

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT: THE LAND-GRANT  
UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

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## ABSTRACT

### INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT: THE LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

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Internationalization plays an increasingly important role in many universities today. Not only do institutions engage in efforts to inject an international component into the curriculum and to expand study abroad, but also undertake more complex partnerships and forms of cross-border education, in some cases with significant risk. The expanding scope of internationalization raises questions as to how such initiatives fit within the institution's mission and overall strategy. This qualitative case study examined how a large, public, research-extensive, land-grant university framed various forms of internationalization and who was involved in these decisions. This study also considered how this institution approached the opportunity to open a branch campus relative to other strategic international decisions.

Administrators at this university understood internationalization to be important for a land-grant institution in today's global world. Traditional forms of internationalization, such as study abroad, tended to have more bottom-up participation, whereas larger, cross-unit initiatives evidenced significant senior leadership involvement. The findings highlight the critical role of leadership in furthering a strategic international agenda. Ensuring sustainability of strategic international initiatives was also important. In addition, the study revealed the institution approached the opportunity to open an international branch campus differently than many other initiatives, in a nearly

confidential manner. Although the institution did not proceed with the international branch campus, the institution's approach to that opportunity raised questions about whom leaders involve in such decisions and when.

The institution's leadership emphasized creating a "global presence," which many understood to imply raising rankings and creating an international brand. This focus on international image and ratings versus more traditional internationalization and capacity building calls into question the tie of such efforts to institutional mission and the implications for global higher education more generally.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, for instilling in me a love of learning, and to my children, that they may know the value of setting a goal and achieving their dream.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### *Background and Context*

In light of increasing globalization, higher education institutions are working toward internationalizing their campuses and curricula. Altbach and Knight (2007) define globalization as “the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education toward greater international involvement” (p. 290). Thus, globalization is an external force influencing the environment in which the institution operates. Internationalization, on the other hand, relates to how the institution responds to globalization (Altbach, 2004), and involves choices (Altbach & Knight, 2007). This study examined how an institution made such choices as it selected specific internationalization strategies.

“Traditional internationalization” focuses on providing an institution’s students with international and intercultural perspectives through means such as study abroad, curricular enrichment, language study, and enrolling international students at the institution (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Traditional internationalization thus relates primarily to student learning outcomes. In the last decades, traditional internationalization has become increasingly common on university campuses, evidenced by the development of study abroad programs and efforts to inject an international dimension into the curriculum. Toward the end of the last century, however, Knight (1994) identified internationalization as a “process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution” (p. 7). In this definition, internationalization aligns with the traditional three roles of the university.

Indeed, internationalization now goes well beyond direct student impacts. As “brain drain” moves toward “brain circulation” and the Internet allows ready sharing of text and images

digitally, faculty relationships and research often span countries and continents (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). The internationalization of research brings more heads together to solve the world's problems, which are increasingly global in nature to begin with. In fact, the Board on Agriculture of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC, 1997) identifies the "Global University for the 21st Century" as one in which the academy "affirms and serves broad human needs in a new global environment in which geographic, political, economic, intellectual, and cultural boundaries have diminished significantly" (p. 6). These words suggest a humanitarian role for the academy. In a world whose sustainability is challenged by climate change, depletion of resources, population growth, disease, and hunger, international research is indeed important (Simon, 2009). Such efforts, focused on research and outreach, would still fall under Knight's 1994 definition of internationalization. .

Yet, not all types of international activity in higher education today fall neatly into the definitions of internationalization presented above. The global climate in higher education creates an increasingly competitive environment among many institutions, illustrated by the emergence of not just national, but international rankings (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2006). As competition among institutions increases, colleges and universities often highlight their international presence as a distinguishing factor to prospective students on their web pages (Carnegie Mellon University, 2009; George Mason University, 2009; New York University, 2009). One wonders whether the drive toward internationalization still concerns the traditional goals of the institution, or whether other factors are at work. The growth of transnational education is a prime example. Increasingly, institutions are expanding operations across borders and markets in new ventures that may serve an entirely different population. While teaching is a

part of core mission, transnational enterprises bring a new set of stakeholders overseas, raising particular concern in the case of a public university (Chambers & Cummings, 1990). In recognition of this changing landscape, Knight (2003) proposes a broader definition of internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 2).

Among newer forms of internationalization are an increasing number of agreements between U.S. institutions and universities overseas (Chan, 2004; Sternberger, 2005). In the past, most agreements focused on exchanges of students and faculty. More recently, however, institutions are establishing various forms of academic collaboration, such as “twinning” or “bookend” programs. In the former, a student completes the first portion of the curriculum in a home country institution, and finishes in the partner institution abroad. Bookend programs are similar, with the student starting and finishing at home while spending the middle portion of her studies abroad. Although twinning and bookend formats typically operate at the undergraduate level, universities are also cooperating in graduate education through various joint- or dual-degree programs (Thomas, 2008). Such programs can take a variety of shapes, but in their basic form combine courses taught by a foreign partner with coursework taught by a U.S. institution in order to grant a degree from one or both institutions. Such ventures, to the extent they help another institution or country build capacity, may fall into a definition of outreach, along the lines of NASULGC’s (1997) vision of a global university. In some cases, however, the awarding partner does not continue to invest in the relationship, though collecting revenue, and capacity building does not occur (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). For example, many overseas business programs appear more intent on capturing market share than building capacity or solving the world’s problems. Traditional internationalization was rarely for profit; however, today profit is

increasingly seeping into the thinking of many institutions under the banner of internationalization (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

If some jointly administered programs challenge the traditional definition of internationalization, then the idea of an international branch campus pushes the definition even further. In the last 10 years, a number of global-minded institutions have opened full masters or undergraduate programs abroad (Becker, 2009). Students attending such campuses located in a host country (such as Singapore) may never set foot on the soil of the source country (such as the United States). While the degree of investment varies, such programs typically involve establishing brick and mortar facilities in the host country, as well as creating, in microcosm, a faculty and administrative structure to support students at the overseas location (Green, Kinser, & Eckel, 2008). In some ways, this bears great similarity to decisions to establish another location domestically. However, international branch campuses typically target as students nationals of the host country, and in some cases, students from the larger world region. A few U.S. students may attend or participate in exchanges on the campus, but they are not the primary focus. Furthermore, decisions to expand overseas, in contrast to domestically, typically involve working with some kind of partner in the host country, such as a private investment group or government-related entity (Stearns, 2009). The degree of institutional investment in international branch campuses varies depending on the scope of vision and what resources the partner brings to the table (Croom, 2011). Overall, however, the great distances involved, relationships with partners and sponsors abroad, cultural innuendos, currency fluctuations, potential for changes in the political climate, and the like add significant potential risk to such ventures vis-a-vis domestic expansions.

