

Marlene Johnson's comments
CONAHEC conference:
"Higher Education Collaboration: Local Responses in a Global Context"
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It is a pleasure to be here today, and to participate in this important discussion. I would suggest that it's particularly important at this time in our political calendar, as the candidates for president focus on the economy, its impact on our local well being as well as the global economy, and our role in world affairs. In this environment, there is an urgency about higher education's role and leadership in helping to define relationships and roles of individuals and citizens.

In promoting the internationalization of U.S. higher education, NAFSA: Association of International Educators has three distinct roles. First is our role in professional development and training the international education leaders and practitioners on all U.S. campuses. Second is our role as the advocacy leaders within higher education on policy questions that affect the ability of higher education to assume its appropriate and key role in educating the future leader of the U.S. and many from around the world as well. Third, recognizing the successes of individual campuses in their internationalization efforts, in order to serve to share best practices and inspire other leaders, institutions and communities to work on these important issues as well.

On the professional development/training side of our work, our goal is to ensure that all university staff working in the field of international education have the skill sets and tools to provide quality support to incoming and outgoing students. On the leadership level, our efforts are to develop the leadership capacity of key individuals to make the case upward in the university system, broadly throughout the faculties and to the larger community, that increasing the international focus of all aspects of the university is essential to a well education students and to keeping the university at the cutting edge of engaging with its community of business, non-profits and other educators in a way that addresses the future challenges and opportunities our communities and individuals face.

Our advocacy work has focused on national level policy goals tied to advancing national interests related to foreign and security policy. The framework of our advocacy agenda was initially articulated in a paper released in 1999 calling for a National Policy on International Education, in which we laid out the details of why such a policy was essential to the nation. Most recently, we have updated that paper and released it as a paper to the next president of the United States, outlining why international education is essential to the national security, the economic well being and to improving the role of the United States in the world. This paper is available on our web site and I encourage you to read it. I welcome your feedback.

On the national policy agenda, we coordinate our efforts with in the higher education community, while also working to build a strong network of grassroots activists on college and university campuses around the country.

One of the ways NAFSA empowers its members to make these connections is through our annual economic impact statements, which demonstrate the amount by which each state benefits from hosting international students and their dependents. These statements are further broken down by institution, which gives are members tangible, concrete evidence regarding the benefits of international education at home – information they share with local political leaders as well as with member of congress.

We have also worked actively with our grassroots network to encourage individual state governments to focus on the values of international education to their own states. To date, NAFSA’s grassroots activists are responsible for more than 20 states passing an International Education Policy specifically focused on why this is essential for the future health of their state and its citizens.

A growing number of professionals in international education have connected the impact of their work with local concerns in their own communities. A number of terrific innovations at a local level tell the story. Each year, NAFSA presents its Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization to U.S. institutions that have made remarkable strides in internationalizing their campuses.

The awards are presented at our annual conference, and the winning institutions are profiled in a book published each fall and featured in our bi-monthly magazine, *International Educator*. One of the criteria for the Simon award is demonstrating international aspects to local outreach efforts. To give you a sense of the extraordinary things going on at institutions that tie their campuses to the local communities, and I would like to highlight a few specific stories.

At Howard Community College in Maryland, not far from Washington, DC, there is a tremendous commitment to promoting international learning while keeping community service at the forefront of the institution's mission. Rising to the challenge of meeting the needs of areas businesses and their increasingly global reach, Howard offers continuing study opportunities ranging from intensive language instruction for U.S. workers preparing to China to technical training for Kuwaiti workers arriving in the United States. It's ever growing English Language Institute caters to the needs of suburban Maryland's growing immigrant population. In addition, Howard offers study trips to Russia for both students and members of the local community.

