

## Appendix D: Trilateral Advisory Committee Meeting: Notes

Wednesday, March 8, 2000

Washington, DC

*Present:* Rebeca Ambriz Chavez, Coordinadora General de Programas, Asociacion Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educacion Superiores (ANUIES); Luz Elena Banos Rivas, Directora de Cooperacion Educativa e Intercambio Academico, Instituto Mexicano de Cooperacion Internacional; Nicole Begin-Heick, University of Ottawa; Peggy Blumenthal, Vice President, Institute of International Education (IIE); Sally Brown, Senior Vice President, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC); Naomi F. Collins, ACE Consultant; Madeleine Green, Vice President, Center for Institutional and International Initiatives, ACE; Francisco Marmolejo, Director, CONAHEC, University of Arizona; Karen McBride, Director, International Relations, AUCC; Sylvia Ortega Salazar, Rectora, Universidad Pedagogica Nacional; Barbara Turlington, Director, International Education, ACE; Thomas Wood, President, Mount Royal College, Canada. *Absent:* Dolores Sanchez Soler, Asociacion Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educacion Superiores.

The meeting was opened at 8:40 a.m. on March 8, 2000, by Madeleine Green, Chair.

The purpose of the meeting was to devise, based on research model programs, a concept paper and feasibility study, and based on feedback from the field, to determine whether or not to proceed with the design phase of a multitiered marketplace for North American Higher Education Cooperation, Collaboration, and Exchange (outlined in those documents). Challenges to the committee, noted at the outset, were to think big and creatively, but to be pragmatic and realize constraints. Members acknowledged the value of the research, studies, and reports.

The committee considered the history of trilateral discussions (in which many of those present had participated), focused on specific reasons that trilateral exchange activity had not taken off with the zest some had envisioned, and reviewed barriers and obstacles to North American interchange. From this base, discussion turned to the concepts outlined in the papers, generating fruitful discussion and ultimately consensus on conclusions and recommendations.

### Key ideas that emerged included:

- The main challenge to mobility in North America is not lack of structure or of organization, but of policy, resources, and coordination.
- Student and faculty preferences are difficult to address, and we are unlikely to solve these comprehensively. However, student interest largely depends on faculty support for exchanges, and faculty support depends in large part on trust in the programs in other institutions, which in turn depends on opportunities for contact and familiarity. It was also noted that interest levels, preferences, and other apparent obstacles to exchange might more productively be viewed as "market forces," rather than barriers.
- Instead of looking for general (undifferentiated) demand, we should look for demand in specific areas or special niches. For example:
  - If we assume that the affluent have easy access to exchange, and will continue to be as mobile as they choose to gain professional advantage over their peers, we need also to look at special populations (e.g., students in all three countries of low socioeconomic origins; people of minority or indigenous populations; and disabled students).
  - We should also consider special interest areas like those in the professions, because interest in professional exchange (e.g., engineering, business, and health fields) has proved considerable.

Fields in the sciences also are of interest and may be supported through other agencies (e.g., CONACYT, NSF). Combined niches may also prove fruitful, e.g., women in science and engineering programs.

- Incentives for mobility in North America are different from those in Europe, where the political and economic incentives are in building a European identity, and exchanges are funded by governments.  
North America shares some characteristics of Asia (in that exchanges are driven by economic and career motives, and are more individualistic); but in Asia significant motivation for exchange stems from the hope of growing family and other businesses through expanded linguistic and cultural skills acquired abroad.
- One way to bolster student interest may be to view North American student mobility in a new way: not so much as the old language and culture-based "junior year abroad," but more as career development and professional enhancement. Thus, we need to consider other models, including work-study and other career related approaches (discussed further below).
- Institutional commitment and leadership are essential in this enterprise. Since there is currently a range of sophistication, experience, and expertise among institutional leaders in developing and sustaining successful exchanges, needs of novices as well as experienced leaders need to be addressed.
- Because of institutional autonomy and differences among higher education systems, comprehensive systems won't work to deal with course and credit recognition, accreditation, or other quality assurance issues in North America. (Discussion on how to address this, below).

After serious discussion of complex issues surrounding possible marketplace concepts and models, the group's thinking shifted to a different approach. Based on feedback, research, written studies, and discussion, a consensus emerged that sustainable support for a complex new structure would be difficult to ensure; that a new structure may not be the best way to address current obstacles; that existing institutions play roles which can be deepened, strengthened, or expanded to advance exchanges; and that new formal systems to equalize asymmetries and differing priorities may be less practical (and cost-effective) than individual case by case agreements, based on best practices without formal structures and systems (more on this below).