This expanding scope of internationalization raises questions concerning how such initiatives fit within the institution's mission and overall strategy. It also raises questions concerning how institutions go about framing and deciding up on various forms of internationalization in the first place, in particular those that the institution may designate as strategic. Hence, this study examined how an institution framed various forms on internationalization and who was involved in these decisions. The research included examining how one institution approached the opportunity to open a branch campus relative to other strategic international decisions.

Today, institutions involved in international relationships such as joint programs and branch campuses find them "immensely demanding" (Stearns, 2009, p. 132), requiring attention of both those directly as well as indirectly involved. The broad impact of such initiatives on a large number of stakeholders combined with the high risk and visibility place such projects into Bess and Dee's (2008) definition of strategic decisions. Meanwhile, some critics argue such ventures may signal an undesirable shift in institutional mission and goals. Knight (2009) suggests internationalization is playing an increasingly important role in international rankings. She writes, "This focus on gaining worldwide profile and prestige signals a lamentable shift from capacity building to status building as a driving rationale" (Knight, 2009, p. 9). It is not clear whether such a shift is intentional; institutions entering into strategic international ventures rarely say outwardly that their purpose is raising their status in rankings and garnering international prestige.

On the other hand, it may be that some institutions, whether stated or not, are pursuing a new aspect of mission. To this end, Peter Stearns (2009) identifies two purposes for the global efforts of higher education:

First, to improve the knowledge and skills of American students...to function adequately in an increasingly intense global environment. Second, to use the prestige of American higher education to improve the nation's standing abroad and to forge relationships, both individual and institutional, that provide mutual benefits in this vein. (p. 17)

The second of these purposes goes beyond the goals of traditional internationalization. One might even question how directly this purpose ties to the roles of teaching, research, and service. Does leveraging prestige serve as a form of outreach or is this primarily aimed at improving rankings and standing in the world? Does the shift in internationalization represent mission shift or more haphazard mission drift? As noted earlier, how international initiatives factor into overall institutional strategy is not always stated and not always clear, especially given the substantial risk and investment required for many overseas ventures. In the case of international branch campuses, Lane (in press), questions what it means for a public institution in one country to operate as a private institution in another. In a review of the problems with international branch campuses in Japan in the 1980s, Chambers and Cummings (1990) devote an entire chapter of their book to the issue of control of public resources in branch campus arrangements. In particular, they note, "For long-term political support, a plan must demonstrate that the benefits of the project provide a return to those who support its costs and risks" (Chambers & Cummings, 1990, p. 88). Such concerns underscore the need to clarify how internationalization strategies align with overall institutional mission.

### *Learning from History...or Not*

The international branch campus exemplifies a rather extreme example of a strategic, cross-border initiative due to the large investment and high risk involved. International branch campuses as an internationalization strategy are also interesting in that it is not apparent

universities have learned from past experience. Only a few decades ago, a “climate of opportunism” (Magner, 1990, ¶ 1) encouraged many U.S. institutions to establish branch campuses in Japan. During the 1980s, private Japanese investors and local governmental authorities lured institutions overseas by providing funding and facilities. The Japanese economy had become the second largest in the world; students and profit seemed assured. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, more than 30 U.S. institutions established branch campuses in Japan (Brender, 2004; Ohmori, 2004). By the start of the new millennium, however, only a handful remained. Within the last decade, many institutions found branch campuses, at least in Japan, did not hold the promise they anticipated and so withdrew their operations.

Yet, twenty-five years after the rush to open campuses in Japan, again it seems every few months another institution is announcing plans to open a branch campus abroad. This time, however, the greatest hotbeds of action are Southeast Asia and the Middle East (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). In these regions, as was the case in Japan earlier, private and governmental in-country partners encourage Western universities to open programs on their soil. Today, governments such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Dubai aim to create centers of higher education to meet domestic demand, add to the local revenue base by attracting foreign students, and promote a knowledge-based economy in the region (Garrett, 2005; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Dubai International Academic City, 2007). Institutions pursuing branch campus opportunities offer a number of reasons in the announcement of such ventures, including opportunities to internationalize faculty and students, expand their service mission abroad, enhance prestige, and diversify revenue (Green, Eckel, Calderon & Luu, 2007).

Despite the potential gains, establishing a branch campus remains “one of the riskiest ventures a university, college or school can embark on” (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, p. 36).

Failure can lead to not only financial loss, but can damage the reputation of an institution abroad and strain relations with stakeholders, as the failure of institutions in Japan, and more recently, the politically messy withdrawal of the University of New South Wales in Singapore demonstrate. In the latter example, the University of New South Wales closed its campus in Singapore just one semester after opening, creating “huge egg on their faces as a provider in South-East Asia,” according to New South Wales Greens Party education spokesperson John Kaye (Alexander, 2007, ¶ 13). UNSW Asia, as the institution was called, expected to enroll 500 students the first year and eventually reach an enrollment of 10,000 students as a research-based institution (Cohen, 2007a). Despite significant investment from the Singapore government, the institution was unable to break even, and was reported to have agreed to repay Singapore as much as \$22 million (Cohen, 2007b). A short time earlier, Johns Hopkins University closed its biomedical research center in Singapore Center amid considerable controversy after it was also not able to meet targets for faculty and doctoral students (Jaschik, 2006).

More recently, George Mason University, with an enrollment of only 180 out of its 2011 target of 2000 students, decided to close its campus in the United Arab Emirates in May 2009 after three years of operation, citing disagreements with its partner regarding funding and control (Lewin, 2009). In the following year, Michigan State University closed its undergraduate programs in the neighboring Emirate of Dubai after two years of operation, citing low enrollment, lack of funding, and the recession (Simon, 2010). As these examples show, even with significant partner support, such agreements can have financial and non-financial impacts if the arrangement does not go as planned. With regard to the risks of a failed overseas branch campus, Green et al. (2008) write,



The risks of a poor showing are not simply financial, but they affect the institution's reputation as well. Some may well argue that it is easier to make up lost resources than to repair a damaged reputation. Furthermore, reputation, once damaged, limits access to future opportunities. (p. 27)

Although international branch campuses hold a great deal of allure, institutions examining such a strategic opportunity overseas must weigh carefully the potential risks in light of other motivating factors, whatever those may be. The high-risk nature of these ventures, combined with their tainted history in Japan, raise questions as to how institutions consider and frame such opportunities vis-a-vis other potential strategic international decisions.

