

**The Feasibility of Developing a Multifunction Marketplace to Increase North
American Higher Education Cooperation, Collaboration, and Exchange:
Report and Conclusions**

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Goals

The broad goal of this project has been to find ways to intensify North American academic cooperation and exchange by addressing key obstacles. The immediate goal has been to explore the feasibility of creating a new mechanism, a marketplace for higher education cooperation and exchange. An earlier feasibility discussion paper developed for this project provided the basis for determining whether to proceed with the design of such a marketplace. This paper presents both the findings of that earlier paper and the conclusions drawn from analysis and discussion of the research and study documents by the advisory committee..

The intention of the proposed marketplace was to increase broad and sustainable North American cooperation and exchange in all fields (arts and sciences, professional, and technical fields) and in multiple models (undergraduate and graduate mobility, collaborative research, joint degrees, curriculum development, distance education, internships, and new and emerging combinations). At a time when regional economic and cultural ties are growing stronger worldwide, it appeared to the three sponsoring higher education organizations, the American Council on Education (ACE), la Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior (ANUIES), and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), that a comprehensive approach might be the most effective for North America.

NAFTA Context and Project Background:

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was designed to enhance trade in goods and services among North American nations and strengthen the economies of all three nations. Consistent with, and complementary to, this commercial agreement, North American leaders in government, higher education, and the corporate and foundation sectors have agreed to advance higher education cooperation and exchange.

ACE, ANUIES, and AUCC have from the beginning of trilateral discussions been at the forefront of North American collaboration efforts, and have signed a memorandum of cooperation. With the support of their respective governments, the three associations undertook an exploration of the feasibility of a multifaceted marketplace approach to North American mobility, collaboration, cooperation, and exchange. NAFTA provides the rationale and context for government involvement not only in enhancing opportunity, but also in removing barriers that limit the flow of students and scholars, ideas, and academic projects across North American borders.

Trends

Recent statistics on North American exchanges indicate some positive trends. Open Doors (December 1999) shows an increase of 10.3 percent for U.S. student study in Mexico, placing Mexico as the fifth most popular destination, with 7,574 students. Canada, as a destination for study by U.S. students, rose by 41 percent, albeit on a small base, to 962 students. Canada and Mexico are the only two countries outside of Asia that rank among the top 10 countries of origin of foreign students in the United States. Canada as a country of origin rose by 3.2 percent; and Mexico, by 0.9 percent, putting them at sixth and 10th place, respectively.

An AMPEI report of 1999 notes that since 1991-92, the number of Mexicans studying in the United States has risen from 6,650 to 8,975, an increase of nearly 35 percent. During the same period, the number of U.S. students in Mexico (on exchange programs) has increased 35 percent, from 4,600 to 6,200. The greatest percentage increase is in the number of Mexican students in Canada, from 232 to 543, or 134 percent

In the competitive North American Mobility Program, sponsored by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, demand for programs exceeds available support by a ratio of 3 or 4 to 1. Although it is difficult to ascertain trends because this program has been subject to funding uncertainty (resulting in delayed announcements that affect applicant pool), clearly there is strong interest. Similarly, U.S. student interested in the Fulbright Program is sufficiently high that the ratio of candidates to awards for study in Mexico is about 5 to 1; and for Canada, it is 3 or 4 to 1 (with certain limitations which hinder application numbers).

Since the application processes for both these programs are rigorous these ratios, represent significant measures of interest. (Clearly, better longitudinal data and analysis would be a major asset to program planning.)

A less optimistic rendering of the North American Mobility picture is portrayed in CONAHEC's Working Paper No. 8, by John Mallea, Salvador Malo, and Dell Pendergrast, in which they present a failure to meet the vision of the Vancouver communique from 1992 to the present. However the statistics are interpreted, it appears that higher education exchange has not fulfilled the potential under NAFTA that many people had hoped: Numbers and percentages of students crossing North American boundaries remain small.

Obstacles and Barriers Identified

Trilateral discussion since 1992 has revealed at least three significant obstacles to exchange which dampen enthusiasm, limit collaboration, and restrict ease of mobility. They have been identified as (1) asymmetry and differences in national and higher education priorities, needs, and resources; (2) an overall lack of resources and funds for these endeavors; and (3) issues surrounding credit transfer and program recognition.

To test assumptions on barriers, determine level of interest and demand for North American collaboration and exchange, and envision the possibility of enhanced programming through a proposed marketplace model, questionnaire was administered at the annual meeting of the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) in Veracruz in October 1999. Responses indicated that there is interest in exchange programs (varying from country to country); that difficulties in receiving credit or having programs recognized are perceived as critical barriers to exchange; and that significant growth in activity is unlikely without the infusion of new resources.

