

## Abstract:

In this paper, I stress the importance of international education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In this new Millennium, mankind has entered a stage of unprecedented social history. Today the entire planet is connected through virtual medias. Thus national borders have become more transparent as multilateral organizations, multinational corporations, NGOs, and social networking sites create a new sense of the word citizenship: the beginnings of the “global citizen.” The problems we face as a society such as economic crisis, international terrorism, and global climate change are caused globally and felt globally. Therefore, the only solutions are global in nature and require individuals of every nation and creed to collaborate. I discuss these solutions which find their origins ultimately in education. A modern education must require an international aspect in order to instill the values of global civics to students as well as form new skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century job market. This can be done by creating on campus initiatives, strengthening language programs, and developing technological connections with students in other countries. Off campus, students can study abroad or partake in community service projects where they can experience personal growth and connect with another culture.

# Becoming a Global Citizen in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Academia

The great American author Mark Twain once said “travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.” In my life, I have been taught to accept this truth and reflect it in my academic pursuits. There is no doubt in my mind that an experience in a foreign culture is mind altering and life changing. Every time I come back from a trip abroad I grow a little bit each time, because when I live my perfunctory lifestyle here in the United States with all my class work, family, and friends, I am forced to think about others living their own daily lives across the planet. When I look at the moon, I realize that it is the same moon that someone is looking at in Singapore, in Beijing, in London, in Moscow, in Rio, and in Bagdad. This is one of the most amazing and unique facets of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. For the first time in the history of mankind, the world is connected. No empire, war, or genocide has been able to span the same amount of territory as Email, Facebook, or Twitter. Now we can truly call ourselves a global society, and as an educational institution, it is imperative that Eckerd college or indeed any American college or high-school foster the ideal of being a “citizen of the earth” in education.

Globalization is not a subject that can be confined to one discipline such as International Studies and International Relations. It spans all majors. In regard to health and medicine,

extensive medical research and development are being done in India. Marine Science is certainly a globalized major since research and study can be conducted across the planet's oceans which are considered as "common global heritage." Across the pond, scientific researchers from Germany, Switzerland, France, England, the US, and Japan are collaborating on a facility to produce energy through nuclear fusion. Classics and anthropology majors have the ability to study in the world's greatest libraries or even to work on archeological sites in Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. Business majors in particular must adapt to a market environment that relies on global trade, cross cultural connections, and supply chains especially in the East Asian region. Political Science students study comparative governments and international organizations in The Hague, Geneva, and New York and must keep themselves informed on global affairs.

Thus there is no excuse for avoiding the gradual globalization of our planet as well as human society in American academia. "White-collar workers who once seemed immune to off-shoring---lawyers, financial analysts, even local newspaper reporters---are now in peril of seeing their jobs shifted to India, Eastern Europe, or China. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics thirteen of every 100 US computer-programming jobs shifted overseas in recent years."(The Week 13) Based on such statistics it is essential that students come into the workforce with the realization that success will rely on connections made across borders. While our grandparents faced competition from the kids down the street and our parents faced competition from all Americans, our generation must compete in a global labor market.

One may ask, how did we get to this point? Just thirty years ago, half the world was restricted to the average American. As the 1980s progressed, the specter of Communism looming over the global east gradually became more transparent, and the weakness of closed nations reached a boiling point with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. With the fall of the wall came the unification of the world politically and socially. Described by New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, “it tipped the balance of power across toward those advocating democratic, consensual, free market-oriented governance, and away from those advocating authoritarian rule with centrally planned economies.”(Friedman 52) This centralization in global ideological agreement led many political thinkers such as Francis Fukuyama to assume that the world had reached a virtual “end of history” at least in regards to conflict. Although this was not to be the case, the world had indeed connected with the aid of technological advances. According to Friedman, “the political constraint on the individual reach collapsed with the fall of the Berlin Wall (though of course large swaths of repression still exist), and the practical constraint on individual reach collapsed with the rise of Apple and Windows-enabled, modem connected IBM PC.” (58)

With the elimination of political as well as physical barriers, the people of the world are in a gradual evolution of what New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman calls flattening. When a free trade deal causes an increase in manufacturing jobs in China, there will be a labor shortfall in the United States. When the Libyan government loses control of oil ports, gasoline prices increase, yet when an earthquake occurs in Japan that decreases the demand for gasoline,

prices go down. When a fire spreads across the Russian heartland, grain prices will increase, causing political instability in other nations. As our lives become more intertwined, so do our problems as a planet. Issues such as human rights, economic woes, labor shortages, depletion of resources, terrorism, and global climate change are problems that cross national borders. Indeed most of the problems we face in our day and age are global, thus requiring international response and collaboration. This demand for global response has sparked the rise of global networks and multilateral organizations.