Recently, the American Council on Education launched a series of working papers to shed light on this emerging phenomenon (Green et al., 2007; Green et al., 2008). These works highlight the range of incarnations of international branch campuses today and highlight issues and questions for institutions considering such ventures to ponder. Other authors have recently noted the important issues of partnership and governance in branch campus arrangements (Croom, 2011; Stearns, 2009). Having a list of considerations and issues is important; lacking in the literature, however, is how and whether institutions consider and reflect on such advice from a more strategic point of view as they evaluate such opportunities.

### *Strategy and Internationalization*

Strategy is a means for organizations to address changes in the environment (Chaffee, 1985). Through internationalization, colleges and universities address globalization in a number of ways, including programs, organizational approaches, and policies (Altbach, 2004; Knight, 2004). According to Knight (2004), programs include activities such as visiting international scholars, international research, study abroad, and bringing international students to the home

campus. Organizational approaches are those that relate to governance and operations, while policies may include not only priorities and directives, but also how internationalization is integrated into various activities of the institution, such as admissions, planning, and faculty development (Knight, 2004). Many institutions have developed an internationalization plan that reflects such initiatives (Childress, 2009). These plans can establish institutional commitment, define goals, and develop stakeholder involvement in international initiatives (Childress, 2009). Childress' (2009) study of internationalization plans at 31 U.S. institutions found that plans vary in detail and may reside in multiple levels of the institution. She found that in many cases, a centralized, internationalization task force was a key driver in developing the plan. She also notes that once in place, plans may not be perceived as useful and may, in fact, be disregarded in decision-making processes. Childress (2009) suggests future research examine the kinds of activities and goals such task forces use to develop these goals. Along this line, I suggest research into exactly how an institution selects specific strategies for internationalization casts a wider net than just a task force, especially in light of Childress' notion that such plans may be disregarded in subsequent decision-making. While a task force may be an important stakeholder, given the complex nature of higher education organizations, other players with different perspectives, interests, and motives are likely involved as well. Further, the process of selecting specific options may vary depending on the nature of the strategy in question. For example, the decision to open an international branch campus may unfold very differently than expanding study abroad programs.

As many large, U.S. institutions "internationalize" through more involved ventures, how do they approach possible ventures that carry with them not only high visibility, but also high risk? Several authors note the complexities of expanding overseas may challenge the usual

decision-making processes within an institution. Eckel and Kezar (2006) observe that institutions involved in increasing global activity often need to widen the circle of those traditionally involved in decisions to include staff with international expertise and even foreign institutional players. McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) suggest some institutions “may not be equipped with the skills and experience to make the best-informed decisions” in this international environment (p. 38). According to McBurnie and Ziguras (2007):

The decision-making processes that lead to transnational operations are usually invisible to those outside the institution (and perhaps to many inside), and the financial arrangements are normally deemed commercial in confidence, and not open to public scrutiny. Details only make their way into the public domain when failures are sufficiently spectacular and/or when a government audit is reported. (p. 40)

Such secretive processes described above do not typify the work of institutional task forces with broad campus representation.

Notably, there is a body of literature surrounding the risks and issues for corporations that expand internationally. Michigan State University’s Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) even supplies an online toolset within its “globalEDGE” product to evaluate a company’s readiness to expand abroad (Michigan State University CIBER, 2010). Although corporate models may potentially inform universities venturing overseas, as not-for-profit entities, one can rarely apply them directly in the higher education setting. While commercial enterprises may look at a number of factors in deciding if, when, and where to expand abroad, the pursuit of profits as a primary motive means that return on investment projections typically provide a ready metric to assess such proposals. Not-for-profit organizations such as higher education institutions also have concerns about potential costs and

revenues, as few can afford to *lose* money; however, less tangible outcomes may play a prominent role in evaluating opportunities (Levin & McEwan, 2001). Still, competitive pressures may push institutions to move quickly in evaluating overseas opportunities. For example, the perceived advantage of being a “first-mover” in a given region or program offering may result in institutions moving quickly in setting up branches or other agreements overseas. McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) suggest there may be pressure to be engaged in certain countries as markets there open up, citing as an example the high interest in establishing relationships and programs in China.

In addition, higher education institutions typically have complex decision-making processes very different from private corporations (Birnbaum, 1989; Cameron, 1989; Chaffee 1983; Mintzberg, 1979). In the case of international branch campuses, for example, McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) observe “a hard-headed economic weighing of the risks against the likely financial benefits is unlikely to produce a compelling argument for an institution to establish an overseas campus” (p. 37). Higher education institutions may approach organizational-level strategy in ways notably different than corporations (Bess & Dee, 2008; Cameron, 1989). For example, Zemsky, Wegner, and Massy (2005) suggest institutions today should strive to be “market-smart and mission-centered” (p. 51). That is, higher education institutions should examine strategic opportunities not through profit-generating potential, but through contribution to mission attainment in the form of higher education, research, and public service. Gioia and Thomas (1996) found when looking to establish competitive advantage, “perceptions of an institution’s prestige or ranking come to the fore, often taking precedence over measurable substance” (p. 352). In fact, McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) suggest prestige may override economic analyses in the decision to open an overseas campus. Such a position aligns with

Stearns' (2009) goal of leveraging the existing prestige of U.S. higher education. On the other hand, it is not clear how deeply some institutions consciously weigh such factors at all.

In sum, how institutions assess and select strategic international opportunities is not well understood. Yet, institutions are increasingly investing in international undertakings that pose significant risks not only to organizational finances, but to institutional reputation and important stakeholder relationships. This study examined how an institution approached such strategic decisions.

### *Problem Statement*

In this fast-changing, global world, how an institution approaches institutional strategy and major, long-term decisions may have significant impacts on its future. Duderstadt (2006) writes, "The ability of a university to adapt successfully to the profound changes occurring in our society will depend a great deal on the institution's collective ability to develop and execute appropriate strategies" (p. 263). Yet, higher education institutions frequently operate in a less than strategic manner, particularly during times of decline such as we are currently experiencing (Miles & Cameron, 1982). As institutions operate in an increasingly international, if not global, context, strategy becomes more complex, spanning issues and risks beyond one's borders, such as differing cultures, political structures, markets, and regulatory frameworks (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). Given this complexity and risk, institutions can benefit by more intentional approaches to strategy. Yet, in light of the recent explosion of branch campuses, it appears institutions may not have learned from failed ventures in the past. Rather, universities seeking international opportunities may rush into opportunities to not lose ground to competitors. Indeed, change in universities tends to be reactive rather than strategic (Duderstadt, 2006).