Additional barriers emerging from further discussion, research, and input by the advisory committee and reference groups have included: (1) lack of language proficiency; (2) difficulty of obtaining visas; (3) faculty disinterest; (4) structural and cultural differences among higher education institutions in the three nations; (5) institutions' limited awareness of exchange possibilities and of information resources available; and (6) a need to

address student advising and service issues, including those surrounding information, preparation, orientation, and accommodations.

Note that these barriers are consistent with those identified by other studies, including IIE's Academic Mobility in North America: Toward New Models of Integration and Collaboration; CONAHEC's Working Paper No. 9, "Survey and Evaluation of North American Higher Education Cooperation," by Fernando Leo'n-Garcia, Dewayne Matthews, Lorna Smith, and Missing the Boat (see Appendix G).

Project Methodology

For purposes of the current study, an advisory committee of nine members (three each from Canada, Mexico, and the United States) was convened (see Appendix B). In a teleconference, the committee reviewed the survey questionnaire prior to the October 1999 CONAHEC meeting (see Appendix C).

To provide perspective to the project, a study was conducted of existing exchange programs that might offer relevant formats or approaches to addressing barriers. With the input of the advisory committee, 15 programs were identified for study, and topics for research were developed. Information was gathered on each model with the help of a research assistant, verified and corrected by the program's contact person, and revised for the current document (see Appendix H).

A reference group of four to eight (primarily) campus-based people in each country was also selected to advise on the value of a new mechanism, and to provide other advice and assistance.

A concept paper was drafted and circulated to all members of the advisory committee in January 2000 for input. As a next step, a draft feasibility discussion paper outlining possible design features of a North American marketplace was distributed in February 2000 in preparation for a March meeting of the advisory committee (see Appendix A).

A PROPOSED MARKETPLACE INITIATIVE

Introduction

Responses to the concept paper by members of the advisory committee indicated an overall consensus to pursue the study of a "higher education marketplace for North America," but with a range of views concerning how the marketplace should look, from a true "free market" without artificial constructs, to a more formal scheme that might resemble such existing models as SOCRATES/ERASMUS and CEEPUS.

A model was presented to the advisory committee at its March 2000 meeting; it assumed the creation of a multifunction marketplace setting in which traders come together under a set of rules and restrictions (e.g., the New York Stock Exchange). The model was developed on the basis of a review and analysis of existing models, feedback from members of the advisory committee, participants at the CONAHEC meeting, and other colleagues. The proposed marketplace attempted to incorporate useful features of existing programs, address identified obstacles, strike a balance between flexibility and structure, and develop a comprehensive approach to North American collaboration in higher education.

The proposed mechanism was a multifunction marketplace, with a four-tier structure, governed under a written framework document, and based in trading program elements in an effort to balance needs and interests among participating institutions over time. It addressed at least two key obstacles to exchange directly: differing and asymmetrical needs and priorities, and credit and course recognition and transfer. These obstacles, and others that lie in part outside the marketplace model but affect its smooth functioning (including visas and language proficiency), as well as the broader higher education context of exchange (including university leadership, faculty, and student issues), were also addressed. Resource issues, often cited as key obstacles to exchange, were treated not as stand-alone barriers, but under the auspices of related topics. Approaches to revenue generation also were suggested.

Framework for Collaboration: A Written Document

To ensure shared understanding for participation in the marketplace, a written governing document was suggested to set a framework and context for exchange and collaboration, and serve as a contract between participants and market. The document would outline general principles and practices, and address policies concerning access and requirements. Designed to be a written constitution, as well as a contract, it would include purpose, policies, practices, and processes—the rules of the road—for the marketplace, to ensure shared understandings and smooth operations.

To be developed at the same time as the marketplace, and by the board (and other stakeholders) of the organization (existing or new) entrusted to develop and manage the marketplace, this framework agreement, would cover key issues in mobility, credits, currencies, and other issues addressed below under respective subject headings.

A supplemental guide was also suggested to ensure internal coordination within each institution (e.g., among faculty, registrars, and other administrators) by clarifying respective responsibilities. Because smooth coordination of efforts within each institution helps to ensure smooth operations among institutions, such a guide would enhance collaboration.

A Four-tiered Marketplace

A Place for Posting Needs and Interests:

The broadest need, it was assumed, is to connect people with complementary interests with one another. This would best be effected through a specially designed web site with a template that encourages institutions to post their interests and offerings.