At Colgate University, a private liberal arts college in Hamilton, New York, there is a strong belief that the transformative energy many students feel after returning from study abroad should be channeled back into the local community. Students have engaged in service learning projects with Bosnian refugees in the

area, and have helped to launch micro businesses and community non-profits. These types of efforts receive institutional support through the university's Center for Outreach, Volunteers and Education (COVE). This allows students to engage with the issues they may have dealt with studying in sub-Saharan Africa or in the former Soviet Bloc right in their own backyard, and helps share the positive impact of international education with a broader audience.

At the University of Oklahoma – the state's flagship public campus – there has been a tremendous focus on internationalizing the community beyond the campus. The university's International Programs Center offers events across the state to build awareness of international issues in an increasingly global world. The goal is to help ordinary citizens be able to see the international connections to their daily lives, and create and maintain an informed population. Closer to campus, the university has launched a program called "OU Cousins," which pairs an international student with an American student on campus – seventy percent of whom come from Oklahoma itself. Combined with a friends of international students program that allows students from overseas to spend time with area families, the university is making great strides toward building global civic awareness among all Oklahomans.

These are just a few examples of the many ways international educators are building a local constituency in support of student and scholar exchange. Of

course, each setting is different, and every approach is unique, as these cases demonstrate. Yet the positive impacts of these endeavors on promoting our issues at all levels of government have been remarkable, and continue to reap rewards.

There are also a number of very important state initiatives that reflect the momentum overall in the country for internationalizing our institutions and our communities. Let me share a few of them with you.

At the state level, Indiana has undertaken an effort to internationalize its K-12 curriculum, which includes working with teacher training programs within the state to ensure that they have the international competencies necessary to bring into the classroom. In addition, in February of this year, the state's department of education convened a leadership summit with representatives from both K-12 and higher education, major corporations and small business, and foundations to explore the opportunities for further growth of international education within Indiana. Shortly thereafter, Indiana University – the state's largest university system – launched its own international strategic plan, which included a goal of expanding outreach to schools, citizens' organizations, and businesses by providing training programs, language institutes and a wide array of other educational opportunities to the general population.

In West Virginia, the state's higher education commission launched its Consortium for Internationalizing Higher Education in May 2006. This innovative

collaboration between government, business, and both public and private higher education institutions assists campuses in internationalizing their curricula, builds contacts between West Virginia institutions and those around the world, and seeks to increase both the number of international students studying in the state, as well as the number of West Virginians studying abroad. The consortium also provides a website to help students find educational opportunities both for those coming to West Virginia and those seeking an experience abroad.

In North Carolina in 2005, Governor Mike Easley asked the University of North Carolina's Center for International Understanding to coordinate the state's North Carolina in the World initiative. While aimed mostly at internationalizing K-12 education, the initiative also pairs schools with teachers from around the world, as well as UNC students studying abroad. In addition, the UNC School of Education maintains an extensive online portal for educators seeking international education curriculum materials. By having the state university system work together with primary and secondary education, North Carolina is creating tremendous momentum for growth in international education.

As we have worked to advance international education issues from campus to Congress, a few trends emerge:

- There is growing recognition of internationalization as a core direction/responsibility of higher education

- Increasing reality of global economy: most U.S. communities are dependent on the global economy for jobs, either through direct investment of foreign companies in their communities or the importance of international markets for the sale of their locally made products.
- Growing ethnic diversity of the U.S. has resulted in tremendous diversity in language and culture in virtually all U.S. urban schools, and hundreds of schools in more rural communities as well.
- Recent study by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs indicates that the majority of U.S. parents believe that their children will need to compete and be effective in a global economy, want their children to speak second languages and want their children to study abroad.

In these ways, international education is an increasingly local concern. As we advance our policy agenda through different strategies and tactics, higher education institutions are increasingly realizing that our work ties into their overall missions. This is especially true for public universities and community colleges, with their particular roles in driving state and local economies.

We have seen some remarkable progress across the nation as a result of these efforts, both at the state and local levels, and I am optimistic that our leaders in higher education and in our communities and states recognize that they must keep this momentum if we are to be more thoughtful and respected leaders in the

world, able to participate successfully in the global economy and prepare our young people for the challenges and opportunities ahead.