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to understand how an institution approached various forms of internationalization by addressing the following research questions:

- How do various forms of internationalization connect to overall institutional strategy?
- Who is involved in strategic international decisions and in what role?
- How does the consideration of the opportunity to open a branch campus parallel or differ from decisions regarding other forms of internationalization?

In order to examine these issues, I conducted an embedded case study to examine an institution that, in addition to other internationalization strategies, considered opening a branch campus. The decisions are not the focus; rather, this study examined *how* the institution assessed these various internationalization strategies.

The study involved reviewing documents relevant to institutional mission, planning, and the various internationalization strategies. In addition, I interviewed a variety of participants on campus, including the senior international officer, relevant deans and assistant deans, senior academic administrators, and other directors involved in campus internationalization. More details on the study's design follow in Chapter Three.

### *Importance of this Study*

Universities are unique in the large number of stakeholders to whom they must answer (Duderstadt, 2006). Decisions of strategic importance, by definition, impact a large numbers of stakeholders (Bess & Dee, 2008). The outcomes of internationally-focused strategy often expand the number of stakeholders by involving people and entities overseas. For example, a failed branch campus venture may have significant impacts on the students and faculty in the program, many of whom will have made major life changes to attend the school or work on the campus. In addition, major financial losses may wind up being absorbed directly or indirectly by the state,

overseas sponsors, the institution and its foundation funds, or even through tuition money at home. Examining opportunities that cross borders involves issues that may include but also extend beyond those encountered domestically. For instance, while concerns about public reaction at home may be important, cultural and political concerns abroad may weigh heavily in the deliberation. Success or failure abroad may impact not only an institution's domestic reputation, but also its international image and opportunities for future partnerships.

As institutions entertain more international opportunities across many cultures and parts of the globe, it is important to develop a means to consider such options and how they fit with overall institutional strategy. This study examined how an institution approached various forms of internationalization, including the opportunity to open an international branch campus. In so doing, it provides lessons learned on how similar institutions might frame strategy in an international context. Illuminating how one institution went about the framing and process of deciding on specific opportunities to internationalize, this study helps other institutions in similar circumstances more thoughtfully consider how to approach such choices and create a basis for additional research in this arena in the future.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### *Introduction*

Institutions face choices daily, from minor and perfunctory acceptances of gifts to those that may impact the direction of the institution for years to come. Decisions in the latter category may include opening up new markets, significantly altering the programmatic mix, or investing in flagship facilities. Such major decisions are strategic in nature, as they are “concerned with the long-term orientation and design of the organization vis-à-vis its environment” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 597). They often pose financial risk or potential damage to an institution’s image should they fail.

With an increased emphasis on internationalization, many institutions find themselves considering strategic, globally-focused decisions (Eckel & Kezar, 2006). While forms of traditional internalization are important, universities are pursuing many new types of international programs and partnerships. Some universities feel pressure to identify and engage in significant international projects. Michaelson (2009) notes,

Lately...attention to proposed international teaching, research, and service ventures, some of them very large-scale, has taken on new urgency at American universities. ...University presidents and boards fear being left behind in the rush they perceive toward global expansion. (p. 24)

This statement implies institutions may be pursuing such projects in order to attain or not lose competitive advantage. It is not clear, however, whether and how institutions understand and frame these international ventures, and how framing of such decisions may differ among varying means of internationalization. In addition, how these international initiatives fit into overall institutional strategy often remains unclear to internal and external stakeholders. This study



examined how an institution understood and framed various forms of internationalization, including undertakings that do not cleanly fit within the definition of traditional internationalization, such as opening an international branch campus.

This chapter begins with a few definitions, provides some historical context, describes current rationales and justifications for cross-border education, and discusses the status of the literature surrounding models of internationalization. As the rationales and models do not fully explain how a given institution approaches and makes sense of institutional strategy and strategic choice, the second half of the chapter summarizes a number of orientations that frame the manner in which a university may approach strategy more generally. Together, these bodies of literature provide background for studying how a specific institution approached strategic international initiatives.

### *Definitions*

It is important to clarify terminology before going further. Higher education today is an increasingly international enterprise and sometimes people understand terms in different ways. As an umbrella term, *cross-border education* refers to “situations where the teacher, student, programme, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders” (OECD, 2004, p. 19). This covers a wide scope of arrangements, including students studying abroad for a month or pursuing an entire degree in another country, faculty exchanges, and online course delivery of programs across borders. An *international branch campus* is a form of cross-border, program mobility in which an entire degree program of the originating “source” country is offered across borders in another “host” country. This definition of an international branch campus entails a physical presence of the source institution in the host nation from admission through graduation. This physical presence may vary from a relatively small

instructional site to a large campus setting with athletic facilities, residence halls, etc. In this study, I use the term “branch” loosely and do not imply a specific definition such as that used by some regional accreditation organizations. In particular, this definition does not infer a separate governance structure.

### *Lessons from the Last Century*

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the experience of branch campuses in Japan provides an interesting historical context within which to consider how institutions explore international opportunities of similar size and risk today. More than 30 U.S. institutions pursued some kind of branch campus expansion in Japan during the 1980s. By the end of that decade, however, the situation in Japan changed, as potentially excessive opportunism seemed to be driving investors and institutions alike, in some cases at the expense of quality and in ways that created significant issues for Japanese students (McMurtrie, 2000). Chambers and Cummings (1990) led a study of U.S.-Japan higher education ventures at that time. The study, coordinated by the Institute of International Education (IIE) and funded by the Japan–United States Friendship Commission, came about amid growing concern that the nature of some of these ventures might impact relations between the two countries. This study surveyed around 100 institutions that had at least contemplated expanding into the Japanese market, or in the case of Japanese institutions, into the U.S. market. In order to illustrate a number of key issues, the authors conducted in-depth case studies with a number of institutions that had expanded into the Japanese market. The report opened the eyes of many to a darker side of higher education entrepreneurship and its potential risk.

Chambers and Cummings (1990) found a number of problems in arrangements with branch campuses in Japan in the late 1980s. The larger issues they noted included naïve

negotiations, unmet educational expectations, lowered standards, lack of institutional commitment, awkward governance structures, problematic costing mechanisms, financial and legal manipulation, and power and control issues among partners (Chambers & Cummings, 1990). The authors documented many of the ventures in Japan and summarized the most prominent lessons from these experiences. A number of institutions, feeling an urgency to open a branch campus quickly while some competitive advantage might remain, jumped into partnerships without documenting or validating assumptions or understanding either the cultural implications or host country higher education market. The lack of up-front investigation, negotiation, or alignment of intentions resulted in later problems.

