reflect on the meaning of what they have learned during their study away. Many colleges have taken explicit steps to help students make the transition from the campus to study away and back. Depending on the field of study and the particular faculty mentors, a student may in fact have significant opportunities both to prepare for study abroad and to engage with what they have learned after returning to campus. Often, however, students come to perceive the learning that occurs through experiential engagement with another culture as a discrete entity with little or no relation to the academic major or the general education curriculum of their home institution. It is certainly easier to foster the reabsorption of lessons learned if students have enrolled in a program led by a member of the home college’s own faculty. A study-abroad program overseen by a faculty member of the home campus may begin with preliminary sessions that help students prepare for what they will encounter in their travel. Upon their return to campus, a series of continuing interactions between students and the faculty leader can help ensure that the experience of study abroad continues to inform a student’s subsequent learning in the curriculum.

Collaboration can help increase the scale and, conceivably, the educational impact of a study abroad program led by faculty members of participating institutions. If faculty and students from two or more colleges participate in a given program, the result is a larger cohort of students, representing a more diverse range of backgrounds and interests. Working together across campuses, faculty members could prepare a common set of presentations and exercises that prepare students for what they will experience

from both academic and social perspectives. When students return from abroad to their home campuses, faculty members can continue to engage this cohort to reflect on the significance of what their travels have taught them, and to relate those lessons to students' continuing progress through the liberal arts curriculum. Collaboration across campuses makes possible a deeper frame of reference for continuing engagement with the lessons learned from abroad. Two or three campuses participating in such a program could foster continued interaction among students and faculty through e-mail list serves, a Web site, as well as face-to-face meetings to reflect on the impact of travel in the context of one's academic major or other disciplinary perspectives.

Collaboration across campuses makes possible a deeper frame of reference for continuing engagement with the lessons learned from abroad.

Collaboration among institutions can foster increased coherence between study abroad and curricular learning, even if students have studied in programs not managed by their home institutions. One of the concepts to which the Presidents' Roundtable gave particular attention is that of an inter-campus research conference for students who have studied in a particular region of the world. Many colleges have a tradition of convening research conferences as an annual event for their own students. Collaboration among institutions in convening inter-campus events offers the advantage of building an expanded community of interest among students as well as faculty members who share common experiences in particular regions of the world across these smaller campuses. A conference of this kind can help spur students to continue to engage the themes from their experience of another setting and culture – to apply the methods and data of their academic disciplines to a fuller understanding of international issues experienced through study abroad.

### **Language Learning**

It is commonly observed that while study abroad has increased dramatically in all of higher education through the past decades, language learning has not increased in the same degree. Students often choose to study in locations where English is the native language spoken, and the relative disinclination of undergraduates to engage deeply in the acquisition of another language is a cause for concern in a world of increasingly global interactions. The most recent data for study abroad as reported in the Institute for International Education's *Open Doors* indicates that in 2003-04, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ireland together account for 27% of all study-abroad locations U.S. students chose. The Presidents' Roundtable strongly underscored the conviction that language acquisition is a core element in fostering greater understanding of cultures other than one's own. Their discussion also indicated how difficult it can be to instill the motivation for students to acquire another language in the course of their undergraduate

The Presidents' Roundtable strongly underscored the conviction that language acquisition is a core element in fostering greater understanding of cultures other than one's own.

careers. On individual campuses the issue often comes to center on whether the study of foreign language is a requirement for graduation. It is a question that all too often devolves into pure politics, pitting the language departments against the rest of the faculty and exposing raw conflicts over student enrollments and the allocation of resources to departments.

In the Presidents' Roundtable as well as in earlier Global Partners Roundtables and related projects, there has been particular interest in providing students with opportunities to learn languages that are less well represented in most small liberal arts colleges. Two collaborative scenarios offer the prospect of expanding the range of languages available to students of Global Partners institutions: one is a consortial approach to establishing systematic arrangements with well-established centers of language study – such as the Beloit College Center for Language Study. Another approach is to collaborate in the teaching of lesser-taught languages across participating institutions using interactive audio-video technology. The ACS Classics Program offers a model of real-time inter-campus instruction using electronic technology in courses for which there is comparatively little demand on a single campus. The Mellon-funded project to teach Arabic jointly at Kenyon College and Denison University using this technology offers another promising instance of partner institutions expanding the reach of language instruction through technology. One of the proposals to emerge from the Global Partners East and Southern Africa Regional Alliance is a program to teach Kiswahili by this means. In a variety of ways collaboration extends the promise of strengthening the culture of language learning among students and faculty of a given institution. While each college must clear its own path through the issues of language acquisition, collaboration can provide an important set of resources for strengthening the culture of language learning across two or more campuses.