This conclusion advanced the discussion from how to build a structure to how to address needs of the field, including help for institutions in furthering exchange. The group agreed that the greatest barrier to mobility is lack of sustainable financial resources, which a new structure is unlikely to solve. However, addressing asymmetries, credit transfer, and stirring student interest may be accomplished in other ways. It was agreed that instead of building a complex physical or operational marketplace, creating a "virtual marketplace" would be useful and feasible. Such virtual marketplace should build on rather than duplicate existing mechanisms such as EI Net, which has the potential to fulfil this need.

A number of outcomes, conclusions, and recommendations to the three governments emerged from this productive turn in thinking

#### Outcomes and conclusions:

1. A decentralized rather than centralized system will be most productive, cost-effective, and sustainable for North America. We see this as a network coordinated by a single organization and offering a non-prescriptive, free-market approach.  
-- This program and mechanism should take the form of a "virtual marketplace" rather than a physical marketplace. The virtual marketplace would include:

#### A. *Informational Services*

- The site should have clearly stated categories of information, such as exchange opportunities (e.g., North American Mobility Program; National Security Education Program); financial aid and scholarship possibilities; conferences, seminars, and events; information on quality assurance; research; work-study; and internships, via easily accessible portal technologies.
- Much of the information already exists at IIE, NAFSA, ACE, ANUIES, AUCC, CONAHEC, specialized associations, and other organizations and can be hot-linked to the site.

#### B. *Matchmaking and Brokering*

- The virtual marketplace should run an interactive web site, bulletin boards for posting needs and interests, relational data bases (for informing and connecting people), and a mentor/advisor service (experienced institutions aiding novices) for a mix of automatic and personalized services.
- These services could be undertaken by an existing organization, CONAHEC, whose mission and capacity are suited to developing and managing such programs.

#### C. *Best Practices*

- The virtual marketplace should serve as source and coordinating mechanism for developing and sharing information on best practices through guidelines for various aspects of exchanges (e.g., credit recognition; how to obtain visas for work-study students; and portability of financial aid), to include standard procedures for student mobility, industry standards, and model documents.
- It was agreed that models of best practice can play a major role in guiding new and experienced institutions in developing and implementing programs.
- Associations, including specialized accrediting or licensing associations in each profession, should play a role in providing best practices for all areas of interchange.
- It was also agreed that it is not best to address one of the major obstacles identified during the process, that is, balancing asymmetries and differing priorities and needs between and among institutions and nations, through formal structures and mechanisms. Rather, it is through finding ways for faculty members to get to know each other and their programs and helping them to reach informal understandings on exchanges that are mutually beneficial, even if not strictly identical. Information on best practices can be very helpful here.
- The provision of detailed information on institutions and programs, as well as on practical strategies, will also be the best way to address quality assessment issues and ways to interpret academic value, including course and credit transfer and recognition.
- At least three approaches to course and credit recognition mentioned were: 1) posting examples of actual courses that have been successfully credited in one institution to act as a guide to others (as done with engineering programs under RAMP). Faculty members will recognize and respect their colleagues' judgment, and ease credit recognition; 2) posting detailed course content and outlines for information and evaluation for potential users; and 3) researching and reporting best practices in course and program recognition that have worked in the existing North American Mobility Program and other exchange programs.
- Areas to be included under best practices would include model memoranda of understanding (MOUs), institutional agreements, internal institutional coordination, language preparation, visa acquisition, and student issues.

D. Features of the site would also include built-in feedback mechanisms for user response (up front and continuing) to shape the system; and trilingual and trinational materials; and trilateral financial support.

2. Work-study, co-op education, and internship programs could be a new programmatic focus to galvanize exchanges. These programs link mobility to professional life and address student (and corporate) interest; they are a promising new direction for spurring North American exchange. Such programs also have the virtue of furthering student learning while providing additional resources and encouraging language learning.

- A first step would be to approach the North American Alliance for Education and Enterprise (Wood), Conference Boards, and their counterparts in each country, to seek productive partnerships.

3. Student need-based top-up support is essential to broadening and expanding access to North American mobility experiences.
4. Support for faculty travel to get to know their colleagues in other institutions and to set up exchanges is among the most useful tools to expand student mobility.
5. Encouraging bilateral (as well as trilateral) programming within the trilateral context, without rigid insistence that each exchange be trilateral, will be an effective means to achieve major goals for North America.
6. A focus on North American area studies may be a useful aspect of overall programming if the products and programs are engaging, innovative, and productive.
7. In order to significantly advance North American mobility, significant government investment is needed. All evidence indicates that absent sustainable resource commitment, programs on the scale and scope of those in Europe are unlikely to occur.