The experience in Japan pointed to the need to fully understand the context and partner abroad, and take time to ensure a contractual basis that will support the educational institution's interests while still aligning with the partner's goals. Chambers and Cumming's (1990) guidance is most helpful at the point one is evaluating a very specific opportunity. Today, as universities rush to form a variety of strategic partnerships, such as dual- and joint-degree programs, as well as branch campuses, one wonders whether they may be falling into some of the same traps.

At the same time, Chambers and Cummings (1990) are silent on how or if such ventures fit into an institution's overall mission and planning context. They presume the institution has already decided that opening a branch campus in Japan is an appropriate action for the source institution. Their advice focuses primarily on evaluating the specific opportunity and outlining an agreement. It is important to also consider why colleges and universities are addressing various cross-border opportunities in the first place.

#### *Motivators and Drivers for Cross-border Education Today*

As part of campus internationalization, many colleges and universities are engaging in activities that fall under the broad umbrella of cross-border education. The 2004 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) book entitled *Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges* provides a framework for examining international higher education ventures that cross borders. OECD's (2004) definition of cross-border educations aligns with Knight's (2006) classification of cross-border education into three forms: people mobility, educational program mobility, and institution or provider mobility. For all of these forms of cross-border education, OECD (2004) identifies three categories of rationales: policy rationales, institutional rationales, and student rationales. Looking around the world today, one sees growth in cross-border education where these rationales align, for instance where a revenue-seeking institution expands in a country with hospitable higher education regulations and a large number of students interested in education from a foreign provider.

An institution considering engaging in cross-border education needs to understand the policy rationales in the potential target country. At times, national policy may be very explicit, such as Japan and Britain setting national targets to increase the number of international students (McNeill, 2008; Smithers & MacLeod, 2006). In other cases, one can intuit national policy by looking at how a country limits or encourages scholarships for international students, fee regulations for overseas students, and even what kind of data are published regarding student mobility (OECD, 2004). OECD (2004) lists four categories of policy rationales underlying cross-border education: mutual understanding, capacity building, revenue generation, and skilled migration. Four other drivers within host countries include rising demand for higher education, the appeal of foreign education, favorable government policies, and the rise of English-language-based programs internationally (Green et al., 2007). Within a country, however, stakeholders

may interpret and carry out the policy differentially (OECD, 2004). In many cases, such as opening an international branch campus, the institution must work with a sponsoring organization, whether a host government or private consortium. In such cases the institution must also understand the partner's goals and objectives in order to assess compatibility. For any successful long-term partnership, both parties must find they are gaining something worthwhile in exchange for the effort expended (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011).

Student rationales are also of importance; without an interested and qualified applicant pool, an institution's cross-border initiatives cannot succeed. OECD (2004) lists a host of determinants of student interest in enrolling in programs of overseas providers, including the language of instruction, perceived institutional reputation or that of the education system more generally, accreditation status, recognition in the local labor market, and relative cost of the programs versus other reputable institutions. These factors may also play against considerations that would drive students to attend institutions outside of their country, such as the ability to get a job overseas and quality of life in the foreign country, especially if the branch is competing to keep students in the host country who might otherwise go abroad.

While government policy rationales in a host country matter in terms of identifying a location, and student rationales are vital to a potential market, why an institution wishes to engage in cross-border initiatives is a key element in the decision process. According to OECD (2004), "a significant share of the development of cross-border education has been institution- rather than solely policy-driven" (p. 28). That is, institutional objectives play a significant role in shaping cross-border ventures, including international branch campuses. OECD (2004) notes two common reasons for institutional interest in cross-border education: the search for quality and

prestige, and domestic funding issues. Green et al. (2007) add to this list a desire to advance internationalization and quality as well as the service mission.

As global competition increases among institutions, the Times Higher Education-QA World University rankings, Shanghai Jiao Tong University World Academic Rankings, and other such ratings take on increasing importance. In this climate, “competition has increasingly required gaining (or maintaining) a worldwide reputation for quality” with a “strong international dimension” (OECD, p. 28-29). With international reputation a part of this game, the recent chain of institutions creating joint- or dual-degree programs, unveiling international exchanges, or looking at opening a branch campus leaves the impression many are “keeping up with Joneses,” hoping not to be left behind in the quest for international partners and strategic locations. Some institutions may already have an advantage by leveraging their existing brand and image.

McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) highlight the important role of prestige in such ventures:

[T]he appeal of a transnational education program is in large part dependent on the prestige of the foreign university issuing the degree...the ‘brand status’ of the institution providing the credentials is vitally important in the marketplace. (p. 5)

The authors also recognize that an overseas venture can present reputational risk to the home campus. They observe “even prestigious research-oriented public universities secure in their home base packing order, can find their reputation undermined and their energies attenuated by their transnational teaching activities” (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, p. 5), in particular in the face of financial losses.

Meanwhile, the move to mass education and contracting government support has left many Western universities struggling to maintain a strong funding base (Zusman, 2005). As a result, institutions of higher education, especially public universities, are increasingly looking for

ways to diversify sources of income (Green et al., 2007). Many institutions seek to bring international students to their campus to enhance revenue. Like corporations, others hope to find new revenue sources abroad and look to various types of cross-border education and international research to provide external income streams. Yet, financial risk remains a major issue in deciding whether to explore opportunities abroad (Green et al., 2008). Institutions need to be assured they will not lose money over time. By at least breaking even, in the right circumstance an international campus may provide enough external funding to be what Zemsky et al. (2005) refer to as “mission-centered and market-smart” (p. 51), that is, a situation in which revenue allows a relaxation of existing financial limits, thus allowing greater mission attainment. Mission attainment may take the form of internationalization, quality improvement, research opportunities, and service. Of course, the wrong arrangement may have just the opposite effect, pulling down mission attainment.

In addition to these institutional rationales, sometimes other factors drive institutions to expand abroad. McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) suggest such ventures are “driven by the personal desire of the institution’s leader to have a lasting legacy both in their institution and in the country in which the campus is to be located” (p. 38). Other times, they note a desire for an institution to be one of the first on the ground as a given market opens up. In both cases, such emphasis has the potential to cloud the decision-making process.

