

# The Power of Partnerships:

## A Transatlantic Dialogue

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AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION  
The Unifying Voice for Higher Education



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# Foreword

The most recent Transatlantic Dialogue, the 11th meeting of U.S., Canadian, and European higher education leaders (presidents, vice chancellors, and rectors), took place in June 2008 in Canada, a few months before enormous economic turmoil was unleashed first in the United States and then around the world. As a result, the vision of the future of higher education abruptly changed shortly after the meeting. Ironically, the June 2001 Transatlantic Dialogue in Canada, which served as a reference point for the 2008 meeting, occurred just over two months before the events of September 11. At that time, participants had no inkling of the profound changes that were to shape the geopolitical environment and the climate for higher education. Nor were the consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall or the speed of change in Europe entirely visible in the Transatlantic Dialogue of 1990. Similarly, while some in 2008 saw clouds on the economic horizon, few anticipated the severity of the economic problems that were about to materialize. The abrupt and largely unpredictable events that shape the course of higher education are a constant. As the dialogues reveal, higher education leaders around the world face the challenge of looking ahead and leading in an environment in which change is a constant, and turmoil all too ubiquitous. This meeting focused on partnerships—one important tool that higher education institutions can use to be more creative and adaptive in an environment in which expectations are increasing and resources decreasing.

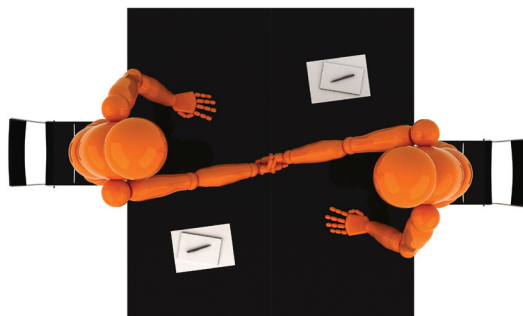
# Executive Summary: The Power of Partnerships

This essay is based on a meeting of 28 higher education presidents, rectors, and vice-chancellors who met in Vancouver, Canada, for the 11th Transatlantic Dialogue. The Transatlantic Dialogue is an ongoing initiative of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the European University Association (EUA), and the American Council on Education (ACE). The meeting focused

on the role of partnerships of all types in meeting the challenges of a fast-changing environment. Looking back on a previous meeting held in the summer of 2001 just before the watershed events of September 11, the group considered how quickly the global environment can shift and how institutional leadership must be adept at navigating this ever-changing landscape. In an eerie parallel, this most recent dialogue took place just before dramatic economic downturns began to unfold.

The essay begins with an exploration of the climate for partnerships. Around the world, institutions are facing intensified competition at home and abroad, more insistent public demands for accountability, pressures to both widen access and contribute to economic development through research, stagnating public funding, and a growing role of the market. In this environment, “going it alone” may not be useful as a dominant strategy.

Institutions are recognizing the need to partner with one another, at home and abroad, and with corporations, non-governmental organizations, and community groups to better serve students, enhance research, and meet public needs. Such alliances help institutions undertake new activities or extend their current ones by combining resources. Cooperation can help institutions compete, enabling them to accomplish with others what they could not do alone. The examples of partnerships



brought to the table illustrated creative responses to issues both global and idiosyncratic. The partners ranged from private businesses, to state agencies, to other educational organizations.

The essay explores five key issues: the motivation to initiate and maintain partnerships; the economics of cooperation; conflicts inherent in cooperation; the role of government; and issues related to the special case of partnerships with the private sector.

The final section outlines the leadership qualities and institutional characteristics that are vital to the establishment and maintenance of successful partnerships. The participants noted that as change is inevitable, higher education leaders cannot prepare for an unpredictable future partnership climate but must instead be flexible and creative.

When working with partners outside the academic realm or outside one's country, it is important to have strong cross-cultural skills and understand the challenges associated with the culture of the academic institution. A new partnership must resonate with the school's mission, and leaders must be able to persuade stakeholders, faculty members, and staff that the partnership is necessary and harmonious with the goals of the institution. Partnerships, however, cannot be sustained by rationale alone; they must also be financially sound and realistic, based on the institution's human and financial resources.

Just as September 11, 2001, reshaped our geopolitical environment, the recent economic crises will bring new challenges to the higher education community. The art of leadership is preparing for an unknown future.

# Introduction

In June 2008, 28 higher education presidents, rectors, and vice-chancellors from the United States, Europe, and Canada met in Vancouver, Canada, for the 11th Transatlantic Dialogue, sponsored by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the European University Association (EUA), and the American Council on Education (ACE). Initiated in 1989, the Transatlantic Dialogue series brings together institutional leaders from the United States, Canada, and Europe to engage in in-depth conversations on current higher education issues.

Each successive conversation has demonstrated that the transatlantic gap is narrowing at the same time that the rate of change in higher education is accelerating. The preoccupations of institutional leaders in the United States, Canada, and Europe are now remarkably similar. Access, accountability, changing demographics, higher education's role in society, managing with limited resources, globalization, the rise of market forces, and the role of institutional leaders in navigating these challenges are but a few of the common issues. And new challenges have emerged or become more prominent, as the 2008 seminar's

opening discussion revealed. Relationships with external stakeholders loom large on the horizons of institutional leaders. Those from both sides of the Atlantic emphasized the role of higher education in regional and local economic development and expressed concerns about threats to institutional autonomy. They also shared mixed views on the increased competition in higher education, both within nations and globally, noting its costs and benefits.

A touchstone for the 2008 meeting was the 2001 Transatlantic Dialogue that also took place in Canada—at the Université Laval in Québec. During that conversation, participants envisioned a “Brave New World of Higher Education,” shaped by the forces of competition, technology, and globalization. It is always interesting to look back at predictions made years ago, and to reflect on the many unforeseen events that have reshaped the larger society and altered higher education's trajectory. Although the three drivers for change identified in 2001 were still very important in 2008, they had played out somewhat differently than the group had predicted seven years earlier. Technology, for instance, is ubiquitous. And although it has created profound change in higher



education, some meeting participants challenged the idea that it has truly transformed institutions' core operations or pedagogy. Stephen Toope, president of the University of British Columbia, observed that technology provides tools, but human beings are the end users. People, he asserted, are the heart of our institutions and the actual drivers of change. Globalization, a second driver identified in 2001, has become a new paradigm, and its effects are still unfolding. The third driver, competition, is a given. At the same time that it has intensified, however, institutions have sought to balance competition with international cooperation and strategic alliances with partners at home. As Pierre de Maret, former rector of the Université Libre de Bruxelles and EUA board member, noted, seven years later, the world seems less brave and less new, and the general mood is less optimistic.

The 11th Transatlantic Dialogue focused on partnerships in their many incarnations—with higher

education institutions, businesses, and other external stakeholders at home, and with institutions and organizations abroad. The underlying premises were that “going it alone” is increasingly difficult, and that partnerships build capacity and strength that few institutions can muster on their own. Paradoxically, “cooperation redefines the space in which higher education competes,” as one participant put it. The partnership strategies that the leaders at the Transatlantic Dialogue pursued and the lessons they learned are elaborated in this essay. Although many notable differences exist among institutions in Canada, the United States, and Europe—and striking differences within nations—the Vancouver meeting illustrated that on both sides of the Atlantic, competition not tempered by cooperation will leave higher education weakened and isolated from the society whose support is vital.