### **Gauging the Quality of Learning**

An insight frequently voiced throughout the Global Partners Project is that international and intercultural education does not consist wholly of study abroad. One of the most important questions these colleges confront, in fact, is how to create learning environments that provide a strong element of international engagement for students who do not study away, while fostering integral connections between on- and off-campus learning for those who study abroad. A strong and recurrent concern through the Presidents' Roundtable and earlier Strategic Briefing Roundtables pertains to the

educational quality and impact of study abroad. A recent analysis of study abroad enrollments at Global Partners institutions revealed that more than half of all students from these colleges who participate in study abroad enroll in programs managed by third-party providers – which is to say, institutions other than the 42 liberal arts colleges participating in the Global Partners Program or the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, which also manages study-away programs. While some third-party programs are

The difficulty in ascertaining a program's educational quality causes concern from both an academic and financial standpoint, particularly when an institution exports financial aid to the managing program in which its students enroll.

comparatively well known and highly regarded, there are many instances of programs that enroll a handful of students from these institutions, and in these cases especially it is hard to determine the quality of teaching and learning that occur. The difficulty in ascertaining a program's educational quality causes concern from both an academic and financial standpoint, particularly when an institution exports financial aid to the managing program in which its students enroll.

In this as in other challenges related to the strengthening of international and intercultural education, collaboration can extend the range of what any single college could expect to achieve in itself. The Global Partners East Asia Regional Alliance piloted an effort to share evaluations of study abroad programs in China from the standpoint of their suitability for students of liberal arts colleges. This effort represents a model that could prove equally valuable to a larger number of institutions across the Global Partners Project. The assessments provided by colleagues of peer institutions can provide an invaluable gauge of the suitability of particular study-abroad programs. While different colleges may reach different conclusions about the information conveyed through these informal assessments, the sharing of information can help any college decide how well a given program's philosophy and pedagogical approach matches its own educational goals for study abroad.

One outgrowth of the Global Partners Project is an effort to develop and apply more fitting measures for assessing student learning in study abroad programs. If the efforts toward this purpose that ACM, ACS, and GLCA are currently pursuing with funding from the Teagle Foundation prove successful, Global Partners institutions and their three consortial associations will be poised to show national leadership in assessing learning which combines experiential with academic components in an off-campus setting. In this as in other respects, collaboration among liberal arts colleges yields an opportunity to reach goals beyond what any single institution could hope to accomplish alone.

## **Beyond Global Partners: Conceivable Courses of Action**

A central purpose of the Presidents' Roundtable was to review proposed ideas for future collaboration suggested in earlier Strategic Briefing Roundtables, and to consider feasible next steps for the Global Partners Project following six years of funding from the Mellon Foundation. Part of the discussion was given to reviewing the list of collaborative prospects to emerge from previous Strategic Briefing Roundtables (that list appears below as Appendix A). In reviewing this list, participants in the Presidents' Roundtable stressed that any single action, even if jointly undertaken with other liberal arts colleges, becomes a partial solution to the problem of preparing students for active participation in a global and intercultural world. No single step can bring about a complete fulfillment of the mission to educate students for increased global and

A recurrent theme through this series of roundtables is the need for presidential commitment and leadership to make possible the strengthening of global education at liberal arts colleges.

intercultural understanding. At the same time, there was a recognition that progress in achieving such a goal will likely occur in increments, and that leadership is a requirement for continued momentum and advancement. Indeed, a recurrent theme through this series of roundtables is the need for presidential commitment and leadership to make possible the strengthening of global education at liberal arts colleges. Presidents exert a strong leadership function that makes possible promising courses of action – within a single institution, and across groups of institutions. The strong, visible support of presidents is key to the success of any step to attain these educational purposes, whether undertaken individually or in collaboration with other colleges.