To address the issue of broad access vs. member-only services, the site might include two levels or components: a general access matchmaking bulletin board to attract and inform potentially interested partners; and a member-only service limited to those who choose to pay a fee. If the initial bulletin board were limited to members only, it would restrict access and choice; but if costs of the marketplace and brokerage service have to be covered (at least in part) through member, user, or service fees, then some kind of mechanism has to capture revenues (see “Banking, Venture Capital, and Revenue elow).

Such a site not only needs to be well-designed, at a level of sophistication comparable to that of e-commerce, but also advertised and disseminated, both online and off, in professional and association publications, at national meetings, and through other access to targeted audiences (e.g., *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and direct mailings, etc.). It requires heavy promotion as part of a comprehensive and comprehensible program.

(Note that evolving technologies, such as converging media, streaming, and interactive Internet will likely increase opportunities for electronic interaction in the next few years.

The concept of an "electronic marketplace" has been developed in a separate paper ("Virtual Marketplace," document 3). See "Feasibility Discussion" below.

Connecting to Possible Partners:

When potential partners meet via the web, they can follow up with e-mail and telephone conversations as they explore possible shared interests, and determine whether or not to meet in person.

Meeting and Connecting in Person

Since partnerships and agreements depend on personal and professional fit, meeting in person to ascertain rapport and strike up agreement is essential.

These connections can best occur through a real marketplace, or fair—a site at which people meet face-to-face. The gathering place serves at least three functions: to connect in person people who have met electronically; to convene those who have not had previous conversations; and to reaffirm connections and adjust programs among those already engaged in agreements. The event may be an add-on to an existing meeting of a relevant organization or the program may stand alone. (Further discussion of venues and targeting was provided in the feasibility discussion draft presented to the advisory committee.)

Brokering Agreements:

To realize the type of program delineated in the first draft feasibility study, a professional broker(s) has to play an active role in engaging all parties in forming agreements. A template for agreement might be developed to help facilitate the matching process, and would include a format for describing course offerings (or other program elements). The broker would serve as matchmaker, mediator, and manager of the clearinghouse.

NB: The main challenge in brokering is to devise systems and documents that ease, guide, and facilitate processes, not tax, vex, and rebuff participants.

The Currency of the Marketplace

Any proposed system of trade, barter, or currency should have to address a key obstacle to exchange, namely, asymmetry and/or differing needs, interests, and priorities. If existing mechanisms succeed in achieving fair and mutually beneficial balances, no need exists to develop new systems of equalizing differences.

Thus, a key question in designing a marketplace mechanism was whether to develop system of currency, and if so, whether it should be uniform, tied to an agreed upon unit (e.g., person-semester); or whether to allow program elements themselves to serve as documents of trade (chits or IOUs), of floating value determined by the needs and demands of participants.

A discussion of possible currency systems, and of issues surrounding currency development, was elaborated on in the earlier discussion draft of this report. The discussion and conclusion of the advisory committee are found below, beginning on page 16.

The study also proposed the development of a system to classify program elements (e.g., by courses, technical assistance, language training, internships, and other categories) to facilitate trade in recognizable units. The classification system was to be built into the template for agreements so that categories of units become consistent.

Success of the marketplace model and its currency would depend on a commitment to long-term trade and a large pool of participants (as in a real market) so that the mechanism offers opportunity, variety, and choice over time.

Banking, Venture Capital, and Revenue Sustenance

Resource development was recognized as crucial to the success of this model in a number of areas: start-up funds; revenue streams to maintain the program; and stipends for key participants such as student cost of living differentials and faculty travel awards or other incentives.

For startup, sources of support would likely include the three governments and/or large foundations. Such sources would be most willing to seed the project only if they were confident in its prospects for long-term support through continuing revenue streams built in to the concept.

Ongoing revenue generation might be derived from the creation of a profit-making business, an enterprise that would offer products or services to the market (e.g., a placement service). Creative thinking plus market analysis would be necessary.

Additional ongoing support would include corporate involvement if ways are found to provide mutual benefits to corporate and other constituents.

User/access fees: Without North American government support comparable to that in other regions of the world, user fees would be necessary. One challenge would be determining at what stage to levy fees to help defray administrative costs, while maintaining as broad and open a web site as possible up front. For access to marketplace services, possible approaches include: fees for web site access at a certain point, subscription fees for use of web site and/or for other services, posting fees, membership fees for general access to the marketplace, or other models based in commercial, subscription, and/or dating services.

Student stipends and faculty travel awards: Since international exchange experience benefits not only the individuals and institutions involved, but also strengthens nations, corporations, and the world, participants need support from beneficiaries beyond the

immediate users. Such support would fuel student mobility through top-up support, cost of living differentials, and travel; and would enhance faculty involvement, commitment, and interest through professional travel awards for the purpose of developing exchanges, collaborative projects, joint research, or other interchange. Most importantly, it would provide equity and access for students of varying means.