It is impossible to overestimate the speed of communication and progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An article by Joel Spring claims that “It is new transportation technology that makes possible the quicker movement of global migrants, workers, and tourists and makes it possible for educational and government leaders to easily meet almost any place on the globe. Communications and information technologies allow for the global exchange of ideas about educational practices and create a world library of information.”(Spring 7) Due to the expansive nature of these technological advancements, instant connections allow individuals living at opposite ends of the planet to communicate with one another. Nowhere is this best represented than in Thomas Friedman’s book *The World Is Flat*.

Friedman describes a GE supply chain center where its members gathered for a meeting: “[here] we can hold a virtual meeting of the key players from its entire global supply chain for any project at any time on the supersized screen. So their American designers could be on the screen speaking with their Indian software writers and their Asian manufacturers all at

once.”(Friedman 6) This is the world we live in. No longer can you expect a job or research opportunity without some form of cross boundary cooperation. This realization is best articulated by Andreas Schleicher from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development: “the world is indifferent to tradition and past regulations, unforgiving of frailty and ignorant custom or practice. Success will go to those individuals and countries which are swift to adapt, slow to complain, and open to change.”(Stewart 192) This adaptation as a nation starts in our institutions of higher education where educators must stress the ideals of global citizenship through language programs, international exchange, and social media.

So what exactly does being a “global citizen” entail? First, we must examine the relationship between individual citizenship and globalization as well as the ideals of global civic responsibility and awareness. This is best articulated by Graham Pike in his analysis on the difficulties that the concept of global citizenship still faces. Pike points out that the idea of citizenship is still conceptually tied to nationalism and the nation-state. The identity, responsibilities, and rights of the individual citizen are defined by national jurisdictions not global constitutions. Also the process of globalization has not supported the idea of individual global citizenship; it has supported individual global consumerism and trade. Thus the benefits of globalization and trade are for the most part restricted to material or monetary values. “Virtuous citizenship and the establishment of the “global moral community” seem unlikely to be fueled by the juggernaut of economic globalization, driven by the principles of profit, competition, and efficiency.”(Pike 41) Thus, those who enjoy the true form of global citizenship

are either affluent enough to have leisure time to establish global connections or are in a particular position to contribute to international political/economic agreements. What is needed in global education is to instill a sense of civil ethos towards the global community that students can consider in their daily lives. "While the state will confer the constitutional rights and duties of citizenship, education should play a critical role in expanding young citizens' understanding of the responsibilities, and potential pleasures, of living in a global community. The result will be active national citizens with an informed global conscience." (46)

What is an example of a global citizen? There are many different types of global citizens that serve separate functions in society. To start with, "Global Cosmopolitans" are simply individuals who take part in frequent international travel which results in the development of an ideology of openness to other cultures, peoples, and lifestyles. "Global Activists" are individuals who actively contribute to causes for human rights, income inequality, and environmental protection in such mediums as the Peace Corps or NGOs. Global activists are often joined with "Global Managers," those who strive for global justice, democratization, and centralization through international institutions such as the United Nations or the International Court of Justice. Finally there are "Global Capitalists" entrepreneurs, translators, and industrialists who take part in international trade and economic investment/development across borders.

All these can be considered global citizens; thus as students we strive to obtain the knowledge that allows us to become a part of the global system or at least understand it. In this regard I would include another component of globalization, "the globalized educator." The

concept of the global educator is defined in an article by Ross Lewin: “classroom teachers, school principals; scholars with international credentials, contacts, and research agendas; leaders of international exchange programs; and educational outreach coordinators for advocacy groups together comprise a visible and dynamic group of global citizens today.”(Lewin 6) Ultimately these global citizens are perhaps the most important because it is they who instill the concepts needed to become a citizen of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to a new generation of builders and shifters who will live in a world where national borders are increasingly diaphanous.

The reasoning behind this is further elaborated in the argument of the moral philosopher, Martha Nussbaum. According to Nussbaum, colleges and high schools ought to treat national citizenship as secondary to global citizenship in regards to civic education “on the grounds that education for world citizenship helps to promote individual and collective self-awareness, helps promote the spirit of cooperation in solving global problems, and helps acknowledge moral obligations from wealthier and privileged nations to the rest of the world.”(7) There are things that students and academics simply can’t understand about another country without being encouraged to explore the world. The more one explores, the more one realizes that despite our differences, we are threatened by the same problems. Thus the goal of a Global Educator is to “strive to render their students competitive in the international economy, while also instilling awareness and empathy of cultures, countries, and issues of common concern across the planet.”(60)