# The Climate for Competition and Cooperation

**A**round the world, institutions are facing intensified competition at home and abroad, more insistent public demands for accountability, pressures to both widen access and contribute to economic development through research, stagnating public funding, and a growing role of the market. The changing context has created opportunities as well as concerns about the new paths that institutions are expected to travel. As Pierre de Maret observed (see sidebar), higher education institutions are places of paradox, challenging leaders to navigate difficult and ambiguous terrain.

A number of trends have contributed to the growing competition among higher education institutions. Reductions in public funding have pushed institutions to find new revenue streams. The quest for prestige has resulted in fierce competition for students and faculty members. Most countries are home to political pressures to concentrate research funding on a limited number of institutions or programs to enhance national research capacity and create centers of excellence. The growth of private and for-profit higher education institutions has introduced new competitors. Even the most

## HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AS PLACES OF PARADOX

The dilemmas:

1. How to be...
  - Accessible and high quality?
  - Challenging and fair?
  - Autonomous and accountable?
  - Public and private?
  - Innovative and conservative?
  - Engaged and dispassionate?
  - Critical and respectful?
  - Demanding and supportive?
  - Creative and precise?
  - Local and international?
  - Specialized and interdisciplinary?
  - Rational in the face of irrationality?
2. How to...
  - Attract funds without sacrificing autonomy?
  - Do more with less?

Adapted from the presentation by Pierre de Maret, *Gauging the Climate: A Comparative Analysis of the Contextual Factors Affecting Higher Education*, presented at the Transatlantic Dialogue, June 2008.

traditional higher education institutions on both sides of the Atlantic find themselves in a new game with a new set of rules.

In this environment, “going it alone” may not be useful as a dominant strategy. Institutions are recognizing the need to partner with one another, at home and abroad, and with corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and community groups to better serve students, enhance research, and meet public needs. Such alliances help institutions undertake new activities or extend their current ones by combining resources. Cooperation can help institutions compete, enabling them to accomplish with others what they could not do alone. Sometimes, cooperation is the only way to be able to compete. In spite of the obvious added value of cooperation, institutions and their leaders find it difficult to implement change that challenges basic assumptions and the traditional silo structures of institutions. Thus, while *transdisciplinarity* has become the new research paradigm, doctoral education, with some notable exceptions (e.g., in France), is still managed along traditional disciplinary lines.

The Bologna process, now involving 46 countries, provides a remarkable example of cooperation that has no parallel across the Atlantic. The efforts to restructure degrees into three cycles (bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate); the focus on learning outcomes, linked to a European and to national qualifications frameworks; a shared understanding for calculating credit units; the delivery of diploma supplements; and the creation of a European Register of

quality assurance agencies represent a remarkable feat of cooperation that formed the backdrop for the dialogue. Thus, the Bologna process has brought the concept of cooperation to an entirely new level in Europe, and networks are multiplying. The new conventional wisdom maintains that universities can complement and learn from one another. At the same time, new research policies at European and national levels have resulted in a more competitive environment—both within Europe and globally—than existed only a decade ago. In contrast, competition has been a longstanding feature of U.S. and Canadian higher education.

The 2008 Transatlantic Dialogue focused on partnerships as a central strategy to address the challenges institutions face and to take advantage of opportunities that enable them to extend their teaching, research, and service beyond traditional parameters. The examples of partnerships brought to the table illustrated creative responses to issues both global and idiosyncratic. The partners ranged from private businesses to state agencies, to other educational organizations. And although the format, structure, and status of the partnerships varied from country to country, these initiatives struck a common chord with dialogue participants, as echoed in the themes in this report.

The specific rationales for the various types of partnerships varied. But the underlying themes were similar: Cooperation extends an institution’s capacity to undertake activities that it could not engage in alone, either because it lacks the required expertise or it does not

have sufficient resources. Pierre Moreau, president of the Université de Québec, reported that his university, in cooperation with a number of other small regional institutions, sought to bolster the capacity of McGill University to recruit top-notch scientists, seeing a benefit to all.

Cooperation with partners outside higher education affirms the positive role of the institution in the larger society, and its willingness to be an active player in the local community. International partnerships underscore an institution's quest for quality, which knows no national boundaries, as well as the cosmopolitan nature of the institution. The drivers may be internal (seeking a research partner with complementary strengths) or external (government programs that provide incentives for cooperation). Regardless of the partner, and as elaborated later in this essay, institutions undertake partnerships with specific goals in mind and the conviction that the benefits of cooperation will outweigh the inevitable difficulties.

Even though the extent and purposes of partnerships may represent a new feature in the higher education landscape, they are not a fundamental break with past practices. It is not as if higher education institutions had never been influenced by societal needs, or were convinced that flying solo

was the only appropriate course. Few now question the engaged institution as an appropriate location to debate—even solve—problems in society. Partnerships, however, require a modified relationship with society. Institutional autonomy remains a virtue, but must be negotiated when working with partners that are safeguarding their own independence. And although the institutional mission must drive partnership decisions, it may be a mission much broader in scope than many are used to. Economic development imperatives drove several partnerships described at the meeting, for example, involving activities that leveraged the institution's primary teaching and research missions for far-reaching community benefits. In other instances, partnerships with the private sector enhanced the organizational capacity of the institution, thereby minimizing reliance on (scarce) state funds.

Participants agreed that partnerships are no silver bullet, but they fit the spirit of the times, in which institutions must stand at the intersection of the traditional and non-traditional in order to maintain their core role in society. In these arrangements, institutions can imagine new engagements that extend beyond a narrowly conceived academic agenda and involve projects that resonate with societal needs.

**Even though the extent and purposes of partnerships may represent a new feature in the higher education landscape, they are not a fundamental break with past practices.**

## What Are Partnerships?

The Transatlantic Dialogue defined partnerships as cooperative agreements between a higher education institution and another distinct organization to coordinate activities, share resources, or divide responsibilities related to a specific project or goal. All partnerships share three elements: First, partnerships reflect involvement with an entity outside the formal organizational structure of the institution. Internal arrangements within a campus, such as interdisciplinary degree programs, shared laboratories, or multi-use facilities are not partnerships in the sense meant here. Because partnerships exist with other educational organizations, government agencies, private businesses, or charitable groups (or some combination of these), they require institutional leaders to work outside their home base and develop a functional structure that spans organizational boundaries.

Second, partnerships entail a spirit of cooperation. The institution cannot unilaterally dictate the specifics of the relationship, nor can it take into consideration only its own interests. One-sided partnerships are

hard to establish and impossible to maintain. Contributions are needed from all parties, whether those contributions reflect commitments of financial resources, personnel, or time. This, of course, does not mean that partnerships are always equal. In fact, most partnerships can benefit from one partner taking a leading role. And an institution will always have certain non-negotiable elements—academic freedom and autonomy, for example—that would be preconditions to getting involved with other organizations. But a key aspect to partnerships is that each party substantively commits to the arrangement and cooperates within an agreed upon framework.