Recommendations to Three Governments on Trilateral Commission  
(see draft Letter for actual wording based on these notes)

1. An innovative "virtual marketplace," as described above, is a promising, productive, and cost-effective approach to North American interchange. The three governments are urged to support the efforts of CONAHEC and its EI Net to ramp up capacity and technology to fulfill the informational and matchmaking functions and services of a new virtual marketplace for North America. Such a service should provide "one-stop shopping," including best practices and professional guidance and advising.
2. Because work-study proves a promising new approach to North American interchange (as discussed above), each of the three governments should convene its relevant agencies (e.g., Commerce, Science, Labor, Energy, Environment, Education) to join forces and create partnerships to further trinational mobility.
3. To further exchange in points 1 and 2, we urge the governments to meet for the purpose of addressing relevant visa barriers, and to devise ways, under NAFTA, to ease and rationalize the process. The information clearinghouse of the virtual marketplace, discussed above, can help maintain and distribute accurate information on outcomes in three languages.
4. To equalize and broaden access to opportunities, the three governments should support a program for student mobility through need-based top-up awards for the marginal (and opportunity) costs of exchange to those students from less advantaged backgrounds.
5. Based on agreement that faculty involvement is essential to student mobility, we may want to include a recommendation for support of faculty who are trying to develop exchange relationships, as the North American Mobility Program now provides. [note: in final letter, this was included in first point, with student and faculty support via NAMP.]
6. The Mexican government is urged to continue support for graduate student education.

In sum, the committee began by identifying barriers to exchange, and considered a marketplace concept to address these. After examining successful models, exploring sustainable resources, and pursuing a study of the concept, the committee listened to the research and to feedback from reference groups, reconsidered issues and obstacles, and concluded that the most fruitful direction for North American interchange will be:

- (1) to develop a virtual marketplace to:
  - (a) provide coordinated, categorized information,

- (b) offer a virtual matchmaking, brokering, and advising service, and
- (c) compile and disseminate best practices in all areas of interchange;
- (2) to pursue work study, cooperative learning, and internships as mechanisms to advance mobility; and
- (3) to recommend that governments convene colleague agencies to create new partnerships for mobility, find ways to ease visa acquisition for exchanges under NAFTA, and support student top-up awards to broaden and equalize access.

Next steps:

- Draft two-page letter to three governments for March 30 meeting.
- Write report on Stage 1 discussing what was learned; the enduring issues; and the problem of aid.
- Finish feasibility study (especially models) for submission (and possible web posting).
- Produce two new products: the working model based on two or three existing models; and the virtual marketplace.
- Continue to work with advisory committee and reference groups.

Products:

1. Concept paper
2. Feasibility study including appendices of model programs, useful resources, questionnaire, etc.
3. Notes on March advisory committee meeting.
4. Draft letter to three governments with recommendations.
3. Report on Phase 1, to include products above.
3. Outline/rationale for work-study programs.
4. Outline/components of virtual marketplace.

*NFC - Drafted 3/8; Final Revision and distribution, 4/5/00*

AGENDA QUESTIONS FOR MEETING OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE, NORTH AMERICAN  
COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND EXCHANGE.  
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- Item 1. Feasibility issue: Will a marketplace model work?
- A. As a mechanism (is it functional)?
  - B. As an approach to enhancing North American collaboration and exchange?  
Will it address our major goal--to increase exchange and collaboration activity by addressing current barriers and obstacles to interchange?
- Item 2. Should we proceed to the design phase?
- Item 3. If proceeding: What is the best design with which to begin?
- A. Structure: Where along the continuum from "free market" to a more structured approach should we begin? What is likely to strike the best balance between too much/too little administration?
  - B. Key Barriers:
    - 1) Re: credit and course transfer and recognition, should a template based in existing models (ECTS, UCTS, Diploma Supplement) be developed to capture course and program information? Or will a less formalized insistence on mutual agreement suffice?
    - 2) Re: balancing asymmetrical and differing needs and priorities, should we design a uniform currency system based in a core unit, or start with chits or IOUs of program elements?
    - 3) Re: Other barriers and players are there, additional considerations or approaches we should take into account?

C. Revenue:

- 1) Which form(s) of revenues should be projected / incorporated into initial design?
- 2) If user fees are among them, at what stage would participant involvement become formalized? (Trying to preserve an open, accessible market up front, at what stage would user fees be imposed or membership gate be entered?)

D. Additional/Specialized Expertise:

For design phase, what specialized skills are needed, beyond those contained in existing advisory and reference committees and PI? How do we find a person with that expertise?