In one segment of the Presidents' Roundtable, participants convened in three separate groups, one for each of the three associations that oversee the Global Partners Project. Each group was asked to identify a limited number of initiatives that institutions of that cluster would have conceivable interest in pursuing after the Mellon Foundation's funding of the Global Partners Project expires. Each group summarized the results of its individual reflections on flip charts, the contents of which appear verbatim in Appendix B below.

Based on the exchanges of the Presidents' Roundtable plenary sessions, in addition to the summaries that emerged from the individual meetings of ACM, ACS, and GLCA presidents, it is possible to identify a set of prospective collaborations that could involve Global Partners institutions and their three consortial associations in greater or lesser degree. The activities can be grouped into broad categories, ranging from those that require comparatively little institutional effort, to those that require leadership and support of senior administrative officers as well as the commitment of human and financial resources to collaborative efforts. Clearly, the three consortial organizations –

ACM, ACS, GLCA – would have important roles, individually or collectively, in advancing this work. Given the resource constraints on every institution, many actions from this list would require funding from outside sources to succeed. As such, some of these actions could become candidates for targeted fundraising efforts from external sources. The conceivable actions to follow from the Global Partners Project include the following:

**Share information** (requiring comparatively small commitment of institutions to share information with a consortial or inter-consortial group, although it does entail consistent staff effort to collect, analyze, and distribute such information) Among the information to be shared:

- Campus information on student enrollment in study abroad, by country and program;
- A consumer report of study-abroad programs managed by third-party providers, drawing together qualitative reviews from colleges that have sent students to given programs and countries;
- Data on the cost that institutions incur in supporting study abroad;
- Best practices in international/intercultural education: circulation of articles, programs of traveling experts to campuses.

**Build/sustain communities of interest among faculty and students with common interests** (requiring strong leadership centered either in a lead institution or within a consortial association, in addition to funding from internal and external sources):

- Continue the support for international learning centers as a locus of support for faculty members pursuing scholarly interests in a given region;
- Undertake a seminar-and-travel approach to faculty development, with pre- and post-travel meetings involving faculty members from several institutions;
- Provide “venture grants” to students for study abroad, which include a requirement for an academic follow-up presentation to peers and faculty mentors of several campuses;
- Host inter-campus forums to strengthen continuity between study abroad and on-campus learning;
- Pursue combined efforts to instill a stronger culture of language learning across campuses – through shared, systematic participation in the kinds of programs exemplified by the Beloit Center for Language Studies;
- Develop programs to provide instruction in less commonly taught languages across campuses using electronic technology.

**Develop models to inform educational and institutional practices for strengthening international and intercultural education** (research projects that would entail substantial institutional engagement, organized and managed by consortial organizations and funded by external sources):

- Models for assessing the quality of student learning in programs of study abroad (major ACM-ACS-GLCA proposal currently before the Teagle Foundation);
- Models for understanding and containing the cost of international education in general, and of off-campus study in particular.

**Develop partnerships to support faculty development, enrich the quality of student learning, and achieve cost containment in study-away programs** (requiring substantial commitment and cooperation of participating institutions and consortial organizations):

- Undertake “silent” or “in-country” collaboration in the management of study-abroad programs;
- Create a buyers’ cooperative to negotiate price discounts and curricular elements in third-party study abroad programs that enroll significant numbers of students from Global Partners colleges;
- Foster sustained consortial partnerships with higher education institutions abroad that have been founded on the model of the American liberal arts college;
- Create new programs or even a new college in other settings.

### **Difficulties of Collaboration: Lessons from Global Partners**

At the same time that they afforded venues for considering future directions in strategic collaboration, the Presidents’ Roundtable and earlier Strategic Briefing Roundtables provided opportunities to reflect on lessons learned from a six-year, tri-consortial project to strengthen global and intercultural education across 42 colleges through collaboration. In fact collaboration is not always a natural instinct among liberal arts colleges, despite similarities of mission and size. The difficulties of collaboration can sometimes equal or outweigh the benefits to institutions. Even when the benefits are considerable, faculty and administrators may not perceive collaboration to be an advantage. Two lessons in particular warrant consideration as these institutions and consortial associations consider next steps beyond Global Partners.

