



International Partnerships and Urban Universities: The Case of the University of Louisville and Central America

Everett Egginton
Executive Director
International Center
University of Louisville

In 1984, the University of Louisville (U of L) had just experienced a period of accelerated growth and expansion. In the previous decade it had grown from a student population of 15,000 to approximately 20,000, drawn largely from the city of Louisville and its metropolitan area. A small contingent of approximately 200 international students, predominantly from middle-eastern, oil-producing countries and Asia, were hardly noticed on campus. Existing resources to support international students were severely limited in scope and sophistication. A small International Center provided academic advising and counseling for international students. Terms such as global and international were used infrequently and were poorly understood by the university community; multicultural was used exclusively in reference to relations and differences between whites and blacks.

In the summer of 1984, the Kissinger Commission on Central America and the Caribbean released its landmark report recommending the creation of educational programs to afford greater opportunities for talented and financially needy students from that region of the world to study in the United States. The report was followed in 1985 by a request for proposals from the United States Information Agency (USIA) for universities to host talented and financially needy students from Central America for upper-division study leading to the baccalaureate degree.

The University of Louisville, which demonstrated a readiness for significant internalization, submitted a proposal to USIA for the Central American Program for Undergraduate Scholarships (CAMPUS) program.

Today, thirteen years later, a number of local and statewide crosscurrents have supported the expansion of U of L's growing international involvement, including the internationalization of the economy, increased immigration of internationals to the Louisville metropolitan area, strong administrative support for externally funded international programs, and the capacity to use technology both for communication and for the delivery of courses. The

University of Louisville currently has an international student population of close to 1,000 students at baccalaureate through post-doctoral levels. In addition, in an average year, faculty and professional staff train scores of international professionals from a

In a relatively short period of time, U of L evolved from an urban, state-supported university seemingly content to offer its programs largely to native Kentuckians living within driving distance to campus to a truly internationally focused university serving scores of international students, scholars, and professionals.

wide variety of fields in both short- and-intermediate term, on-campus training and development programs. Faculty members and professional staff are equally active in training and development programs overseas. In addition, U of L currently offers its own master's-degree programs in business administration, computer science, engineering management, and education in a number of international locations including Hong Kong, Athens, Cairo, Panama, and San Salvador. The university's International Center, in 1984 the only internationally focused center on campus, now shares international efforts with the Center for Latin American Education, formally created in 1989, and the Institute for International Development, created in 1996. The International Center currently provides a broad array of services in three different areas: International student and

scholar advising, study abroad and university-to-university partnerships, and international training and development. The Center for Latin American Education administers a broad array of training and development programs throughout Latin America. And, the Institute for International Development is responsible for developing and administering the university's graduate-degree programs abroad.

In a relatively short period of time, U of L evolved from an urban, state-supported university seemingly content to offer its programs largely to native Kentuckians living within driving distance to campus to a truly internationally focused university serving scores of international students, scholars, and professionals on campus and world-wide. What precipitated this striking change?

Programs

Perhaps the change was inevitable, a natural consequence of changing times. However, change was substantially accelerated by

early and successful work with Central Americans both on campus and in Central America and programs stemming from the Kissinger Commission Report on Central America and the Caribbean and funded by USIA. These programs have played a significant role in the expansion of international opportunities and understanding at U of L. For example, the university region and state have benefited significantly from USIA's CAMPUS program. Since 1985, the Center for Latin American Education has been the recipient of seven USIA CAMPUS grants that have brought to campus approximately one hundred highly talented Central American undergraduate students for English-language training and upper-division undergraduate study leading to bachelor degrees. These students, each of whom spent thirty months on campus, were graduated with baccalaureate degrees in a variety of fields and have returned to their countries where they occupy high-level positions in business, government, education, and the private sector. While in Louisville, each of these students had a host family in the community who, in providing enculturation experiences and moral support, gained as much as they invested in terms of international insights, cultural awareness, and lasting personal attachments. Altogether, the USIA CAMPUS program, which brought approximately eight hundred bright Central American students to U.S. universities during a period of twelve years, provides an example of the value of direct U.S. investment in the education of future leaders in such countries.