Third, partnerships are about working toward a common goal or completing a specific project. More than just a memorandum of understanding, a partnership involves *actions* that result in concrete benefits for the partners. Goals can range from tangible outcomes such as additions to the physical infrastructure, to more subtle outcomes such as reputation or public relations benefits. The University of Maryland, for example, partnered with other state system universities to open a

## THE UNIVERSITIES AT SHADY GROVE, MARYLAND, USA

The Universities at Shady Grove (USG) is a partnership of nine public institutions that offer undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as certificate and continuing education programs, at a central location in Montgomery County, Maryland. The county, a large and diverse suburb of Washington, DC, did not have a public institution until the inception of USG in 2000. The participating institutions, located throughout Maryland, are Bowie State University; Salisbury University; Towson University; University of Baltimore; University of Maryland, Baltimore County; University of Maryland, Baltimore; University of Maryland, College Park; University of Maryland Eastern Shore; and University of Maryland, University College.

Students apply to the partner institution sponsoring the program offered at the Shady Grove location and receive their degree from that institution. As of fall 2008, 3,000 students are enrolled in more than 60 high-demand baccalaureate and graduate degree programs, including more than 1,900 undergraduates enrolled in full-time day, evening, and weekend programs. Some 2,000 students have received baccalaureate degrees from the partner universities since USG's inception.

USG baccalaureate programs are upper-level programs only—students complete lower-level instruction at regional community colleges. All undergraduate programs have articulation agreements with community colleges that enable students to transfer seamlessly into the programs offered through USG.

The Shady Grove location provides students with three all-purpose buildings that house “smart” classrooms, offices, computer labs, specialized science laboratories, and clinical training facilities in nursing, pharmacy, and respiratory therapy. USG also offers distance education facilities, student lounges, study areas, a library, café, bookstore, and a fitness center. USG has its own administration, technical support, and academic and student services staff. Current student services include advising, financial aid counseling, library services, technology services, and academic support and career and placement services. All USG degree programs either require or strongly encourage internship experiences for students, strengthening the linkages between coursework and work experience. All academic policy is determined by USG's Governing Council, composed of the provosts (chief academic officers) of the participating campuses.

The identification of academic programs to be offered through USG, and by which university partners, is a collaborative process that involves decision makers at the highest levels of the universities and community partners. State enrollment funding formulas provide incentives for participating institutions to offer degree programs and grow at USG while at the same time support the operational costs of USG.

USG has emphasized partnerships with external stakeholders as central to its operation and success. The USG community includes partnerships with local businesses, state and county governments, public schools, community colleges, and the community at large. The USG Board of Advisors is composed of 30 leaders from all of these communities; it works closely with USG and its partner institutions to support the identification and development of degree programs that meet workforce needs and regional economic development priorities.

satellite campus and gained substantial political goodwill that translated into budgetary support in a tight fiscal environment (see sidebar). Of course, not all outcomes can be specifically articulated in advance, and some benefits will arise as a happy unanticipated consequence of the partnership. But without a direct purpose, partnerships are unlikely to be productive.

In addition to partnerships being thought of as discrete activities, they can also be considered as a con-

tinuum that runs from competition to mergers. Pure competition would place the institution in a relationship characterized by zero-sum games of market access and organizational survival. For example, an institution might seek to challenge a new provider with a competing program by aggressively recruiting students and faculty members or challenging its authority to operate. The other end of the cooperation spectrum results in institutional mergers, where all resources are combined under a

single organizational and financial hierarchy. This approach seems more prevalent in Europe than in the United States or Canada. Consolidation of higher education institutions in Denmark and similar moves in France are examples of cooperation-mergers at this extreme (see sidebar). But most examples of cooperation fall somewhere in between. In particular, it is important to recognize that some degree of competition is inherent in many cooperative

agreements. A competitive drive can influence how far a cooperative arrangement will go before organizational self-preservation steps in, and motivate universities to pursue the most advantageous partnerships possible. Competition, then, means that few arrangements move all the way toward merger, except in instances of government mandates or when it is in the strategic interest of the institution.

## NANCY AND THE LORAINÉ

The University of Nancy, situated in the Lorainé region of northeastern France, was founded in 1572. After a rapid expansion of French higher education following World War II, many large institutions were aggregated into small to medium-sized universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Specifically, the University of Nancy was replaced in 1970 by three newly created institutions—Université Henri Poincaré, which offered degrees in natural and applied sciences and medicine; Université Nancy 2, which focused on the humanities, social sciences, and the law; and the Institut National de Polytechnique, which focused on engineering—and an additional new university in Metz, 60 kilometers from Nancy. The new university offered a full spectrum of programs and disciplines (except medicine).

These divisions, compounded by the traditional balance of power and authority that favored the faculties (or, in U.S. parlance, schools and colleges) rather than the institution as a whole, weakened the universities. The universities were further undermined by the existence of national research bodies (starting in the 1930s) that employed full-time researchers and drained research funds away from the universities.

Between 1970 and 2001, the Lorainé universities both competed and cooperated with one another. They competed by creating study programs leading to redundancies—especially between Nancy and Metz—and vying for funding from the same regional sources. They cooperated through shared research laboratories and graduate schools.

Over the last 15 years, several developments have led to a strengthening of the universities as institutions. First, multiyear contract agreements between universities and the government were introduced, which required that institutions develop institutional strategies, especially in research, and strengthened the role of the university president and the senior management team. Second, the devolution of power from Paris to the regions resulted in the emergence of regional economic development policies that have taken into account the role of higher education. Third, globalization and the resulting worldwide competition influenced the French government to develop incentives for greater cooperation among neighboring institutions in order to create critical mass and ensure greater visibility of French universities. Fourth, the place and power of the national research organizations are slowly but surely diminishing: There is a marked shift to anchor research in universities.

In 2001, the three universities in Nancy and the University of Metz started discussing a merger that would create a comprehensive university that could have greater international stature. The merger is envisaged as a series of steps, including a shared contract for 2005–2008, the creation of a structure to speed up the merger of administrative services, and shared international activities, among others.

The planned merger represents a great deal of work, particularly in persuading the administrative staff to work together and in trying to combine four organizational cultures. The regional authorities have taken a keen interest in the proposed merger, which they see as being crucial to the development of a post-industrial economy in the depressed Lorainé region. Their support has been important, although they have sometimes misunderstood the universities' structures and decision-making processes. The merger plan is on track but necessitates a great deal of negotiating time to persuade and convince both institutional members and external stakeholders.



# Key Issues

The dialogue highlighted five key issues common to partnership arrangements: the motivation to initiate and maintain partnerships; the economics of cooperation; conflicts inherent in cooperation; the role of government; and issues related to the special case of partnerships with the private sector.

## MOTIVATION: WHY DO IT?

Higher education institutions have inherent internal expertise and typically long-term goal horizons. So it may not be surprising that overcoming institutional inertia is often the biggest hurdle for establishing partnerships. Egos can become embedded in organizational identity, with a “not-invented-here” mentality preventing consideration of partnerships and their benefits. This is especially the case when potential partners are perceived as of lower quality or less prestigious or if the goals of the partnership are viewed as suspect. For example, a university may view a research partnership with a commercial firm as a way to enhance its research profile, but worry that the business will make unreasonable demands concerning intellectual property or

confidentiality. Several elements must be in place to make partnerships not only possible, but also worth doing in the first place. They must be seen as organizationally appropriate, necessary to achieve something that is valued, and better than the alternative of going it alone.