Sources would need to include corporations and corporate foundations (possibly with "named" stipends, e.g., Citibank Scholarships, Microsoft Mobility Awards, General Motors Internships); and/or government-supported top-up awards. (Note: If support comes from the three governments, it may be limited to those from their home country.)

Other sources of existing support, such as Mexico's scholarships for faculty upgrade, or U.S. student financial aid, may be applied to international exchange experiences (in Mexico, for example, applying to SESIC for a PROMEP scholarship; or to CONACYT for other appropriate awards). The information clearinghouse (proposed above) would list sources of financial support (using existing and new documents, including those of IIE).

Additionally, to open international experience to students without financial means, governments could offer need-based awards.

Support from home institutions also is important. The CREPUQ-ANUIES program, for example, draws on institutional support for participants. Some institutions in the United States have seen successful efforts by students to create a global mobility fund through voluntary contributions, e.g., \$1.00 per student at registration or special events, used for need-based stipends for international experiences. Administrative, counseling, and other infrastructure for exchange also are essential.

Opportunities for internships, work-study, and other approaches to student support as part of a comprehensive mobility program also should play an important role. (More on this topic below.)

Note that in considering all resource and funding issues, assurance of sustainability is key to the success of the marketplace program.

Structure and Management Issues

Structure, management, and administration of the marketplace were deferred to the design phase, pending discussion and decision by the advisory committee on whether or how to proceed.

Value of a Comprehensive Approach

Creating a comprehensive new program was driven by the belief that a successful program would generate greater demand, and that greater demand would drive new growth in programs and language proficiency in an expanding spiral of demand-driven exchange and collaboration. By accommodating the spectrum of internationalizing activity, from student and scholar mobility to research collaboration, curriculum development, and joint endeavors; by including all professional and academic fields; by addressing issues that spur and deter involvement of relevant constituencies; and by encouraging new and emerging formats and creative approaches, this mechanism could

address the needs of a rapidly changing and unpredictable world, as well as obstacles identified and described above.

BARRIERS, OBSTACLES, AND CONTEXT

Of the identified barriers to exchange, some are addressed within the proposed marketplace concept; others lie wholly, or in part, outside the marketplace, but have considerable impact on the effectiveness of the mechanism, and therefore need attention in any overall approach to enhanced North American interchange.

Within the Marketplace: Program and Course Transfer or Recognition

Considerable effort would be required to address fully the panoply of issues surrounding the transfer or recognition of courses or programs within or among countries, and the related issues of quality assessment and mutual acceptance of courses, credits, degrees, and national accreditation. However, for the purposes of the proposed marketplace program, it was proposed that these issues be addressed pragmatically, based on successful examples.

At the inception of the marketplace, the framework document would require agreement by participating institutions on credit and course transfer and/or recognition among partners to allow the program to move forward, and provide necessary assurance for participants. This might be achieved through the development of a special template within the framework agreement to provide a format for sharing information on course and program offerings. At least two types of documents exist as guides. First, the credit transfer schema of Europe and the Pacific, ECTS and UCTS, provide outlines and documents that help capture relevant information for evaluating credits and courses (even if the entire schema were not adopted in North America). Second, the emerging European (OECD/ NESCO) "Diploma Supplement" may also provide a model to enhance degree and credential transparency.

In the longer term, a systematic study should be undertaken to analyze existing programs to develop models of best practice for credit and course transfer and recognition. Such a document would capitalize on past successes, ease agreements, and assist novices. (Discussion of this approach was provided in the concept paper.)

Ongoing study should also seek to develop possible synergies between academic and professional recognition in North America, as professional exchange has proved to be a promising area of mutual exchange (in the North American Mobility Program and RAMP). The professions also have been ahead of academic fields in defining criteria for program content, credentialing, and accreditation.

Within the Marketplace: Information Resources and Successful Examples

Exchange is limited by institutional leaders, administrators, and faculty who may be unaware of opportunities for exchange and of information resources. Providing and maintaining a central source of information is an essential part of a comprehensive program. Accurate information also can help offset exaggerated or erroneous perceptions people acquire through the media and word of mouth, in regard to safety and security, visas, health, or other issues.

Beyond a passive role, the proposed marketplace would provide strong outreach to institutional leaders and faculties to promote North American exchange. Presentations at relevant seminars and annual meetings, information disseminated through association channels, and other active outreach will be required to ensure that the pool of participating institutions broadens steadily.

Within the Marketplace: Student Service/Advising Issues

For successful mobility experiences, student service issues need to be addressed. Through a combination of appropriate information and agreement provisions, any such program will need to address student advising issues, including those surrounding preparation, orientation, and accommodations.