Educators ought to consider more than just geography and culture when teaching students about the world. As Vivian Stewart points out, “rather our challenge is to hone student’s critical thinking skills and to familiarize students with the key that can apply to new situations.”(Stewart 185) This can be done through the creation of lines of communication between schools across the globe modeled after such exchanges as the GE software supply chain conference in India illustrated in Thomas Friedman’s book. According to Stewart’s article, “we need to open global gateways and inspire students to explore beyond their national borders. Programs such as iLEARN and Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) make it possible for students to work collaboratively with peers in other countries.” (185) This then allows students to apply the concepts they learn in class to real life situations while at the same time acquainting them with new technologies and methods of global collaboration. This would prove especially effective in environmental studies where students could exchange ideas, observations, and interpretations on a recent environmental crisis with students from the country that is currently experiencing the crisis. A perfect example of such a crisis would be this year’s tsunami and nuclear disaster in Japan. Japanese students could take measurements and record data that could then be interpreted by American students. In effect students would be trained to solve problems through a global/bilateral forum with the help of high speed communication technologies.

High school second language education in the United States is sub-par compared to that of India and China where English education begins at the young age of 10-12. In American high-

schools the only secondary languages offered are usually French and Spanish. The demand for international perspective is already changing American educational standards at the local level. In Chicago, an initiative supported by then Mayor Richard Daley created Mandarin language programs for 20 public schools some of which are located in minority inter-city districts. The Evanston Illinois Township School Board, a suburb of Chicago, included an international perspective requirement in its graduation requirements.

The Asia Society in Manhattan has also promoted global education in a series of participating high schools across the nation. “The mission on each school [referenced in Stewart’s article] is to prepare low-income students for college and to promote their knowledge of world regions and international issues. Each public or charter school incorporates international content across the curriculum, offers both Asian and European languages, provides international exchange opportunities and provides links to international organizations and community service opportunities.”(Stewart 189) Mandarin language programs offered through the Asia Society are funded by the Chinese Ministry of Education in the PRC. One of these school districts participating, Gahanna-Jefferson School District of Columbus, Ohio, received \$30,000 from the Chinese Government. “Hank Langhals, who serves as coordinator for pupil services in that school district, told CNN that the rise in Chinese language education correlates to China becoming an economic and social world power.”([Huffington Post 1](#))

However, in class teaching of global problem solving skills and cross cultural concepts is only half of a truly globalized education. A study abroad experience is of equal importance to

on campus global focus initiatives. Not only does study abroad allow students to connect with and learn about another culture, it also forces students to act independently and grow stronger personally. Over the past few decades, popularity in study abroad programs has increased considerably. According to an Australian Government report, “in 2004, 1.8 million students were studying outside their country of origin in 2000. This figure is projected to rise to 7.2 million by 2025.”(Pasfield 3) This trend towards international education has attracted the support of national governments as well, for instance the Australian Government donates \$5.5 million a year to study abroad programs. Other study abroad programs open students to the rewards of community service and global civic responsibility in areas such as environmental conservation, global poverty, and social conflicts. According to Eckerd College’s service learning coordinator Brian Macarg “I’m particularly rewarded when students make long term decisions after a study abroad experience such as joining the Peace Corps or becoming an English teacher abroad.” Service trips are designed to aid students in learning about civil injustice and global human rights. As a result students are encouraged to act against injustice globally as well as locally. Eckerd College has certainly proved to be successful in this regard. This year, students were able to help educate children in Venezuela, witness political conflict in Northern Ireland, and aid impoverished communities in New York City.

I’d like to conclude with my experience with international education. Last semester I was given the opportunity to study at Eckerd’s study center at Xiamen University in China. There I was able to observe Chinese culture, a culture quite distant from my regular life. There I was

able to understand how the individual Chinese citizen was viewed differently from the average American citizen. I witnessed the swift speed and efficiency in China's construction of urban environments and rural infrastructure; nothing seemed to stop. While there were many differences between China and The United States, there was something I noticed in the friends I made that was similar. America is not the only nation where citizens have a dream. People in India, China, and Brazil want what Americans have: a house/apartment, a car, a healthy environment, food, and especially internet connection. Even in the poor Chinese migrant communities I could see young factory workers busily web surfing at internet cafes, connecting with each other or with citizens in other nations, possibly employers.

As the future generation of Americans we must rise to this challenge and learn to adapt to a world that doesn't revolve around American ingenuity, because even now it doesn't. As the present generation of American educators, teachers, and school administrators should explore new methods to instill the virtues of global citizenship as well as the skills of cross boundary collaboration to students. Students must be encouraged to look beyond their own national borders both physically and virtually to adapt to an environment where problems and solutions are international in nature. While other countries may be developing their economies, infrastructures, and labor forces faster than the United States, America still has the best institutions of higher learning in the world. Therefore, I believe American leaders and educators can still rise to the occasion and support the ideals of being a global citizen to students in order to lead America towards a better and brighter future in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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