An organizationally appropriate partnership should clearly fit with the institutional mission and values. A mission of service to a community and a strong program in teacher education, for example, may easily accommodate a cooperative arrangement with primary and secondary schools. Montclair State University, with its strong teacher education program, partners with 23 school districts in the state of New Jersey. Another model is provided by the University of Aveiro, Portugal, which integrates a polytechnic institution that serves a different population and has a different mission from the university proper. Another example is creating opportunities for underserved populations who could benefit from a public-private partnership to construct a satellite campus facility, as was the case in the Universities at Shady Grove. It is possible, of course, to push the mission too far and get out of sync with dominant university values—setting



secrecy over openness, or prioritizing private goods over public goods, as examples. At its core, the partnership should not create a dissonant story line within the institution.

In addition to being organizationally appropriate (and with an important nod to the requirement for specific partnership goals noted above), a cooperative relationship also needs to be a *necessary* means to achieve a valued end. The partnership between Simon Fraser University and private developers (see sidebar) was essential to the university's

ability to create a downtown campus that could accommodate its needs. The partnership may fit the institution, and it may serve valued goals, but leaders also need to consider whether the mission and goals could be readily served absent the partnership. A U.S. campus president cited the example of the creation of a state system, calling it a “merger in search of a meaning.” Alliances and mergers are very challenging to implement, all the more so if their purpose and advantages are not clear.

## SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

For more than 20 years, Simon Fraser University (SFU), Canada, has sought innovative partnership arrangements to expand its suburban-based operations into downtown Vancouver. In 1986, SFU created its Harbour Centre Campus, opening the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue in 2000 (the location of the 2008 Transatlantic Dialogue) and the Segal Graduate School of Business in 2006.

SFU is now embarked on its most multifaceted partnership to date—relocating its School for the Contemporary Arts (SCA) to a massive urban redevelopment (the Woodward project) in one of Canada's poorest urban neighborhoods, Vancouver's Downtown East Side (DTES). Set to open in its new location in September 2009, SFU's SCA will form part of a larger revitalization project in a community currently characterized by a disproportionate incidence of homelessness, mental illness, and drug addiction. The Woodward project will create not only SFU education facilities, but also a mix of private and public sector housing and commercial facilities. The inclusion of SFU's SCA in the redevelopment of DTES clearly reflects an appreciation of the social and educational benefits a university can bring to the planned renewal of a community.

The partnership underpinning the relocation of the SCA involves SFU, a private developer, the city of Vancouver, and the government of British Columbia. All partners are engaged collaboratively in the planning, development, and funding of the project. However, as with any multi-stakeholder-led initiative, there have been challenges along the way. SFU faced cumbersome bureaucratic provincial processes to obtain the government's approval of the priority and scope of the initiative, and funding for architectural/site planning to ensure the initiative was aligned with provincial capital planning priorities. The initiative also dealt with complex and at times problematic planning negotiations with the private sector developer, chiefly around site development and architectural design issues to accommodate the separate interests of the proposed tenants and host community. The university also experienced difficulties securing financial commitments: Promised federal funding did not materialize and provincial capital funding (linked to a strategic plan for an expanded higher education system) precluded funding a fine arts initiative.

Ultimately, using a formal public-private partnership (“P3”) proposal as the basis, a financial agreement was struck by the developer, the university, and government to contribute collectively to SFU's purchase of the facilities to house the SCA. As an approach to capital planning and investment in higher education, the P3 process was advantageous to the university in several ways. For example, it resulted in detailed architectural planning and fixed-price negotiations that created a precise basis for cost/benefit assessment of the project, which led to its approval. It also raised much needed capital and reduced the burden of SFU's risk. In addition, the arrangement demonstrated SFU's strength at leveraging constructive and mutually beneficial relationships with the private and public sectors, and highlighted the university's dedication to sustaining community relationships forged during the more than 20-year development of SFU's operations into downtown Vancouver.

Establishing and maintaining partnerships can be very time-consuming and fraught with difficulty, and certainly involve trade-offs. If the same goals, or even equivalent ones, can be attained solely through independent university action, the best advice is to go it alone. If, on the other hand, individual action has limited utility or will create more problems than it solves, then cooperation is preferred.

Sometimes the appropriateness or necessity of a potential partnership is unclear. The activity may be consonant with the institution's mission, but still seem slightly out of bounds. It may also not be strictly necessary or other options may achieve similar ends, at least from an internal assessment of the opportunity. What can tip the balance in these cases, though, is considering the consequences of inaction. One president noted that his institution failed—for reasons of “academic snobbery”—to take the lead in forming an institutional network in a field in which it was clearly a leader and thus missed an opportunity seized by another institution.

External stakeholders often legitimately apply pressure to the decision-making process. Government policy apparatus may set the stage for a cooperative arrangement with incentives for partnerships. Here the necessity of the initiative is informed by the consequences of not following the government lead—political goodwill may be lost or funding opportunities may vanish. In other cases, competitive pressure suggests moving ahead in order to counter encroaching rivals. Here, the consequence of doing nothing

is institutional decline. External considerations in these cases suggest the activity is both aligned with organizational mission and necessary for maintaining or enhancing institutional stature. Participants acknowledged the importance, therefore, of considering not just internal evaluations of mission and necessity, but also the significance of the activity to important external stakeholders.

## ECONOMICS OF COOPERATION

While thinking about partnership appropriateness and necessity, financial issues obviously must come into play. Few institutions can afford to take significant financial risks, regardless of the external factors pressing the institution into action. But the economics of cooperating with other organizations are not straightforward. There are short- and long-term expenses, direct and indirect costs, as well as the opportunity costs and intangible benefits discussed earlier. These calculations involve other organizations, too, with their own set of thresholds relevant to the viability of the partnership.

All partnerships must be financially affordable. It is important to evaluate not only the start-up costs, but also the long-term expenses in terms of personnel, property maintenance, and program subsidies. Part of the problem here is that higher education institutions are notorious aggregators of expenses. For example, the staff time devoted to the development and operation of a particular partnership is often not accounted for as a cost of the partnership; rather, it is considered as part of the general institutional

**Establishing and maintaining partnerships can be very time-consuming and fraught with difficulty, and certainly involve trade-offs.**

budget. Specifying salaries as project costs gives a more realistic portrayal of the university's financial obligations. The same model should apply to other operating costs, especially if the partnership relies heavily on the existing capacity of the university. In many parts of the world, it is commonplace for overhead expenses to be charged to grants. Similar strategies can apply to budgeting cooperative arrangements of various forms.

Broadly, a cost-benefit analysis should determine what gains are anticipated and whether they are sufficient to offset the losses. There are several points to consider in this analysis. Probably the most important is to recognize that opportunity costs and transaction costs can be substantial, especially considering the presidential time involved in setting up the partnership. In addition, many partnerships are established with visions of a financial bonanza just over the horizon. These visions should be grounded in reality so that the horizon doesn't fade into the sunset. Moreover, future financial payoffs typically do not serve well as primary motivators for action, especially in a public university setting. So it is important to focus on the non-monetary benefits as well, and calculate how those will accrue to the benefit of the institution. Finally, it is easy to focus on the immediate benefits and neglect future costs. Institutional leaders should consider the returns measured over the lifespan of the partnership, and not just the immediate costs associated with setting it up and maintaining it. The variables of interest, therefore, should be the value of the partner-

ship across its lifespan, contrasted with the calculated expenses associated with its maintenance.