Within the Marketplace: Institutional Cultural Differences

Another set of obstacles noted are the differences in structure, history, and culture of higher education that complicate transacting business among the three countries. These and other cultural differences have to be addressed in any mediating and brokering process; those who manage or participate in programs will need background to ensure cultural understanding and awareness.

Within and Outside Marketplace: Language Proficiency

A broad discussion of language proficiency issues, including different perceptions by students, faculty, and administrators, was provided in the concept paper. It concluded that as a practical matter, it will be useful to assume not so much that students with proficiency will seek exchange, but rather that students motivated to participate in exchanges will learn the language. That is, interest in and demand for doing business, engineering, anthropology, or environmental science abroad will spur teaching and learning of language rather than the other way around; language study may not precede but follow interests (although some educators might prefer it the other way around).

While agreements on language proficiency might best be left to those signing memoranda of understanding, an effort should be made to address need-based language education. Although the larger academic issue remains—how to increase language learning and proficiency—one expectation is that stimulating sufficient interest in exchange will generate earlier interest in language study so that potential exchange students become language-ready. Success in generating greater demand will in the long run drive not only postsecondary but also secondary school language learning and requirements.

Outside the Marketplace: Visas

Although it is difficult to obtain accurate research on visa applications granted and rejected for the United States (based not only on statistics, but also on analysis of underlying reasons and trends needed to interpret data), the fact is that visa acquisition, as both a perceived and actual barrier to exchange, needs to be addressed.

In regard to the proposed marketplace program, it will be essential that the three governments, under the rubric of NAFTA, agree on ways to provide for appropriate visas for students and faculty in short- and long-term interchange, and at various levels and

types of study (including internship and work-study programs). Representatives of the three respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs can negotiate understandings and agreements on types of visas, or number of heads per year, that may be exchanged, or find other approaches that foster freer exchange in ideas, students, scholars, and educators (possibly based in models used in other geographic regions). The outcomes of these discussions and agreements, disseminated to institutions in each country, will help ensure awareness by participants of the visa application process, and convey realities rather than misperceptions surrounding visa applications.

Context. Higher Education and Community. The Actors

College and University Leaders and Administrators

College and university presidents and senior academic administrators are key to international collaboration and exchange activities through their vision and support. A comprehensive approach to North American interchange must engage presidents and administrators of both experienced and novice institutions to gain institutional support for international activity on campus, and ensure sustainability through financial resources, faculty incentives (e.g. leave time), and other commitments. Leaders may be able to stimulate or inspire interest by learning from successful examples. A visionary foundation that recognizes the role of leaders in championing internationalization on campus may be willing to support efforts that foster leaders' engagement through special seminars, roundtables, or substantive onsite programs.

Faculty

Faculty are key to stimulating student demand, capitalizing on student interest, helping determine student destinations, and generating their own academic research collaboration, curricular enrichment, and other cooperative intellectual pursuits. Conversely, by their lack of interest or engagement, faculty can be a barrier to exchange.

A comprehensive program will need to spur faculty interest through such mechanisms as short-term exchange opportunities for participating in seminars, travel to meet colleagues abroad, or opportunities to learn the benefit of greater global involvement from peers. Enlightened leaders will be in the position to offer institutional incentives, or help remove institutional barriers.

Students

There is consensus that students are at the core of mobility issues, and that increasing their interest in, and demand for, North American exchange is essential; and, furthermore, that different levels and types of students—graduate, undergraduate, and internship/work-study students—face different issues and obstacles from one another.

Consensus also exists that incentives for student involvement include: urging by faculty; assurance of credit recognition or transfer; systems to address language proficiency; comfort about visa issues; procedures for housing accommodation; and the positive reinforcement of returning peers and corporate leaders, who favor hiring and promoting people with international experience.

Resources (or lack thereof) commonly emerge as a key issue in discussion and studies. Even in tuition-neutral situations, student financial burdens include transportation costs, housing differentials, insurance, and other expenses. Additionally, the cost of lost wages for students who require paid employment to support themselves also limits access and participation. Thus, without top-up awards, opportunity will remain limited to students of means.

Finally, for students and for faculty, new realities of daily life have emerged since post-war exchange programs were conceived a half-century ago. Career considerations of spouses, dual-income couples, obligations to aging parents or young children, and the necessity of outside paid employment all limit mobility and require new approaches to address changing conditions (e.g., courses that mix intense onsite sessions with distance education components).

Non-Governmental and Governmental Organizations with Higher Education Constituencies

Other important actors in higher education are higher education associations (like ACE, ANUIES, AUCC, and others); international nonprofit organizations (like CONAHEC, IIE, AMPEI, and NAFSA); and government organizations with relevant constituencies (DFAIT, HRDC, FIPSE, [formerly] USIA, now Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State; SEP, and others).