*1. Recognize and seek to address competing interests in the management of study-abroad programs.* Beyond the fostering of collaboration among individual faculty, the Global Partners Project has sought to encourage institutional collaboration in the management of study-abroad programs as a means to ensure both academic quality and cost efficiency. One conceivable result of collaboration across these 42 colleges and three consortial organizations would be the realization that a considerable amount of overlap exists among the study-abroad programs that individual colleges manage. Ideally this understanding could in turn lead institutions to work collaboratively in managing such programs. One of the early visions was that collaboration among Global Partners

colleges would encourage existing study-abroad programs to combine forces where there was substantial overlap, creating in effect “Global Partners” programs of study abroad. It was thought that such programs could pool the energies of faculty members across several institutions, yielding in turn a greater assurance of academic quality, and offering the promise of increased efficiency and cost containment as the Global Partners “brand” attracted more students across participating institutions, helping such programs meet their fixed costs.

One of the insights the Global Partners Project has reinforced is that individual colleges are inherently reluctant to close their own study-abroad programs in favor of a consortial offering. However desirable it might seem collectively for a group of colleges to consolidate redundant and often under-enrolled programs in a given region, no individual college wants to cut its own program for the consortial goal of reducing excess capacity and gaining efficiency. Study-abroad programs on a given campus tend to arise from the vision and drive of individual faculty members who have a strong professional interest in a region and commitment to share that interest with students. An institution

There is little incentive for an institution to make hard decisions regarding program consolidations if the savings from collaborative approaches do not appear distinctly on the ledger sheet of a campus budget.

that seeks to strengthen international studies and programs will very likely want to support the initiative of its own faculty members who demonstrate leadership in creating such opportunities for students. In many cases therefore it is not market demand so much as local faculty interest that leads colleges to create their own study-abroad programs in particular regions. For an institution to say “no” to its own faculty member in favor of a new or existing consortial program can have adverse consequences, causing the faculty member to feel slighted in the pursuit of professional and teaching interests.

The reluctance of senior administrators to engage the political battle of consolidating study-away programs stems partly from the fact that most institutions lack a complete understanding of what it costs to send students on study abroad, either on their own programs or the offerings of third-party providers. As a result, institutional leaders often lack a clear conception of the savings that could be achieved by collaborating with consortial partners in the management of study-away programs. There is little incentive for an institution to make hard decisions regarding program consolidations if the savings from collaborative approaches do not appear distinctly on the ledger sheet of a campus budget. Understanding the full extent of costs an institution incurs in sending students on its own or others’ study-away program is a requisite step for institutions to collaborate for increased efficiency. A current initiative of the Global Partners Project is accordingly to develop a model for better understanding the costs of study abroad.



The Presidents' Roundtable indicated that there are some instances in which an institution's faculty as a whole comes to question the creation of a new program when existing off-campus programs managed by other institutions provide meaningful opportunities for faculty members and students alike. In order to attract widespread interest and support, a consortial study-abroad program bearing a Global Partners "brand" must have a discernible value beyond what an institution can achieve through its own campus-based program. Ultimately it may prove less difficult and more advantageous to create new Global Partners programs than to seek mergers and consolidations of existing study-abroad programs that bear the imprint of faculty ownership.

2. *Create agile collaborative structures that expedite decision making and allow those with an interest to participate.* Another point to emerge in the course of the roundtable discussions was that not every consortial action in the future should necessarily involve all 42 colleges and three consortial organizations participating in the Global Partners Project. Certain activities will naturally appeal to some institutions and some organizations more than others. The experience of Global Partners has shown that

The experience of Global Partners has shown that the denominator of any collaborative action to strengthen international and intercultural learning is in fact never 42 colleges.

the denominator of any collaborative action to strengthen international and intercultural learning is in fact never 42 colleges. Individual institutions will choose to participate or not, according to the degree that a particular action serves their own educational purposes.