Each partner should conduct its own cost-benefit analyses. For the initiative to be successful, it has to be a win-win scenario for all parties. Consideration of the benefits that the partners may particularly value and the special costs they may incur is helpful not only in negotiating the terms of the partnership, but also for determining the trade-offs necessary to establish a viable cooperative arrangement. For example, private-sector partners may be ultimately concerned with bottom-line issues of profit and loss; higher education institutions may be more concerned about academic and social values.

The threshold for participating in a partnership involves these broad considerations of value. What may be inconsequential to the university may be vital for the partner.

## PARTNERSHIP CONFLICTS

In any relationship, there will be conflicts, and partnerships are no exception. The most obvious source of conflict is the inherent differences in the partners' agendas. As separate organizations, partners will naturally respond to different stimuli and have their own internal definitions of success. What counts as a victory on one side may have little meaning—or even a contrary interpretation—on the other. Either party may have unrealistic expectations for what the cooperative arrangement will accomplish; as a result, one partner may place undue pressure on the other to extend or end the relationship. The specifications of the partnership are also subject to interpretation

over time, and understanding of responsibilities can diverge when the original personnel on the project move on to other responsibilities. In one instance described at the meeting, the non-university member of a partnership treated the memorandum of understanding as a literal map of the partnership, while the university read the document as a general statement of principles.

Different agendas also may be evident in the incentive pressure one party puts on the other to initiate the partnership. Increasingly, foundations and philanthropists (and their cousin, government incentives) seek to shape the initiatives they support, rather than simply providing funding. These partnerships can induce universities to engage in activities for reasons quite different from unvarnished commitment to the initiative itself. In these cases, and others that carry similar pressures, the seeds of discontent are sown into the initial arrangement and conflict among the partners may be just a matter of time.

Culture can be a source of conflict as well. The participants had many tales of the impatience of business partners with the deliberative processes of academe. In international partnerships, cultural conflicts abound, compounded by language barriers. Working with partners with very different missions and styles of operation guarantees that managing cultural differences—if not cultural conflict—will be essential to nurturing the partnership.

Conflict can also emerge as a result of creeping competition between the partners. What begins as a relationship among organizations with

common interests and goals, may evolve into one in which accounts of each advantage are kept. Balancing interests turns into scorekeeping, such that gains by one partner must be offset against gains by the other. Fear of giving away too much and getting too little in return can dominate these relationships. Eventually, the conflict rises to the point that the giveaways seem like unnecessary charity, and the partners separate, becoming competitors rather than allies.

In addition to conflict between partners, the existence of different internal agendas within an institution can cause problems. Most frequently cited are counterproductive incentives and reward structures. For example, cooperative initiatives may contradict faculty members' quests to demonstrate individual accomplishments required for promotion and tenure. In any case, faculty are typically committed first to the discipline, then to the department, with commitment to the institution falling somewhere further down the line. Recruiting faculty members to join partnership arrangements can falter when internal incentives for participation are lacking. Related to this is the common campus dichotomy between research and teaching that presumes that attention to one is at the expense of the other. Participation in a research-based partnership, for example, may induce unwelcome tradeoffs with the university's undergraduate program, with corresponding financial and reputational implications.

Other internal conflicts relate to the fragmentation of many institutions. It is difficult to design an institution-

**Conflict should not be a surprise to those leading these initiatives, but recognized as one element inherent in any complex relationship.**

wide initiative that has full buy-in across all segments of the campus. More common are partnership arrangements that focus on one element or another of the institution, with most of the rest of the institution uninvolved or even unaware of what is going on. Moreover, the institution can work at cross-purposes with itself, pursuing multiple agendas without coordination, or developing enclaves of activity independently and inefficiently pursuing similar goals. This fragmentation can be confusing to partners, especially those who are unfamiliar with the particulars of higher education bureaucracy.

In any case, cooperation conflicts result from the complexity of creating partnerships among different organizations. The likelihood that any variation in inter- or intra-institutional agendas will cause a conflict at some point is practically guaranteed. The imperative of organizational survival means that competition is embedded within the partnership dynamic. Conflict should not be a surprise to those leading these initiatives, but recognized as one element inherent in any complex relationship.

## **GOVERNMENT ROLE**

The government plays an interesting role in the development of partnerships. Sometimes, the government itself is a partner. In many cases, government is clearly the instigator through policies and incentives that encourage partnerships. In each region represented at the meeting, examples were given of partnership requirements as a precondition for government grant funding. In

France, for instance, the government made funding available to increase cooperation of neighboring universities and restructured research funding to promote greater cooperation between national labs and universities. In the United States, the priorities of funding agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation shape institutional research agendas. In other instances, public-private partnerships are encouraged as a way of leveraging government funds with private capital. In addition to the promise of additional funding, the state can put pressure on universities to act through the implied or explicit threat of funding retractions. Whether through positive or negative incentives, government facilitates cooperative arrangements by making it more difficult for the institution to say *no* when partnership opportunities are being considered.

Governments, however, can erect barriers to partnerships through complex bureaucratic procedures, financial rules, and requirements. Multiple layers of decision making can delay or derail partnership discussions, and cooperative arrangements may run afoul of rules governing the encumbrance of public funds. Some institutions have attempted to maneuver around restrictions on the use of public money by establishing private corporations or foundations to handle financial obligations that flow from partnerships, but these options are not available in all countries. Government mandates, however, may create obligations that cannot be superceded by the partnership, no matter the risk they pose to

effective cooperation among partners. Similarly, politically motivated agendas can impose restrictions on partnerships that may prevent institutional expansion into new areas or disallow new initiatives because of their competitive impact on favored industries.

Whether or not government is a facilitator of partnerships, political stakeholders generally have high expectations for institutions to contribute to both the social and economic arenas. This may be through

economic development or technology transfer initiatives, or by helping educate a competitive workforce (see sidebar). Although partnerships are not always explicitly part of the social and economic development agendas, enough emphasis is placed on institutional engagement with society that partnerships are a natural focus of attention. In particular, expectations that higher education institutions become involved in the broader education of the citizenry have led to extensive partnerships

## TRENT UNIVERSITY AND THE GREATER PETERBOROUGH INNOVATION CLUSTER

In 2004, Trent University, Canada, in partnership with Sir Sandford Fleming College and the City of Peterborough's economic arm, created the Greater Peterborough Region DNA Cluster with the support of local, provincial, and federal governments. Its mission is to foster advanced research in DNA profiling and forensics science. The DNA cluster was established as a not-for-profit organization, and was named one of 12 Regional Innovation Networks under the Ontario Commercialization Network, through the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation.

The cluster brings scientists, government, and the private sector together to translate the discovery of knowledge into marketable innovations. It does so through three main strategies: (1) business development, facilitating partnerships among academics, the private sector, and other stakeholders to expand the growing research cluster and to access research infrastructure; (2) commercialization of intellectual property, acting as the technology transfer office for both Trent and Fleming College and facilitating access to mentoring, legal assistance, patenting/licensing, and access to capital; and (3) attracting international research talent to the region.

As the cluster developed, it faced several challenges. There were competing perceptions internally and externally around the role it played in research and innovation. Some viewed its research in the traditional sense, as a quest for knowledge and not a route to application and commercialization. A culture shift was needed to acknowledge its role as an economic driver for the region. The cluster also faced questions about its exclusive focus on DNA research, raising the notion that it needed to expand its scope to include research and development in other fields. There were also concerns about its financial sustainability.