Finally, McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) raise questions as to how effectively public institutions operate in a private, market-sensitive manner abroad. They argue entrepreneurial, public universities may not display the same discipline as corporations since the public university probably cannot go bankrupt. They highlight the issues faced by public institutions:

There is a twofold dilemma: the danger that excessive focus on the financial bottom line can compromise commitment to the community service responsibilities of the publicly funded body and, conversely, a concern that poor management of entrepreneurial activities can place at risk public funds and the public trust. (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, p. 45)

In light of such concerns, the way in which a public institution articulates its strategy when venturing overseas is all the more important and interesting.

As the OECD (2004) notes, “The growth of cross-border education activities has been driven by educational institutions and providers, students and policy makers, whose rationales for delivering or receiving cross-border education may be quite different but are largely compatible” ( p. 25). It is important in partnerships for both sides to feel they are gaining something in the arrangement (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011). However, it appears goal compatibility does not always occur, given the scores of failed international branch campuses. Moreover, it is not clear that goals and rationales for international initiatives always align well with overall mission and strategy.

### *Internationalization Strategy*

Universities have been involved in various forms of transnational education for decades. The previous sections outlined some of the experiences of international branch campuses in Japan as well as a number of justifications, rationales, and motivating factors on the part of institutions and host countries for establishing these and other international ventures today. Yet, these rationales alone do not explain how the institution formulates international strategy more generally. A number of authors have examined how institutions approach campus internationalization. De Wit (2002) examines European and American approaches to



internationalization, including rationales as well as various strategies and organizational models. Various authors have created models for campus internationalization as well (Davies, 1995; De Wit, 2002; Knight, 1994; Rudzki, 1995). These models of internationalization, however, focus more on how the institution develops the concept of campus internationalization initially, rather than how an institution examines specific internationally focused opportunities of potential strategic importance to the institution.

As international opportunities become larger in scope, higher in risk, and more central to overall institutional strategy, we need a more careful look at not only how institutions promote internationalization, but how colleges and universities identify, understand, and approach specific, strategic initiatives. In order to look at how institutions frame specific options, international or otherwise, the literature concerning strategic choice in higher education becomes important.

### *Strategic Choice in Higher Education*

Institutions make three kinds of decisions: strategic, operational and tactical (Bess & Dee, 2008). Strategic decisions are long-term in nature and affect the relationship of the institution to its environment, typically involving upper management, impacting large numbers of people and internal units, and possibly focusing on ideas (Bess & Dee, 2008). Tactical decisions, in contrast, deal with transformation of products and services, while operational decisions deal with timing, personnel selection, equipment and the like (Bess & Dee, 2008). This study focused on initiatives that fall into the category of strategic decisions made at the institutional level of the organization. For instance, a decision to open a branch campus falls into the strategic category, given the involvement of senior management, the impact on stakeholders, and anticipated long-term commitments. McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) observe “branch campuses are generally

initiated at the university's center" (p. 38). Stakeholders include the faculty and staff who may rearrange their lives to work in the site; academic and support units on the home campus who devise new operational processes to support the overseas location; students and families abroad who trust the institution and invest time and money in the branch campus; investors, community members, and other institutions that may be impacted by the presence of a U.S. institution in their region; and domestic stakeholders who may be impacted by the overseas activity. Green et al. (2008) emphasize that due to significant start-up costs and effort, institutions investing in an international branch campus need to take a long-term perspective. One of their ACE Round-table participants recommends, "[t]hrow away your short-term goals, they are irrelevant" (Green et al., 2008, p. 21). Other international opportunities may not have quite the extreme risk, very long-term orientation, or the degree of investment of a branch campus, but may still be strategic in nature.

Organizations may approach strategic decisions from a number of vantage points. In fact, even within one organization different players may approach the same situation from different perspectives. Chaffee (1985) identifies three major approaches to strategy: linear, adaptive, and interpretive. Bess and Dee (2008) identify five approaches to strategy that largely subsume and expand on Chaffee's (1985) three. Hence, the following sections review Bess and Dee's (2008) five approaches and consider how they intersect with the motivations for cross-border initiatives defined earlier.

### *Linear Approaches to Strategy*

Chaffee (1985) describes the linear approach to strategy as "methodical, directed, sequential action involved in planning." (p. 90). Bess and Dee (2008) note in the linear approach, "strategy is planned, intentional effort that seeks to align internal organizational structures with a

set of goals and performance objectives” (p. 723). Bess and Dee (2008) add that planning occurs in a top-down manner. Further, in linear approaches to strategy, organizations apply entrepreneurial actions such as changing markets or products to adjust their environmental linkages (Chaffee, 1985). Chaffee (1985) notes that such a process includes identifying goals along with alternative ways of achieving them. The institution evaluates the alternatives relative to their chances of success and selects the best course. Success is often measured in the private sector in terms of profit. As noted earlier, success in non-profit organizations may take other, less tangible forms. Due to the time-lag in decision-making, the linear model assumes the environment remains relatively predictable (Bess & Dee, 2008; Chaffee, 1985).

The linear approach underlies traditional models of long-term and strategic planning that were applied to higher education in the 1970s and 1980s (Dooris, Kelley, & Trainer, 2004). Despite arguments against the use of linear approaches in higher education (Birnbaum, 2001; Cohen & March, 1986; Peterson, 1997), through the years an overriding belief in the virtue of such rational approaches has resulted in continuing adaptation of structured planning models (Birnbaum, 2001). For instance, an institution seeking revenue in its overseas programming might conduct a structured ten-year forecast and cost-benefit analysis of various alternatives. This would typify a more structured, linear approach.

#### *Adaptive Approaches to Strategy*

Chaffee (1985) describes adaptive strategies as those in which “monitoring the environment and making choices are simultaneous and continuous functions” (p. 91). In this approach, the institution attempts to align the organization with changes in the environment, while downplaying the relative importance of advanced planning. In the adaptive model of strategy, the environment includes competitors, trends, and stakeholders (Chaffee, 1985). The

institution and the environment are integrated, and strategy includes not only adapting to, but anticipating environmental changes. Through on-going scanning and adjustment, the institution can be more agile, potentially enlarging its competitive advantage (Bess & Dee, 2008). Chaffee (1985) notes this kind of approach to strategy is based on an “evolutionary biological model of organizations” (p. 92). Much like organisms, an organization must adapt to its changing environment in order to survive.