The same principle of differing interests and focus can be observed in the three associations responsible for administering the Global Partners Project. In reviewing the lists of potential collaborative activities from the individual sessions of the Presidents' Roundtable, for example (see Appendix B), it is possible to discern different kinds of emphasis within the three consortial groups. The proposals from ACM presidents may be described thematically as the development of *systems* – drawing together largely independent efforts across several colleges in a framework that promotes sharing of information and insights with respect to study abroad programs and other promising initiatives. A recurrent element in many proposals of ACS presidents is the development of *models* – for effective re-entry programs, teaching and learning techniques, the application of technology, or the convening of inter-campus forums for enhancing the international character of education at liberal arts colleges. The ideas advanced by the GLCA presidents have a strong imprint of *programs* – through such means as “invisible” partnerships among colleges, the establishment of new internship opportunities for students in diplomatic settings such as the U.N., or the fostering of sustained linkages with liberal arts colleges in developing nations abroad. All three of these consortial

characterizations are simplistic to some degree, though they do indicate the different tenor of conceivable initiatives to emerge from the discussions of the three presidential groups.

The differences among these three visions of future collaboration help to illustrate the need for an organizational structure that allows leadership to emerge from different centers for different projects that hold promise of enhancing global and intercultural learning across liberal arts colleges. It may be that some efforts are carried out primarily through the agency of one consortial association (ACM, ACS, or GLCA), while others may involve any two or all three of these organizations and their member institutions in some way. An implicit theme in the presidents' discussions was that any consortial action undertaken by one association and its member institutions should seek to include member institutions from the other two associations that exhibit a strong interest in participating.

## Looking Forward

Providing students of Global Partners colleges with stronger dimensions of international and intercultural education is a complex task. While Presidents' Roundtable discussion embodied that complexity, the recommendations that ensue from the exchanges among its participants can be simply expressed.

- *Continue the work of defining the educational purposes to be achieved through international and intercultural education.* Collectively and individually, liberal arts colleges must revisit and, as necessary, redefine their purposes in educating students for lives of global and intercultural understanding, addressing such issues as the relationship between experiential and curricular learning, the role of language study in a liberal arts education, and the means of assessing the quality and impact of learning in study abroad.
- *Invest in the sharing of information as an essential element of a tri-consortial network.* One of the most valuable effects of the Global Partners Project has been to foster communities of shared interests across 42 participating colleges and their three consortial organizations. The sharing of information – ranging from numerical data on enrollments, campus policies, programs, and costs, to information about international fellowships and the availability of foreign scholars to visit campus as part of a lecture tour – all serve to link these colleges together and extend the range of possibility for enhancing the international dimensions of learning on a single campus.
- *Pursue opportunities to strengthen the quality and impact of international and intercultural education through collaborative initiatives.* The networks that the Global Partners Project has created among the faculty, administrators, and staff of member institutions constitute an infrastructure for continued interaction and pursuit of collaborative initiatives. The Mellon-funded Global Partners Project

has demonstrated the value of collaboration among liberal arts colleges in pursuit of shared educational purposes.

- *Create managerial structures that make it easy for individual colleges to participate or not, according to the degree of interest they exhibit in a particular initiative.* Collaborative ventures need to be characterized by agility and resilience – an ability to include interested institutions from across consortial groups, to make decisions and move expeditiously in pursuit of shared goals.
- *Recognize that no single step in itself constitutes a solution to the problem of educating students more effectively for the world they will inhabit.* Individually and collectively, institutions need to guard against becoming too satisfied with steps they have taken to promote international understanding, however important those steps may have been. As the nature of relations between nations and cultures changes, the educational programs and activities that colleges offer to their students and faculty must also reflect these changing realities. Not least among the advantages of collaboration is to help individual colleges guard against complacency.

International education means something different in 2005 from what it connoted 30, 40, or 50 years ago. In the broadest sense, fostering greater awareness and understanding of other nations has been a central element of higher education's agenda since mid-century, with the founding of the Fulbright program and other initiatives to engage future American leaders more completely in the languages and cultures of other nations. What has changed dramatically since that time is the position of the U.S. in the world, in terms of both influence and perception. The time has long passed since the U.S. could regard itself as the unquestioned world leader in terms of economic strength or productivity. More than at any other time in living memory, the U.S. and its citizens must learn to engage with other nations and peoples as one among equals.