In response to these challenges, the cluster broadened its mission to include additional life science-related initiatives to ensure that the organization better reflected the research and development activities taking place in the Peterborough region. Its research scope now includes environmental/wildlife DNA, water and air quality, wastewater treatment, agriculture, health, and biomaterials. In the process, it changed its name to the Greater Peterborough Innovation Cluster. And in addition to broadening its mission, the cluster established a private-sector membership category, which provided private-sector investors the opportunity to support the cluster's initiatives and ensure the development of the regional knowledge-based economy.

As a result of its work with the cluster, Trent University is quickly becoming a significant institution for research and development. For example, in 2006, the university established the DNA Building on campus. The building serves as the heart of the growing cluster, housing state-of-the-art DNA profiling, forensics, automation, and life science laboratories, as well as offices of more than 60 Ministry of Natural Resources researchers and scientists. Also located in the DNA Building is the International Consortium on Anti-Virals (ICAV), a not-for-profit organization founded to discover and develop anti-viral therapies for neglected and emerging diseases and to ensure their accessibility to all those in need. ICAV works in collaboration with more than 200 scientists from more than 20 countries.



with elementary and secondary schools. By meeting these and other similar public hopes, institutions generate political goodwill, with tangible benefits down the road. The danger, though, is that by working far afield from traditional strengths, the institutions may fail to satisfy the high expectations, and suffer the consequences.

## PRIVATE-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

The special case of cooperative arrangements with private-sector partners deserves some attention. Differences in organizational culture and goal orientation are at the most extreme when higher education institutions team up with business interests. This can create problems around financial issues, decision-making processes, and the unique role of the university president.

From a financial perspective, higher education leaders need to consider several elements. Private-sector partners may determine what constitutes an adequate return on investment in a manner different from universities. An institution may consider modest gains or even break-even arrangements sufficient, while the private sector may insist on building in a substantial profit margin in order to sustain the initiative. This issue may be particularly acute when dealing with sponsored projects in which venture capitalists not only require a percentage of the profits, but also insist on the right to recoup their investments within a specific timeframe. Another consideration, as mentioned previously, is the extent to which government funds are mixed with private resources. At a

minimum, this involves understanding the different accounting rules for private-sector entities, as well as recognizing the potential tax liabilities institutions may incur in the private sphere. To address some of these issues, the institution may need to set up financial firewalls to guard against the improper use of public funds. A third financial issue involves the ownership of intellectual property generated through the partnership. Academic freedom will conflict with proprietary interests unless these issues are dealt with at the outset.

The differences in organizational structure and culture affect how decisions are made, which in turn, can cause additional problems in a partnership with the private sector. Universities tend to be deliberative and consultative bodies, and operate more by consensus than by decree. They can also be extremely risk averse, scrutinizing the minutiae of every decision to protect themselves from exposure to loss. The private sector tends to be more hierarchical, with lines of authority demarcating project responsibility. It sees profit in risk taking (remember the old adage, nothing ventured, nothing gained). From the perspective of the private sector, then, universities can be seen as stereotypical bureaucracies, slow to make decisions through layers of red tape. Alternatively, complicated institutional decision making can be interpreted as a negotiation technique or as a reluctance to commit to the partnership. For private-sector enterprises used to working within narrow windows of opportunity, the deliberative university process can be frustrating. Although it can

be helpful for the institution to try to streamline its decision-making process for the partnership, it is also important for the private partners to understand the value of consensus in academia, as well as the added commitment such sanction brings to the project.

The college or university president, rector, or vice-chancellor also holds a unique place in the institutional hierarchy that has no equivalent in the private sector. The institutional head is part chief executive and part symbolic representative of the institutional community, often with the title of *professor* and the mantle of a senior scholar. This means, in most cases, that the institutional head is part academician and part manager, placed in the executive role not solely for administrative competence but as an individual of some professional esteem. While there are differences within Europe, and among Europe, Canada, and

the United States, there is growing convergence around the role of the institutional head. European rectors are now more likely to combine the roles of manager and academic leader, and their responsibilities are more external than was the case a decade or so ago. Thus, the institutional leaders at the Transatlantic Dialogue—regardless of nationality—found they faced similar challenges in establishing partnerships. Their authority and credibility to negotiate and maintain partnerships came less from their technical or managerial expertise (although such expertise is essential) than from the symbolic authority of representing a community of scholars, and placing the public good at the center of any initiative. As one European rector put it, “I can’t impress my business colleagues with my management skills. They know I’m a professor. But at the same time, that gives me extra points in every negotiation.”



# Successful Partnerships

## SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PARTNERSHIPS

- Arrangement is driven by “studied self-interest” or mutual benefit.
- There is faculty buy-in, often through incentives (e.g., money, better publications, travel abroad).
- Adequate resources are provided and broadened to sustain over the long term.
- Arrangement is based on a sense of urgency and opportunity.
- Partners are not economic competitors.
- Partners are not geographic competitors, especially not those who are in the same state, province, or region.
- Partners have complementary strengths.
- Partners are at comparable levels of perceived quality (but beware of snobbery in pursuing partnerships).
- Partnership enables activities that can’t be done alone.
- Leadership counterparts cultivate strong relationships with one another.
- Purpose is clear and limited.
- Goals are simple and achievable.
- The community (both internal and external) understands the partnership and why it is being sought.
- There is agreement on who is going to become the public face of the partnership (i.e., in communications).
- The partnership is assessed periodically to adjust or end it.

Advice on successful partnerships emerged through conversation and debate during the meeting. The discussions revealed how regional differences shape the context for partnerships. For example, the American notion of higher education *servi*ng the state contrasts with the Humboldtian idea of the university as *part* of the state in Germany. Europeans approach concerns about autonomy from a historical context of state control, as opposed to the traditional independence of higher education in the United States and Canada (although participants noted that many European countries are moving to greater independence from government, while in the United States and Canada, government oversight and regulation has tightened). Internationalization and cross-border partnerships suggest distinctive approaches in contemporary Europe compared to the United States and Canada. But even in recognizing regional differences, it was clear that certain elements relating to leadership and institutional characteristics had universal application to establishing and maintaining successful partnerships (see sidebar).

## LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

It is not surprising that a group of institutional heads would focus on leadership. As a regular refrain during the meeting, *leadership* developed specific meaning in terms of a set of skills or personal qualities leaders ought to possess. General leadership ability is a given for any successful institutional head. But because partnerships represent an extension of the traditional institutional mission and role in society, more than general abilities are needed. Five qualities in particular emerged as significant.

First, leaders need to be flexible and creative. Partnerships can be unpredictable, and leaders cannot rely on rigid rules and rubrics. Although there is no need to reinvent the wheel for every partnership, the shape, structure, and mechanics of the arrangement must be adjusted to fit the circumstances. Flexible leaders need to know when to bend the rules and how to navigate the organizational and political dynamics of partnerships. Creativity is necessary to envision solutions to the dilemmas faced in setting up any new initiative. By definition, partnerships

## UNICA: A NETWORK OF UNIVERSITIES FROM THE CAPITALS OF EUROPE

Established in 1990, UNICA is a network of 41 universities from the capitals of Europe that fosters academic excellence and cooperation among member universities, as well as dialogue with the capital cities. The network seeks to be a driving force in the implementation of the Bologna process and to facilitate the integration of its member universities into the European higher education area.