In 1986, U of L was awarded another grant by the U.S. Information Agency for the Teacher Exchange Project, designed to complement the objectives and activities of the CAMPUS program by offering short-term exchange opportunities for thirteen Guatemalan teachers and a like number of teachers from the Jefferson County (Louisville) Public Schools over a three-year period. In developing and directing this project, U of L worked closely with Guatemalan counterparts at Raphael Landivar University in Guatemala City. USIA supported only the travel, instructional materials, insurance, and modest stipends for participants. While in Louisville, the Guatemalan teachers lived with the teachers from Jefferson County whom they had hosted when the Jefferson County teachers traveled to Guatemala. By design, the major costs of the project were underwritten by the participants themselves through their commitments to open their homes to each other. The rationale behind the teacher-host exchange was based less on financial considerations than it was on issues of cross-cultural understanding, professional development, and the formation of lasting relationships. On both sides, teachers shared their culture, language, and perspectives on the world with students, other teachers, and members of the community.

In 1987, U of L also benefited from yet another USIA project, the Partnership Program, that linked the university with what was then a small and struggling private university, Universidad Francisco Gavidia (UFG), in El Salvador. Under the provisions of that three-year program, five Salvadoran faculty members received their master's

degrees from the University of Louisville, an additional fifteen Salvadoran faculty members and administrators received short-term training at U of L, while some eight U of L faculty members and staff taught seminars and courses at the partner university in El Salvador. As a result of the Partnership Program, numerous joint projects are underway at the two universities; the most recent, the U of L master's programs in business and education, offered on the campus of UFG in San Salvador. Among the most remarkable achievements, however, has been the tremendous growth and unparalleled success of UFG itself. Additional spin-off developments resulting from these USIA-initiated activities include a three-year professional-development program for Central American university teachers administered by the Center for Latin American Education under an agreement with the Association of Private Universities of Central America (AUPRICA), a consortium of nineteen private Central American universities. Under this agreement, the Center for Latin American Education organized and taught twelve week-long, highly intensive (forty contact hours) professional development seminars over a three-year period. In all, approximately eighty Central American professors participated in at least one seminar; thirteen professors completed all of them.

Proposals for Funding

Why was the University of Louisville, at that time a rather inward-looking and parochial urban university, selected for the first CAMPUS grant, awarded to only twelve universities in the country from an applicant pool of more than one hundred, some of which were elite public universities? In Louisville and in Kentucky, U of L contended in its grant proposal, Central American students would be welcomed and noticed; they would not be invisible as they might be in many urban areas with large Hispanic populations. U of L's prediction proved true: Louisvillians opened their homes and hearts to CAMPUS students; indeed, many traveled to Central America at their own expense as a result of their desire to maintain contact with students and to know their families and cultures. Moreover, the need to find local support for CAMPUS students caused U of L to seek out and establish a close relationship with the existing Latin American community, a relationship that has resulted in many collaborations involving fields other than education, such as business and medicine.

U of L had claimed in its proposal to USIA that Latin American students would benefit from a U of L education, but that in return, members of the university, the community, the region, and the state would learn much from the presence of Latin American students in their midst. The succession of CAMPUS programs and spin-off projects greatly enriched these communities through friendships and professional contacts they nurtured, the resulting recognition and respect for the university's academic programs, and the U of L community's continuing desire to work on an international agenda. As a result of these programs, the university has responded to additional international opportunities.

Initiatives in Latin America

The aforementioned USIA-sponsored projects can be loosely described as people-to-people exchanges. While U of L continued to implement these programs and to seek out additional exchange opportunities, the university began to respond to requests for development assistance. The first such request came in 1990, when the Center for Latin American Education was asked by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Guatemala, and its subcontractor, Partners for International Education and Training (PIET), to bid on a program to train Guatemalan community leaders in managing development programs. The center's bid was successful, and it was awarded the contract. In this program, bilingual faculty and professional staff provided Guatemalan community leaders technical training in project administration and management, disease prevention and health awareness, principles of leadership, and the integration of women into community leadership. Subsequently, the center was invited to bid and subsequently contracted by Development Associates, Inc. (another USAID subcontractor) to design and implement three additional training programs for Guatemalan community leaders. These programs focused on leadership, project design, and principles of community development. The center also responded to requests for development assistance for a number of projects in health-care administration, political participation and civic education, and educational administration and reform.