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Fifteen programs were identified as potential models for study by the principal investigator and advisory committee:

- the European Community action program for cooperation in the field of higher education (SOCRATES/ERASMUS);
- Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS);
- North American Regional Academic Mobility Program (RAMP);
- Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE) in Québec;
- International Student Exchange Program (ISEP);
- Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education;
- European Community/U.S.A. Joint Consortia Collaboration in Higher Education and Vocational Education (EC/U.S. Joint Consortia);
- Canada/ European Community Program for Cooperation in Higher Education and Training (Canada / EC);
- Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC);
- Fulbright; Association for International Practical Training (AIPT);
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE);
- Ontario Four Motors of Europe Program;
- University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP);
- Student Exchange Program between the Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec Universities (CREPUQ); and
- the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES).

Since they are included as Appendix H, this section provides a topical overview. Additional information downloaded from web sites was also utilized.

Note that in addition to these programs, the College and University Affiliations Program (CUAP) of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA, U.S. Department of State, formerly USIA), supports a North American/NAFTA-based affiliation among Carleton University, Ottawa; Georgetown University, U.S.A.; and I.T.A.M., Mexico (see web site: <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/cuap/casestudy.htm>). Although this review and appendix are limited to select, structured programs only, it is important to realize that many more institution-to-institution exchanges and collaborations also exist.

Geographic Range

The 15 programs selected for review represent broad geographic spread. A few were based in North America (North American Mobility Program, RAMP, CONAHEC) or in parts of North America (CREPUQ-ANUIES). A few were based in other regions (ERASMUS, UMAP, CEEPUS) and offer useful typology or profile. One was based in a region-to-region exchange (Ontario and regions in Europe); a few are worldwide (ISEP, AIPT); and others fit one or more category (EU/United States.; Canada/EU; Fulbright).

Program Commonalities

Elements shared by most programs include a signed agreement required for participation and within it, ways to address major issues. Some common solutions to recurring issues have emerged: tuition barter for tuition inequities; the requirement of pre-arranged credit recognition agreements; and the requirement that language proficiency be prerequisite (more information on these topics can be found in relevant sections below, and in Appendix H).

Key Differences Among Programs

In one model, the program is open to anyone who chooses to participate (i.e., ISEP); in another, programs are restricted to institutional or individual competitive award selection (e.g., North American Mobility Program; Fulbright; CUAP; United States/EU and Canada/EU).

Other basic differences exist between the underlying bases of programs in regions outside North America, and the North American situation. For example, programs based in other geographic regions (SOCRATES/ERASMUS, CEEPUS, and UMAP) draw levels of government support that North American governments may not be willing to match or sustain. Second, tuition differentials within those regions are not equal to those in North America; third, SOCRATES/ERASMUS is based on a European political will to integrate, which has been years in development; and finally, as noted below, Europe has pre-existing supra-national structures.

Program Structure

Program structure ranges from consortial arrangements coordinated by a central, nongovernmental body (e.g., ISEP), to programs defined and managed by a pre-existing supra-national structure (e.g., EU). In between are models based in multinational agreements but without a pre-existing supra-national body (e.g., CEEPUS, UMAP). UMAP, which began with bilateral agreements struck within the broader UMAP context, is likely to be shifting to consortial agreements. The AIPT program is based in part in IAESTE's, a network of 64 countries that offer placements and internships in technical

fields worldwide, and convenes once a year to bid and trade slots (a system apparently unique to them).

Support for Program Administration

In programs managed by nongovernmental organizations (e.g., ISEP, IOHE, CONAHEC), the costs of program administration currently require member dues, fees, or private funding to supplement or replace government support that has been reduced or discontinued after start-up. In programs directly run by government entities (e.g., North American Mobility, CUAP, EC/US and EC/Canada), costs of administration are built into program funding. In many programs (e.g., RAMP, ISEP), higher education institutions are required to provide a degree of administrative support, including internal infrastructure for exchange, program representatives, counseling, grant management or other commitment.

Support for Student Exchange

Some programs offer stipends, top-up support, cost of living differentials, or transportation costs for students (e.g., SOCRATES/ERASMUS "mobility grants"). In the CEEPUS program, the home country pays travel costs, and the host country covers the costs of study. Those programs that use top-up instead of complete student costs (including North American Mobility Program) do so with government funds. For the difference between top-up support and actual costs, students need to find personal or family funds, or, if eligible, apply for financial aid.