The network's internal organization is based on three bodies: the General Assembly (which meets once a year), the Steering Committee (which meets four times a year), and the International Relations Officers' Committee (which meets twice a year). A secretariat, in Brussels, is responsible for the administration. Workshops and working groups are coordinated by member universities to ensure maximum member engagement.

UNICA provides a forum for members to reflect on the demands of institutional change; supports cooperative projects in areas of member interest; provides information to its members on European initiatives and programs; and articulates the members' views to national, regional, and local governments. The network groups its activities into five areas: internationalization and mobility; education; research and development; mission and link with society; and policy and strategy. UNICA activities range from thematic student conferences and the development of joint degree programs to information sharing on the Bologna process experience and communication with European Commission decision makers.

This mid-sized network of some of the major universities in their respective countries reflects the cultural diversity of Europe and its institutional heterogeneity. This diversity is a strength but also a challenge. Each member must work within its own mission to balance the investment in this group with the benefits that it accrues to its own campus, faculty, and students. Naturally, some partnerships within the network, particularly among institutions with greater areas of shared interests, are stronger than others. Thus, some projects involve only a small number of network members and can serve as project incubators for the larger group. In addition, the personal relationships that are created over time among the institutional leaders on the one hand and the administrative staff on the other hand, contribute to the network's sustainability.

UNICA faced a key challenge when the international relations officers needed to change their focus from student mobility to other issues such as collaborative research and the development of joint degrees. Initially, these officers did not have the capacity to deal with such issues. The solution was to launch rectors' seminars in order to ensure institutional change in approaching internationalization and international cooperation.

UNICA provides a platform for universities to cooperate on international and regional issues not only with one another, but also with government representatives.

**Flexible leaders need to know when to bend the rules and how to navigate the organizational and political dynamics of partnerships.**

exist outside the box of traditional institutional practice. Leaders should be able to think beyond organizational charts and standard operating procedures in order to fully realize the benefits and avoid the difficulties that partnerships can present.

Flexibility and creativity need to be paired with a second skill: financial savvy. It is impossible to be a successful leader without knowing and understanding where the money comes from and where it goes. Leaders need to be intentional in their use of partnership resources. Cooperation requires recognizing and developing new revenue streams and tributaries, while insisting that the flow of partnership money is channeled to support the broader university mission. Even if the details of the budget are delegated to others, the leader should remain a significant participant in financial decisions. Perhaps more importantly, financial savvy is needed to recognize a losing proposition before it endangers the welfare of the project or even the stability of the institution itself.

Leaders also need to develop cross-cultural skills to work with a wide variety of partners without offending others' norms or neglecting their routines. The example of the UNICA network (see sidebar on the previous page) shows that the survival of the network was predicated on the personal engagement of the institutional leaders, their ability to understand the different circumstances of their colleagues, and the personal relationships that they were able to develop over time. This may be obvious in dealing with international partners, but it is just

as important in relating to partners from other educational sectors, government agencies, and private, for-profit entities. The mores of the faculty club need translation outside the academy, just as the expectations of a school board, government ministry, or executive suite must be reinterpreted for an academic audience. The more numerous the partners, and the greater their range of missions and cultures, the greater the leadership challenge (see sidebar on the next page). Cross-cultural leaders, therefore, speak the languages of all constituents in the partnership.

Persuasion is the fourth skill of leadership. This must go beyond the dictionary definition of convincing through reasoned argument, and include a range of actions and tactics designed to move the partnership forward. Opposition and resistance are part and parcel of any partnership. A persuasive leader has the strategic sense to guide negotiations away from unproductive controversy, and the ability to confront differences with authenticity. Listening is vital, as is the judicious use of power when the time for a decision has arrived. The leader's task is to develop among the partners an enduring commitment to an attractive relationship. The partnership, however, should not be seen as an opportunity for conquest. Persuasion must be practiced with awareness of the compromises necessary to make the initiative work for all parties.

Finally, the dual skills of patience and perseverance are indispensable leadership qualities for successful partnerships. It takes time to develop a partnership, and the simplest

## INDIANA UNIVERSITY–PURDUE UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS AND MOI UNIVERSITY, KENYA

Begun in 1989, the partnership between Indiana University School of Medicine at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and Moi University School of Medicine in Kenya has evolved from a student and faculty exchange agreement into a multi-institutional network of programs spanning numerous academic disciplines, with a complex set of objectives. The current partnership includes 10 other U.S. institutions that joined either independently or through the ASANTE Consortium (America/Sub-Saharan Africa Network for Training and Education), including Brown University, the University of Utah, Duke University, and the University of Toronto. Partnership activities range from curriculum development and joint research to distance education and institution building projects.

The core programming of the partnership is the Academic Model for the Prevention and Treatment of HIV/AIDS (AMPATH) (<http://medicine.iupui.edu/kenya>). This collaboration develops strategies for decreasing the prevalence and impact of HIV/AIDS, and for educating health professionals. AMPATH has received over \$100 million in support from the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Kenyan Ministry of Health, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Gates Foundation, and individual donors. AMPATH currently treats 80,000 people each year, feeds 30,000 each month, and employs 750 Kenyans. AMPATH has built two hospitals and 18 outreach clinics. It also supports orphanages and multiple income and food security units. As part of its emphasis on equity between the Kenyan and American partners in the partnership, the Kenyan Ministry of Health owns all of the sites where AMPATH operates.

Over the last decade, AMPATH and the partnership of medical schools drew in other units of IUPUI, as well as organizations and individuals in the Indianapolis community. The partnership extended beyond the School of Medicine, to include the schools of dentistry, social work, liberal arts, law, business, and nursing in bringing resources to bear on the HIV/AIDS pandemic. These schools as well as other segments of the university, have also launched projects in curriculum development, institution building, student and faculty exchange, collaborative research, distance education, and study abroad. The expanded partnership was formalized in a strategic alliance in November 2006 (<http://ium.epsilen.com>).

This extensive partnership allows students and faculty not typically engaged in international activities to develop intercultural relationships and cross-cultural skills. In the last three years alone, over 50 IUPUI faculty have traveled to Moi to work on partnership activities, while over 20 Moi faculty have gone in the reverse direction. Similar numbers of students have made such journeys. IUPUI students even launched an Impact Kenya organization. Faculty from each institution have taught at the other, while students have fostered friendships via e-mail, as key mechanisms for learning in courses at both institutions.

The phenomenal growth of the partnership between IUPUI and Moi is the result of commitment, hard work, and continual dialogue between Kenyans and Americans to deal with the many issues that have arisen over the years. Research collaborations could not get fully under way, for example, until both universities worked to establish a Research and Sponsored Programs Office at Moi. Weekly bi-national conference calls were instituted to manage the myriad of issues that come up on a regular basis. The IU School of Medicine also established IU House (a complex of six units in Kenya) to facilitate the student and faculty exchanges and ensure a constant on-the-ground Indiana presence.