In this environment, liberal arts colleges in the U.S. have both the opportunity and the responsibility to educate graduates who can make positive contributions to the well-being of the nation, both in itself and in relation to other nations. Liberal arts colleges embody very clearly one of the core values of this country – the value of a deliberative community, committed to reaching decisions through a full engagement of different voices and viewpoints. Finally, the work of liberal arts colleges to provide its students with enhanced understanding of other nations can assist in meeting a national need – that of producing graduates who can demonstrate by example the power of a community to press beyond initial differences, to reach greater levels of mutual understanding, and ultimately to change lives for the better – within the U.S., and across all nations and cultures.

### **The Global Partners Presidents' Roundtable**

The Presidents' Roundtable convened in Cleveland, Ohio on June 20-30 2005 for the purpose of reviewing core themes and collaborative prospects that had emerged from

an earlier series of three Global Partners Strategic Briefing Roundtables. The earlier roundtables had taken place between January 2004 and January 2005, and their participants included chief academic officers, key faculty members, international studies officers, and other campus leaders from across the 42 member colleges of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS), and the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA). The Presidents' Roundtable consisted of nine college presidents and three chief academic officers from across the three consortial groups of institutions, in addition to the presidents of ACM, ACS, and GLCA. The discussion was facilitated and the resulting essay drafted by Gregory Wegner of GLCA. The following individuals were participants in the Presidents' Roundtable and helped formulate the essay's central themes:

Wayne Anderson, President  
Associated Colleges of the South

R. Stanton Hales, President  
College of Wooster

Douglas Bennett, President  
Earlham College

Elizabeth Hayford, President  
Associated Colleges of the Midwest  
(ACM)

Lawrence Breitborde, Vice President for  
Academic  
Affairs & Dean of the College  
Knox College

David Joyce, President  
Ripon College

Roger Casey, Dean of Faculty  
Rollins College

Gregory Mahler, Provost  
Kalamazoo College

Richard Celeste, President  
Colorado College

David Shi, President  
Furman University

Joel Cunningham, President  
University of the South

Christopher Thomforde, President  
St. Olaf College

Richard Detweiler, President  
Great Lakes Colleges Association

William Troutt, President  
Rhodes College

Nancy Dye, President  
Oberlin College

Gregory Wegner, Director of Program  
Development  
Great Lakes Colleges Association

## Appendix A

### Global Partners Collaborative Prospects

A Preliminary Summary  
from the Global Partners Strategic Briefing Roundtable  
and the Regional Alliance Projects

#### Strengthen the Position of Global Partners Institutions in the Market of Study-abroad Programs

*Consumer report of off-campus programs.* Develop a collaborative initiative to provide qualitative review of study-abroad programs from the standpoints of key program attributes (i.e., instruction by U.S. faculty members or direct enrollment in a foreign university, home-stay or dormitory living, cost, etc.) – in effect a consumer report, which could serve liberal arts institutions both within and beyond the Global Partners network in identifying study-abroad programs that are well suited to students’ educational needs.

*A buyer’s cooperative.* Function as a buyer’s cooperative with third-party providers of study-abroad programs, for the purpose of negotiating quantity discounts, and to influence aspects of the curriculum, instructional method, living arrangements, and other elements of the study-abroad learning experience for students of Global Partners institutions. (Closely related to the buyer’s cooperative is a consortial approach to negotiating student exchange agreements with universities in other nations.)

*Shared analysis of enrollment data.* Engage in systematic efforts to collect, analyze, and share campus data on study-abroad enrollments, making possible individual campus comparisons to other Global Partners institutions as well as comparisons between Global Partners campuses and institutions nationwide as collected by the Institute for International Education (IEE).

*Share information about study-abroad programs managed by Global Partners institutions.* Construct a data base of study-abroad programs managed by Global Partners institutions in a form that is readily accessible through the Web to international studies officers, faculty members, and students of participating institutions. (Such information gathering could show, for example, which programs students of Global Partners institutions choose most often for study abroad, or what institutions have conducted site visits or other qualitative reviews of third-party programs.) A tool of this kind could increase the likelihood of students choosing the programs of Global Partners providers – ideally providing the basis for financial arrangements offering economies of scale and reduced cost to participating institutions.

### Pursue Collaborative Approaches to Study Abroad

*Collaborate in the management of study-abroad programs.* One possibility is to pursue arrangements for “silent collaboration” among institutions in operating a common program for study abroad, allowing partnering institutions to share the costs of contracting an on-site agency that would provide instruction, housing, and support to students in a given setting. Such an arrangement would allow each institution to call the program its own, while making possible significant economies of scale.