Other programs (e.g., ISEP, CREPEQ-ANUIES) expect students to cover cost of travel and other miscellany. In the Ontario model, students assume travel, housing, health insurance, and other expenses, but bursaries are offered by universities and governments. The AIPT/IASTE program levies both costs to students (travel, insurance, incidentals) and remuneration through work (a fair wage from employers). UMAP appears to offer a variety of arrangements based in current bilateral agreements, varying from case to case. (Note that Canada, Mexico, and the United States are members of UMAP.)

As virtually all programs build tuition barter into agreements, it makes them cost-neutral in regard to the differential between systems.

Equalization Issues

To balance numbers, most programs simply require the number of students imported to equal those exported (with students paying home tuitions or institutions swapping places), or accept some degree of imbalance and deal with it on a case by case basis. Consortial and multinational schemes expand opportunities for balancing costs by pooling openings. The AIPT program, for example, operates at a set 16:1 ratio (16 internationals to 1 U.S. participant). Within the large, multinational SOCRATES/ERASMUS program, the Commission and National Agencies encourage universities to take measures to achieve balance.

Credit Recognition

Credit recognition and transfer are effected in virtually all programs through pre-arranged, signed agreements. However, because European and Pacific higher education have

traditionally lacked a standard measure (such as course unit), schema have been developed to standardize course values through the creation of a unit against which courses can be gauged, and for which equivalency can be assigned. These systems are similar to those existent at U.S. institutions, but at present, are used in Europe by only a minority of participants. The recent Bologna Declaration, however, seeks to ensure ECTS-compatible credit systems everywhere in Europe.

The underlying principles in Europe include that disclosure of information on programs is the responsibility of the receiving institution; and that setting up a common reference and ensuring that programs are ECTS-compatible help integrate education, and provide for mutual recognition and transparency. These, and the recently developed "Diploma Supplement" in Europe, are considered under credit recognition issues on page ___.

In the ISEP program, in addition to the contract obligating institutions to use credit transfer schemes, students need to be active in arranging credit transfer at their home institution prior to their departure. ISEP provides institutions with guidelines and advice on preparing credit transfer and diploma recognition.

Language Proficiency

Language proficiency is required in virtually all programs. Some (like ERASMUS) support special intensive language training in less commonly taught languages. CEEPUS allows for courses taught in common European languages (German, French, and English), and has also created a program for dual language exchange. ISEP offers U.S. students the possibility of study in English. In Ontario and in ISEP programs (and under consideration by CREPUQ-ANUIES), intensive language training may be available as part of the program, for an additional fee. UMAP notes that the home institution is responsible for preparatory courses, and the host institution for additional training as necessary.

General Strengths of Existing Programs

Strengths of existing programs include their ability to address recurring issues through credit recognition agreements, tuition swaps, and language proficiency requirements. In addition, consortial programs pool openings to provide even greater opportunity. For example, CONAHEC, a North American membership consortium, is developing a "dating service" to supplement its leadership, information, publications, and annual meeting, all of which are based exclusively in North America, and utilize electronic media to spur collaboration.

Program Limitations

Limitations include: that most (nongovernmental) programs are confined to student mobility alone rather than the range of possible collaboration (joint degrees, research collaborations, distance education); most are based in strict reciprocity; and some are perceived by applicants to lack flexibility, to be too bureaucratic, or to move too slowly. Some programs are restricted through formal competition to selected awardees (North American Mobility Program; CUAP, Canada/EU, and U.S./EU).

A review of existing programs indicated that our region might benefit from a new comprehensive program (through new or existing organizations) which would meet the following criteria: (1) cover North America; (2) be open and accessible (i.e.,

noncompetitive); (3) address current obstacles; (4) involve a range of institutional options and opportunities beyond student mobility to include research collaboration, joint degrees, thematic programs, and new combinations of formats for the future; (5) offer a process easy enough to make the program useful and appealing; and (6) allow sufficient flexibility to address differing priorities, needs, and resources among institutions and nations.

FEASIBILITY DISCUSSION, DETERMINATION, AND NEXT STEPS

Advisory Committee Meeting and Process

The advisory committee met in March 7 and 8, 2000, to determine whether or not to proceed with the design of a multitiered marketplace for North American Higher Education Cooperation Collaboration and Exchange, as outlined above. (See meeting agenda, Appendix D.)

To make this determination, members of the advisory committee analyzed a draft feasibility study, based on an earlier concept paper. The principal investigator had identified and analyzed various obstacles to exchange, developed a template and gathered data on 15 model programs, drafted and tested a survey questionnaire on various constituencies, and gathered feedback from the advisory and reference committees and others at various stages. Based on the results, committee members outlined the higher education context for exchange and drafted a marketplace mechanism.