Perhaps most illustrative of the ways in which the partnership has dealt with adversity is what happened during the post-election violence that swept western Kenya in early 2008. While IUPUI evacuated all U.S. students during the crisis, two founding Indiana faculty and many Kenyan colleagues kept AMPATH operating, serving as a point of healing and stability amidst the chaos. IU House became a place of refuge for those displaced by the violence. Multiple phone calls and e-mail messages flew between Kenya and Indiana each day. Funds were raised both within IUPUI and beyond to assist in the recovery efforts once the violence ended. Indeed, as soon as the violence abated, AMPATH and other collaborative projects were renewed with new vigor and little delay. And IUPUI is now working with Moi to hold a major conference on reconciliation and harmonization in Kenya next summer.

arrangements must be intricately managed to ensure the best outcome. Frustration with one's partners is difficult to avoid completely, making patience a virtue in all phases of the initiative. Knowing that there are many unforeseen bumps in the road, it is important to persevere through the impediments, and continue to work toward the ultimate goal, even when the niggling details threaten to sidetrack the entire project.

## INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Apart from the leadership qualities that help ensure successful partnerships, several institutional characteristics play a significant role as well. As some of the most enduring institutions in society, colleges and universities have a host of embedded structures and procedures that have been in place for a very long time. It is rarely a simple matter to change the ways things are done. The challenge for higher education institutions engaged in cooperative arrangements involves adapting existing practices to serve a fresh agenda, without assuming that the old is necessarily obsolete. There must be a method to the madness of the academic tradition, though sometimes it tries the sanity of those attempting something new.

The academic reward structure tops the list of institutional policies that demand attention when developing partnerships. In many institutions, promotion and tenure for faculty members rely heavily on research, with teaching accomplishments holding secondary status. Service is often presented as the third expecta-

tion for academic staff, but it is rarely given much more than perfunctory attention. With reward and recognition structures so narrowly defined, there is little incentive for faculty members to engage in nontraditional activities. In addition, to the extent that partnerships involve cooperation, they collide with demands of faculty members to document their achievements as individuals. How, then, can the institution convince academic staff to contribute to partnerships that may not match their research nor their teaching interests? The persuasive leader may make a seductive pitch, but ultimately it is necessary to revisit the reward structure in order to make partnerships attractive to them.

An alternate strategy involves creating new incentives through the hiring process. In other words, rather than try to modify the reward structure for existing personnel, bring in people with an understanding of how to be successful in a new environment. Faculty appointments with specified commitments to existing partnerships or explicit requirements for involvement in new initiatives can form a core partnership cohort. With attrition and targeted development of new faculty lines, the reward structure can be transformed over time.

One model for a new approach to faculty work may be found in the hard sciences, where large research teams with membership across multiple institutions are commonplace. The Internet provides another strategy for continued and seamless cooperation. A third option is represented by interdisciplinary programs of study and problem-

based approaches, which provide an opening for developing curricula outside the framework of disciplinary traditions and bringing diverse groups together to develop creative solutions to real-world concerns. Nearly all institutions have expertise in these areas, and have developed ways of accounting for and supporting individuals whose research or teaching crosses disciplinary boundaries. Partnerships represent a different sort of boundary crossing, but can still benefit from building on cooperative arrangements like these that the faculties have already endorsed.

Institutions also need sufficient organizational capacity to support new partnership initiatives. Building this capacity is a challenge that involves developing new policies and procedures to support an expanding institutional infrastructure. Just as the institution can leverage its existing talent and knowledge to gain ground in new areas of scholarship, so must it assess its current administrative functions to determine what expertise can be tapped to serve new initiatives. Conversely, some functions may be well designed for existing tasks, but inadequate for the demands of working with external partners. Financial procedures, for example, may need to be updated to handle multiple sources of revenue and account for project-based expenses. Technology infrastructure may need to be revamped to be compatible with partner systems. Maintenance schedules for remote campuses or shared facilities will need to be accommodated. Simply tacking on new responsibilities to existing structures will likely

prove futile in the long run. Rather, institutions that treat organizational capacity for change and growth as a resource to be developed in concert with cooperative arrangements are much more likely to ensure lasting success.

The organizational capacity to sustain partnerships also involves the ongoing communication and assessment strategies that should be built into the initiative. Good communication among partners is key, and the flow of information about the partnership within the institution helps maintain organizational knowledge and support. Communication with external stakeholders—political sponsors, alumni, donors—is also necessary. The partnership may not immediately resonate with all stakeholders; therefore, the communication plan should include good public relations with the press, emphasizing how the initiative is important to the institution's mission. An assessment strategy should involve the validation of anticipated outcomes, as well as the short- and long-term viability of the project. The primary goal of the assessment, though, is to make sure the partnership continues to serve the institution's interest. This aspect of the assessment should, therefore, be under the control of the institution rather than delegated to the other partners. Communicating the results of that assessment will help gain support for mid-course corrections or for continuing the established course.

A final characteristic helps institutionalize the partnership for long-term sustainability. Because of the complexity of academic institutions, it is easy for a partner-

ship to become isolated and thus lose the vitality that comes from connection to the institution's life and mission. Even though it may continue to serve the narrow aims of the original arrangement, without continuing institutional support, the partnership will drift from broader academic values. Eventually it will be seen as incompatible with the institution and have to be terminated or spun off as an independent entity. Conversely, developing compatible

systems and coherent policies for the partnership ties the initiative to the campus and creates stability in the relationship. This means that the institution accommodates potentially different activities under a common framework, and that the academic community accepts and values the partnership mission as its own. This is a tall order, perhaps, but one that is essential if partnerships are going to remain a central university pursuit.



# Conclusion

The Transatlantic Dialogue concluded with summary reflections on the questions leaders should ask as they consider entering into a partnership. Participants agreed on a series of 10 questions to guide leaders in clarifying their goals and developing an appropriate strategy for cooperation (see sidebar).

In thinking ahead, the group speculated that international partnerships and partnerships with the private sector will be increasingly important, as will collaboration around research. Participants were particularly emphatic about the need to intensify international partnerships to reflect the restructuring of the world economy and the growing complexity of knowledge. Charles Bantz, chancellor of Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, noted that institutions need to make a real commitment to any cooperative effort, citing the immense difference between a few afternoons in Florence and the development of a joint degree. The challenges to leaders will be great. As Colin Riordan, vice chancellor at the University of Essex, UK, observed, fostering change requires patience, the ability to focus the scarce attention of people who are preoccupied with very different matters,

## COOPERATION CHECKLIST FOR LEADERS

1. Is this action connected to the institutional mission?
2. Have you identified realistic objectives?
3. Is there mutual trust among partners?
4. Are the right people (leaders?) in place on both sides to make it work?
5. Do you have the necessary buy-in from faculty members?
6. Is there sufficient organizational capacity to meet the needs of the arrangement?
7. Are all aspects of the agreement documented in writing?
8. Have you developed a communication plan?
9. Do you have an assessment strategy?
10. Are you prepared for surprises?

and the ability to empower others to work for a common purpose. Yet, cautioned Kevin Reilly, president of the University of Wisconsin system, there are limits to what leaders can really do. “Sometimes, we think we are really in charge,” he quipped.

The brave new world of higher education looks considerably different from how it did in 2001. In the foreword to this essay we noted that the 2008 meeting took place before the economic turmoil that now grips the world. Perhaps the most powerful insight to be gleaned from looking back and trying to look ahead is not the difficulty of predicting the future, but rather the necessity for higher education and its leaders to be ready to meet its challenges, without ever quite knowing what these will be.



# Appendix

## **Brave New World Revisited: Competition and Cooperation in Higher Education**

### **AUCC/ACE/EUA Transatlantic Dialogue**

June 20–23, 2008

Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue  
Vancouver, BC, Canada

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