*Develop shorter programs.* Collaborate in the development of shorter study-abroad programs that allow students to gain a first experience of another culture and setting, thus helping provide footings for a more extended period of study abroad at a later time.

*Inter-consortial partnerships with liberal arts colleges abroad.* Develop exchange agreements and related partnerships with higher education institutions in other nations that have been established on the model of liberal arts colleges in the U.S., working with these institutions to develop learning programs that help U.S. students understand their own culture in broader perspective.

### Strengthen Global and Intercultural Dimensions of Education on Campus

*Engage with local cultures.* Develop consortial programs to foster heightened student engagement and understanding of cultural differences that exist in immigrant communities in the U.S., many of which are in close proximity to Global Partners campuses.

*Multi-campus international forums for students.* Convene multi-campus events that engage both international and U.S. students of Global Partners institutions in formal and informal exchanges that promote increased understanding of cultural differences of students from different countries – helping international students expand their networks and feel a sense engagement with other students beyond a single institution, while helping U.S. students understand a range of diversity beyond what they encounter on their own campus.

### Strengthen Continuity between Study Abroad and Campus Learning

*Interconsortial forums for student research based on study abroad.* Create inter-campus and inter-consortial forums that allow students who have studied

in a given region to reflect on their experiences and share them with others from an academic perspective, helping students understand their study-abroad experience as integrally linked to their on-campus learning.

*Publication of student papers from study abroad.* Develop a Global Partners venue for publishing the best student papers derived from study-abroad activities across the 42 participating institutions.

*Language instruction across campuses using technology.* Develop a program to provide instruction in the language of under-studied regions (e.g., Kiswahili) across campuses in real-time using video conferencing technology, providing valuable opportunities for language study to students preparing for or returning from study in a given region.

### Share Information, Expertise, and Campus Resources that Support Curriculum Development, Teaching, and Research in International Subjects

*Shared framework for curriculum development.* Pursue initiatives across institutions to make international and intercultural education more integral to the curriculum and learning experience of undergraduates at Global Partners institutions. Work through consortial means to make international and intercultural education synonymous with a liberal arts education from these institutions, as opposed to an auxiliary to be taken or left according to student and faculty proclivities.

*Inventory of institutional capacities.* Develop an inventory of institutional strengths and weaknesses with respect to global and intercultural education across the 42 participating Global Partners institutions – not for the purpose of “ranking” institutions, but rather to help individual colleges set goals for strengthening global elements of their own curriculum and learning community, and to identify areas in which collaboration could help a given institution achieve its goals. (Such a compilation could yield a more informed understanding of which institutions might naturally cluster together in achieving shared purposes, while at the same time helping identify institutions that are poised to show leadership in the pursuit of particular goals.)

*Dissemination of best practices.* Drawing on the work of Global Partners activities to date, as well as the experience of individual institutions, develop a program to disseminate best practices in addressing shared institutional challenges concerning global education and study abroad.

*Develop a traveling circuit of experts* to Global Partners campuses, to help support curriculum development and teaching activities that foster deeper understanding of the international dimensions that are integral to a liberal arts education.

*Arrange to bring young visiting scholars to liberal arts campuses.* Drawing on the work of the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) project, pursue consortial agreements with research universities that would provide campus internships for those who are doctoral candidates or who recently completed Ph.D.'s in international and intercultural topics, giving these young scholars an opportunity to engage in a mentored teaching activity in a liberal arts college, while at the same time making it possible for young scholars to enrich the global and intercultural environment of Global Partners campuses with their knowledge of a field.

*Apply technology to enrich curriculum and teaching in global subjects.* Expand the study of geography and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in the social sciences, language and culture and environmental studies, geoscience, and biological science among other disciplines across Global Partners institutions.

#### Expand Consortial Efforts in Faculty Development

*Exchange programs with universities of other nations.* Build on existing relationships to broaden consortial exchange agreements with universities of other nations, developing contacts of Global Partners faculty with scholars and institutions abroad while also facilitating the process of bringing scholars of other nations to Global Partners campuses.

*International learning centers.* Continue to foster a series of international learning centers, built on relationships that have been developed with leaders of key foreign universities, each serving as a point of contact and interaction for Global Partners faculty members conducting research, study, or curriculum development in a region.