At its meeting, the committee focused on these documents, considered the history of trilateral discussion, reviewed reasons that trilateral exchange activity fell short of hopes, analyzed specific barriers and obstacles to interchange, and scanned the current environment.

Key Determinations and Ideas that Emerged from Meeting

After careful and extensive consideration and discussion, the advisory committee determined that:

- The main challenge to mobility in North America is not lack of structure or of organization, but of policy, resources, and coordination.
[Note: since this meeting, President Clinton announced his International Education Policy on April 19, 2000; see Appendix F.]
- Sustainable support for a complex new structure would be difficult to ensure and a new structure may not be the best way to address current obstacles. Existing institutions play roles which can be deepened, strengthened, or expanded to advance exchanges; 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.
- Top-up grants for students are key to promoting mobility.
- Student and faculty preferences are difficult to address, and unlikely to be solved comprehensively. However, student interest depends in large part on faculty support

for exchanges, and faculty support depends in large part on trust in the programs of other institutions, which in turn depends on opportunities for contact and familiarity.

- Instead of looking for general (undifferentiated) demand, it was deemed useful to look for demand in specific areas or special niches. For example:
 - A. Special populations, e.g., students in all three countries of low socioeconomic origins; people of minority or indigenous populations; and disabled students.
 - B. Special interest areas like those in the professions (e.g., engineering, business, and health fields), because there is considerable interest in professional exchange. The sciences are also of interest and may be supported through other agencies (e.g., CONACYT, NSF).
 - C. Combined niches may also prove fruitful, e.g., women in science and engineering.
- Incentives for mobility in North America are different from those in Europe, where the political, cultural, and economic incentives are in building a European identity, and exchanges are funded by governments. In North America, economic cooperation and free trade issues underlying NAFTA provide a significant but different incentive from that in Europe.
- To bolster student interest, it may be useful 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 and thus, to consider other models, including work-study and other career-related approaches (discussed further below). These types of programs also fit the NAFTA context.
- 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, the needs of novices as well as experienced leaders need to be addressed.
- Because of institutional autonomy and differences in higher education systems and approaches, comprehensive systems do not address course and credit recognition, accreditation, and other quality assurance issues in North America.

Recommendations

To address current needs and spur exchange, the advisory committee recommended the following to the Trilateral Steering Committee:

- The single most important measure to foster student exchanges is to provide need-based student top-up awards. Without such support to broaden and expand access to exchange, mobility will fail to reach the level envisioned in the trilateral process, and will remain marginal rather than transformative for North America. They also recommend continued support for existing programs, including the Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education, which provide both student stipends and professional travel opportunities for faculty to realize sustainable interchange.
- While a complex new physical structure will not be the most effective approach, it was agreed that a "virtual marketplace" is the most cost-effective, productive, and

sustainable direction to pursue. Therefore, they charged the principal investigator with outlining the elements of a virtual marketplace in a short paper for circulation and input (see paper on virtual marketplace).

- Work-based opportunities for learning abroad (e.g., cooperative education, internships, work-study, experiential education) are a promising direction for enhancing and broadening North American interchange. Therefore, they charged the principal investigator with developing a short paper on work-based international exchange for circulation and input (see paper on work-based programs).
- Bilateral programming within the trilateral context will be an effective means to achieve major goals for North America, without rigid insistence that every exchange be trilateral. Given the complexity of developing and implementing international collaboration, some efforts will be more successful if they involve two countries at a time rather than all three at once. Bilateral programs would not replace but supplement trilateral programs.
- Problems with visas must be recognized and addressed, either as actual or perceived barriers to exchange, especially in regard to work-study and cooperative education programs and internships. It was recommended that the Trilateral Committee encourage the appropriate government entities within and between nations, under NAFTA, to address relevant barriers to visa acquisition, to ease and rationalize the process, and to develop information to be disseminated through the information site.

Follow-up to Advisory Committee Meeting

As a result of the March advisory committee meeting, the following steps were taken: (1) submission of a letter with these recommendations to three governments for their March 30 meeting in El Paso (Appendix E); (2) revision of the draft feasibility study (including existing programs, Appendix H); (3) development of an outline of virtual marketplace elements, and an approach to work-study programs, using a sample of existing models, instead of further development of the concept of a marketplace. As necessary, studies will be translated into Spanish and French for posting and distribution.

Conclusion

The three sponsoring associations believe that this opportunity to explore obstacles to exchange, test the feasibility of a comprehensive marketplace model, research a range of issues and models, and provide feedback from the field have provided a valuable opportunity not only to develop products that may foster North American interchange, but also to recommend sound, cost-effective, and productive approaches for the use of limited government resources toward leveraging the greatest results and most sustainable outcomes in our current environment.