In 1993, working with U of L Health Sciences Center and School of Medicine, the center was awarded a contract to train Bolivian hospital administrators on new approaches to health-care administration. Relying heavily on the bilingual faculty of the university's Medical School and School of Allied Health, as well as on experienced bilingual healthcare professionals in the Louisville area, twenty-two Bolivian hospital supervisors participated in the six-week training program. Their training covered financial administration, staff selection and supervision, coordination of support services for hospitals, efficient food-delivery systems, patient routing, control of equipment, total quality management, and leadership principles.

In 1994, the center was awarded three separate contracts to train fully fifty percent of Guatemala's election officials (oficiales del Tribunal Supremo Electoral [TSE]). Seventy-five of the country's one hundred and fifty electoral officials participated in one of the three training programs conducted consecutively; each lasted six weeks. The entire program began in January and ended in August. Consistent with USAID's emphasis at the time on principles of democracy, the officials were trained in various facets of civic education, including democratic electoral processes, maintenance of voting records, principles of citizenship education, and leadership.

Finally, the center was awarded a number of projects in the area of education. In 1991, it was awarded a contract to administer an AID-supported program to train secondary school principals from Bolivia in various facets of school administration, including

educational leadership, evaluation, supervision, planning, instructional methodologies, and educational technology. The following year, the center was awarded another AID contract to administer a training program for Guatemalan school principals that focused on similar themes. In both cases, a heavy emphasis was on site visits in which participants and hosts were given opportunities to exchange ideas, ask and respond to questions, exchange materials, and develop linkages.

More recently, on two separate occasions during 1997, the center was host to high-level groups from El Salvador's Ministry of Education. El Salvador is in the process of implementing a systemic educational reform for which the guiding principle is decentralization. Similarly, Kentucky is in the process of implementing its own educational reform.

The parallels between the two reforms are striking. Kentucky has been implementing its reform since 1990; El Salvador, since 1994. U of L's School of Education has been a significant player in the implementation of the Kentucky reform, most notably in the area of teacher training. As a result of the university's leadership in supporting educational reform, and as a consequence of U of L's prior work in El Salvador, the center was contracted by the Ministry of Education to conduct training and administer site visits on education reform-related topics. The center did so for the Ministry of Education Division Directors in April 1997. Based on the success of this visit and a follow-up visit by the associate dean of education and a number of education professionals to El Salvador in mid-1997, a training and visitation program for state directors of education was arranged for December 1997. In both cases, the groups visited local professional-development schools; received an overview of the Kentucky Educational Reform from Department of Education division directors in Frankfort, Kentucky; visited U of L professional-development model schools around the state; and met with representatives of a number of influential educational groups across the state, including a public-policy group in support of educational reform (the Prichard Committee) and Kentucky Educational Television.

These latter two Salvadoran training programs were particularly notable in that they responded to needs articulated exclusively by El Salvador's Ministry of Education, which financed both programs. Thus, in a period of twelve years, the University of Louisville has developed into an institution that is an active player in the area of international training and development. No longer a regional university, the University of Louisville is an institution whose proposals to international funding agencies are, at the very least, considered seriously alongside of those from our most elite institutions because of a record of success and commitment. Moreover, the university has reached the point where country ministries, universities, and other not-for-profit organizations request assistance and/or cooperation to address their local, national, and international needs, using their own scarce resources.

Lessons of the U of L Experience

Four principles delineate the lessons to be learned from the U of L experience: Mutual benefits, personal relationships, service orientation, and visionary propensity.

Mutual benefits. The benefits of internalization efforts are mutually realized by the university and by its partners. Those who have come to U of L to be trained in short-term professional development programs or who are students or scholars in long-term degree programs or other exchange programs have been active in cultural-exchange activities with host families, local schools, and civic organizations. These relationships have been sustained over time and have grown as host families receive subsequent visits from friends or relatives of their initial international student. Consequently, U of L partners learned from the university, and the university has learned from them. As a community, U of L has grown to understand more about its Latin American neighbors and to be more open toward all internationals in its midst because of our positive experiences with international visitors through government-sponsored programs. The U of L community has benefited enormously from their presence; its members' lives have been enriched at the same time they demonstrated to Latin Americans the United States' capacity and desire to respond to local needs as defined by local leaders.