*Faculty development seminars.* Continue shared efforts to strengthen faculty development, through interconsortial seminars that focus on issues of curriculum development and pedagogy with regard to a particular region, or to the enhancement of global and intercultural education in general.

*Seminar-and-travel approach to faculty development.* Pursue a consortial and inter-consortial approach to faculty development in the form of travel grants to visit other nations and cultures. One possibility is a format in which faculty from several institutions convene in a pre-departure seminar to formulate individual and collective goals; these colleagues travel together through much of their time abroad, then re-convene after returning to the U.S. to share findings and outline conceivable impacts on their research, teaching, and curriculum development. (The same three-part educational structure holds promise for groups of students across Global Partners institutions as well.)



### Engage in Consortial Approaches to Assessing Learning, Understanding Costs, and Enhancing Participation in Study Abroad

*Consortial effort to assess student learning in study-abroad programs.* Adapt, refine and implement promising practices for assessing what students learn in study-abroad programs.

*Strengthen understanding of costs associated with globalizing campuses.* Drawing on relevant models, pursue consortial approaches to gain a better understanding and control of the costs that Global Partners institutions incur in supporting globalization efforts in general and study abroad in particular.

*Shared efforts to foster broader engagement with global and intercultural elements of a liberal arts education.* Develop strategies to encourage more students who are typically under-represented in international dimensions of a liberal arts education to participate and benefit more fully. Underrepresented student groups at present include athletes, male students, science majors, students of color, and students of lower socio-economic status.

### Interconsortial Support and Advocacy on Issues of Pressing Common Concern

*Develop a collaborative network for advice in visa processing.* Develop a consortial network to provide advice and support for campus officials attempting to process the visas of international students coming to a Global Partners campus.

*Lobbying for common causes.* A shared approach to lobbying the federal government on pressing matters of shared concern, such as the issue of international students and scholars seeking visas for temporary entry into the U.S.

### Charting a Course for the Future of Global and Intercultural Education

*A global futures commission.* Establish a Global Partners working group of faculty members with broad international experience to consider cross-cutting issues that are likely to impact global and intercultural education in the future, and to outline ways in which institutional collaboration can help these liberal arts colleges harness their productive energies to formulate and shape the issues of the future. (Examples of cross-cutting themes include environmental issues, border studies, and human rights issues).

## Appendix B

### Summary of Potential Collaborative Actions From Global Presidents' Roundtable Individual Sessions

During one segment of the Global Partners Presidents' Roundtable, participants convened in three separate groups, one for each of the three associations participating in the Global Partners Project. Each group was asked to identify a limited number of initiatives that institutions of that cluster would have conceivable interest in pursuing after the Mellon Foundation's funding of the Global Partners Project expires. Each group summarized the results of its individual reflections on flip charts, the contents of which appear verbatim below:

#### ACM:

- Coordinate links between individual college entrepreneurial interest and consortial efforts to assist sustainability
- Cooperate in review of third-party programs, and share results
- Presidential leadership in identifying redundant programs run by our colleges: "mergers and acquisitions."
- Collaboration to infuse liberal arts approach and values approach to study abroad
- Venue to bring Global Partners presidents and deans with African/European/Asian presidents and deans
- Web-based student "publication" on student experiences abroad, helping to create a community of returned students.
- Recognition of innovative faculty initiatives in international education

#### ACS:

- Re-engagement/re-entry (models)
- Four-year sequential program (models)
- Intro language level: immersion (pre-enrollment and continuation)
- ACS in China: single site; Monterrey/Middlebury Program, Arabic in Turkey
- Less commonly taught languages
- Internships – company sponsored
- Shorter terms: common sites – Thailand
- Residential fellows (international)
- ACS international fellows and interns (use Nomads)
- International students: exchanges, recruitment
- Consulting advising service (evaluational aspect)
- Technology linkages: (e.g., video conferencing)
- Awards/recognition: i.e., travel grants
- International job fairs: tie and papers
- Best practices from companies

- International festivals

GLCA:

- Invisible consortia
- Systematic data collection
- Level three diplomacy program
- International liberal arts college alliance
- International presence sharing
- American college of B\_\_\_\_\_