Personal relationships. Internationalization efforts at U of L have spawned countless examples of warm and lasting personal and professional relationships based on mutual trust and common interests. These relationships have, in turn, generated new opportunities to enhance the internationalization efforts of the university as well as to open doors for additional externally supported projects. Specific examples abound, ranging from lasting personal relationships between Louisville families with their adopted Latin American students and their families to enduring personal and professional relationships among University of Louisville students, faculty, and staff at Latin American universities, ministries, and non-governmental organizations.

One example is illustrative of the multiple outcomes possible from relationships developing from international exchange and training programs. In one of U of L's USAID-sponsored training programs for Guatemalan community leaders, the mayor of Morales, Departamento Izabal, was able to discuss his community's need for a fire truck to his Louisville host family. The host family was able to introduce the mayor to Louisville's mayor. As a result, the City of Louisville donated to the City of Morales, Departamento Izabal, Guatemala, a surplus fire truck, in excellent condition, including all necessary paraphernalia, hoses, fire coats, hats, boots, etc. University and city personnel were invited to Morales for a demonstration of the equipment on a day pronounced by the mayor of Morales, Departamento Izabal as Louisville, Kentucky, Day in Morales.

Service orientation. In developing project plans in cooperation with its partners, the university maintained its focus on the ultimate goal of any international-exchange or professional-development program: to address the needs of U of L partners. The underlying commitment, therefore, always has been toward service. The desire to meet the needs of others generated many rewards, some of which were unexpected. Among these were unanticipated opportunities for sharing research interests; lasting professional relationships in which to share ideas on a regular basis; a broader, less parochial view of the world; and, most importantly, warm and enduring friendships that have certainly withstood the test of time and distance. Indeed, perhaps the most important lesson learned as the university attempted to address the needs of others is that not only does it lack all the answers, it should not expect to have them. The university's ways of solving problems, improving efficiency, and reaching goals may or may not work for its partners. In some cases, their different approaches to the same goals caused U of L to rethink its systems. By focusing on the needs of partners, then, universities can find new ways to think about its own processes and problems.

Vision. The willingness to be visionary and to pursue what seems a pipe dream brings unanticipated enrichment. In 1985, before U of L began to pursue its Latin American interests in earnest by responding to the CAMPUS RFP, its focus was largely on academic endeavors carried out in libraries. This was clearly not enough. In a sense, 1985 was a watershed year of accomplishment, involving many units of the university through the kinds of programs developed by USIA and USAID as a result of the Kissinger Report. These programs moved U of L far beyond the traditional role of the Latin American scholar carrying out research in the isolation of a university office or library. It was the involvement of people with real needs on all sides of the borders that caused these programs to realize such success and to become systemic and long-term.

As described, the University of Louisville has experienced significant growth in its international presence over the last twelve years, most notably in Central America. While the evolution of programs has been remarkable, especially when considering their historical development, it is clear this regional partnership would never have been possible without the focused and interrelated program initiatives developed by the U.S. Information Agency and the U.S. Agency for International Development in response to the Kissinger Report. These initiatives provided opportunities not only for the Central Americans, but also for U.S. institutions of higher education. While U of L continues to look for ways to cooperate with USIA and USAID in program initiatives, ministries, universities, and other non-governmental organizations contact the university directly for assistance and/or participation in collaborative efforts, financed by their own local resources. The fact that U of L is more active than ever in Central America after the conclusion of the CAMPUS and other partnership programs suggests that these early efforts by USIA and USAID established, at least in U of L's case, the capacity for a

sustained and self-perpetuating relationship that continues to yield substantial benefits to all parties. ■

About the Author

Everett Egginton (Ph.D., Syracuse University) is executive director of the International Center, University of Louisville. Egginton spent more than twenty years in the fields of teaching and directing Latin American and other international educational programs. He has raised more than \$10 million in external funding. Egginton is chairman of the Educational Foundations Department, director of the Center for Latin American Education, and director of the International Center. His principal research and teaching fields include: comparative education; education and development; educational foundations; Latin American bibliography, education, and studies; nonformal education; secondary teaching methods, statistics and research methods; and survey research.