In line with this evolutionary biological approach, Cameron (1989) describes a “population ecology approach” to organizational adaptation that highlights environmental niches, which he defines as “subunits of the environment that support organizations” (p. 275), or a subsection of a market in which an organization operates. Over time, niches can change in size or in shape (Zammuto & Cameron, 1985). The former may involve a change in the resources an organization has access to, such as the number of potential customers for a company or the tax revenue for a school district. The latter, a change in niche shape, could come about through a breakthrough in technology that changes the nature of demand for a product. Zammuto and Cameron (1985) found that in declining environments, generalist organizations, with a wide range activities and lines of business, adapted better to a change in niche shape, as the breadth of activity allows them to operate and evolve as the niche does. On the other hand, the authors noted specialist organizations, focused on a more narrow range of activities in which they operate at high efficiency, were better able to adapt to changes in niche size during times of decline (Zammuto & Cameron, 1985). Zammuto and Cameron (1985) further distinguish organizational adaptation by the nature, speed, and ability to foresee the decline. For example they note that some liberal arts colleges literally had to transform themselves, changing focus

and even name, to survive as their niche disintegrated and markets shifted toward more applied study (Zammuto & Cameron, 1985).

Another excellent example of an adaptive approach to strategy is the strategic choice model put forth by Miles and Cameron (1982). In this research, the authors examined strategies of tobacco companies as the negative health effects of smoking became known and more publicized in the 1950s and 1960s. Miles and Cameron (1982) identified three strategies companies employed in this hostile environment: domain defense, domain offense, and domain creation. In domain defense, institutions “preserve the legitimacy of the core domain of the industry” (Cameron, 1983, p. 370). These strategies aim to protect the current market and status quo, and may be used to buy time while evaluating other options. In domain offense, organizations “expand the domain of the organization, that is, to do more of what the organization does well” (Cameron, 1983, p. 370). This includes product expansion, market segmentation, and overseas market expansion. Finally, in domain creation, institutions “add related domains, to diversify, or spread the risk” (Cameron, 1983, p. 370), such as expanding into new areas of corporate training or adding a new publications division.

Cameron (1983) found the most effective tobacco firms over a thirty-year period of decline acted proactively rather than reactively, concentrating on organizational effectiveness rather than organizational efficiency. In contrast to industry, Cameron (1983) found higher education institutions responded much more conservatively in times of decline, focusing internally on efficiencies and cost-cutting rather than taking more innovative, externally focused, strategic approaches. Three decades later, in another period of decline for higher education, one might wonder whether the current emergence of dual-degree programs, overseas ventures, and

online programs represents a more entrepreneurial response. How universities view various international strategies during times of decline may give insight into this very issue.

### *Emergent Approaches to Strategy*

Bess and Dee (2008) state some critics argue the adaptive model rarely represents higher education institutions, which are sometimes described as “organized anarchies” (Cohen & March, 1986). In organized anarchies, decisions may be made by more random “garbage can” approaches seemingly dependent on chance and timing than a careful examination of opportunities (Cohen & March, 1986). Hence, institutional strategy may be defined as emergent, wherein organizational members take action, then assign meaning to the actions that may subsequently be considered strategic (Bess & Dee, 2008). In this conceptualization, strategy results from reviewing past decisions and fitting them into patterns that together may be considered an organizational strategy. Strategy thus emerges and evolves. No leader or set of individuals develop strategy a priori; rather “ideas and innovations can percolate up from the grassroots of the organization and become recognized as an important part of the overall strategy” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 731). Such an approach to strategy is consistent with a view of university organizations as loosely-coupled systems (Weick, 1976).

### *Interpretive/Symbolic Approaches to Strategy*

Chaffee (1985) identifies the interpretive approach to strategy as grounded in a “social contract” entered into by individuals (p. 93). She notes in this model the organization uses metaphors and framing, often embodied through symbols and norms, to help stakeholders understand the organization and its environment (Chaffee, 1985). More to the point, “in interpretive strategy the organization’s leaders shape the attitudes of participants and potential participants toward the organization and its outputs; they do not make physical changes in the

outputs” (Chaffee, 1985, p. 94). Bess and Dee (2008) add that strategy development within the symbolic approach helps members of an organization understand the culture of their organizations.

Interpretive strategies thus align with issues of image and identity. Gioia and Thomas (1996) define image as “how members believe others view their organization” and identity as “features of the organization that members perceive as ostensibly central, enduring, and distinctive in character that contribute to how they define the organization and their identification with it” (p. 354). Hence, image is more external in focus while identity is more internal in focus. However, Gioia and Thomas (1996) add that identity and image serve as perceptual screens or mirrors relative to how team members process information and interpret key issues. They further note, when trying to proactively change an organization, one should reconsider the “assumed durability and distinctiveness of identity and image” (Gioia & Thomas, 1996, p. 354). This approach would align with the interpretative model of strategy. In fact, in their research, Gioia and Thomas (1996) found institutional players interpreted issues as “strategic” if they were likely to help achieve the desired future image for the university; whereas those designated as “political” were associated with the status quo. They further found that institutional players saw an emphasis on future image as a means of changing current identity.

Indeed, Wheatley (2000) views identity as a guiding force during times of change. She writes:

Self-reference is the key to facilitating orderly change in the midst of turbulent environments. In organizations, just as with individuals, a clear sense of identity—the lens of values, traditions, history, dreams, experience, competencies, culture—is the only route to achieving independence from the environment. When the environment seems to

demand a response, there is a means to interpret that demand. This prevents the vacillations, the constant reorganizations, and the frantic search for new customers and new ventures that continue to destroy so many businesses. (p. 86)

Based on the literature, it is still not clear whether and how institutions view the role of image and identity as they evaluate various international opportunities.

### *Post-Modern Approaches to Strategy*

Finally, Bess and Dee (2008) identify postmodern approaches to strategy that question whose voice is heard and prevails in developing strategy. A postmodern approach looks critically at who participates in creating strategy, who interprets the environment, and whether and how dissenting voices surface in the process. Postmodern approaches argue strategy development is neither neutral nor objective, and “indicate the need for surfacing institutional values and raising questions regarding whom those values privilege” (Bess & Dee, p. 734). In some cases, institutions considering or developing international branch campuses face hard questions reflecting a postmodern perspective to strategy, as faculty and staff wonder who decided that University X should be in Country Y, and why institutional resources should be diverted to that particular location in light of political, religious or moral differences in the country and culture.

### Summary

In higher education today, institutional strategy increasingly carries with it an international dimension. Experiences in Japan demonstrate that institutions may at times rush in to situations without fully considering the implications. Some authors question whether universities are well-equipped to make large, strategic international decisions at all. In light of this, it is unclear how some overseas activities fit into institutional strategy. An institution may be able to present many rationales for engaging in cross-border education without coherently



articulating the strategic implications of those actions. As Bess and Dee (2008) and Chaffee (1985) point out, institutions may approach strategy in a number of ways, some more intentional than others. These differing approaches create a lens for examining how institutions approach international strategic decisions.

### Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter describes the research design I used examining how a University approached various forms of internationalization at the institutional level. It is useful at this point to review again the study's research questions:

- How do various forms of internationalization connect to overall institutional strategy?
- Who is involved in strategic international decisions and in what role?
- How does the consideration of the opportunity to open a branch campus parallel or differ from decisions regarding other forms of internalization?

In this chapter I first discuss the use of qualitative methods and especially the case study approach I used to address these questions. I then review how I collected and analyzed the data for this study.

#### *Use of Qualitative Methods*

The current study examined how an institution considered and framed strategies for internationalization, a process about which there is little research and which is not well understood. Such a process involves a number of stakeholders with potentially differing perspectives and experiences and a complex set of factors. Creswell (2007) notes qualitative research is appropriate in trying to understand a complex issue that needs to be considered in its context. Further, Rossman and Rallis (2003) state decision-making processes must be evaluated within the specific organizational context and culture. As such, qualitative research was appropriate for this study.

In this study, I sought to uncover and understand the process of identifying and reviewing forms of internationalization from the perspective of various participants and stakeholders in those processes. The desire to understand how the participants experienced these processes

suggested qualitative research as an appropriate strategy. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994) characterize a main task of qualitative inquiry as trying to “explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations” (p. 7). This study attempted to understand how institutional players frame, account for, and take action with and among strategies for internationalization. To do so, this study utilized quotes and descriptions taken directly from participants as one of the major sources of data. This is characteristic of, “thick description” that presents “details, emotions, and textures of social relationships” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 197). In this investigation, the descriptions presented by the participants during in-depth interviews gave insight into the perceptions and experiences of institutional players in the decision process.

#### *Use of Case Study*

This study’s research questions further suggested the use of a case study approach. Yin (2009) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). An institutional decision process is tightly woven with the institution’s culture, including the web of relationships both within and in this instance, potentially beyond the institution (Tierney, 2008). In addition, case study design is considered appropriate when researching processes (Merriam, 1998) and examining “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2009). This study explicitly focused on an institution’s process of examining and framing internationally-oriented strategic opportunities. In so doing, the study examined how,

and to some extent why, the various initiatives were considered, and required an in-depth study to understand them in within the specific institutional context.

Although the boundaries between context and phenomenon may be blurred, the concept of a “bounded system” nevertheless distinguishes the case study approach (Stake, 2000). That is, the study should define the limits to the context and phenomenon under examination. Creswell (2007) defines a case as follows:

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g. observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case *description* and case-based themes. (p. 73)

The current study considered one institution’s process regarding how it assessed a variety of internationalization strategies over the last decade, including various forms of traditional internationalization such as study abroad, and the opportunity to open a branch campus. The study thus used an embedded case approach (Yin, 2009), looking both at the overall context of identifying international strategy as well as examining several specific instances of opportunity selection. These strategic choices all sit within the larger institutional context, culture, and decision-making framework of the institution. The study looked in-depth at the development and framing of various forms of internationalization, paying particular attention to how the decision to open a branch campus was similar or different from the approach taken to other internationalization ventures. For the various initiatives, I studied who was involved in what roles and with what voice, what kind of approach the institution used, and how participants framed the opportunities relative to institutional mission or other criteria.

### *Case Selection*

I purposively selected Land-Grant University as the site for this case study, which means I looked for a site that offered certain advantages, as opposed to randomly selecting a location. Merriam (1998) notes a purposive approach “is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). I sought a large, research-extensive, public institution that had recently examined a branch campus as the focus of my investigation. Pursuing a branch campus was a pivotal case selection criterion because branch campuses generally involve long-term time horizons, large financial resources, and carry high risk, making it one of the more extreme forms of internationalization. Further, different rationales and decision processes might be involved in branch campus strategies than in other, more traditional forms of internationalization. The institution also needed to be engaged in a variety of other forms of more traditional internationalization, such as study abroad, international student recruitment, and collaborative projects with other universities in order to compare such approaches to one another and to consideration of a branch campus. I targeted a public institution for my site because these institutions are accountable to a larger number of stakeholders, in particular the home state and its citizens. Public institutions are generally subject to higher levels of scrutiny in investment decisions, as described earlier. A decision to open a branch campus involves a significant degree of risk and financial investment that a public institution would presumably need to be able to justify to domestic constituencies. The fact that my site was also a land-grant institution, accentuated this issue, as land-grant institutions have a specific responsibility to provide access to citizens in the working class while serving regional and national interests (Duderstadt, 2006).

The study entailed interviewing high-level decision-makers regarding what might be a sensitive set of processes or decisions at an institution. As a result, I needed to locate an institution willing to provide me access to key administrators and documents. In this regard, an element of convenience sampling (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) arose. My prior contacts at LGU assisted me in gaining access to relevant leaders and decision-makers.

### *Data Gathering*

Merriam (1998) identifies three major forms of data collection commonly employed in qualitative research: interviews, document review, and observation. This study relied primarily on the first two of these, described in the following paragraphs. Since the strategies under investigation largely occurred in the past and over prolonged periods, direct observation was not feasible as a primary mode of data gathering.

From the beginning, this case study utilized document analysis, examining available news releases, web pages, planning documents, and organization charts. I was not able to review meeting minutes; in many cases I was told the committees and working groups kept rather informal records. The documents I was able to review provided background and helped me identify issues associated with the process and a list of people to interview. Most of these documents were publically available on the Web; a few were shared by participants, such as a version of the internationalization task force report edited for external consumption.

Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders constituted the primary means of collecting data. I developed eleven interview questions, using a matrix to cross-check that that my questions sufficiently covered the points in my research questions. The questions examined the participants' views on what the institutional priorities are for internationalization, who sets them and how, and how such priorities impact the participant's unit. The questions also focused

on how units establish internationalization priorities and how unit priorities relate to institutional priorities and objectives. Finally, the questions asked participants to describe specific examples of large international projects and how the approach to them was similar or different. A copy of the protocol used in my interviews appears in Appendix A.

Using information from document analysis, personal contacts, a review of the literature, and my knowledge of higher education organizations, I generated a starting list of key individuals to interview made up of leaders from various positions within the organization. In all, I interviewed 15 individuals, including the interim and former chief international officer, associate senior academic officers, several deans, former deans, and associate deans from academic units, and international program directors. Snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007) helped in developing interview candidates. My primary contact in the organization composed a letter of introduction. Only one potential participant did not respond to my invitation. The interview process continued through multiple site visits. Toward the end of my second campus visit, I reached a point of redundancy (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), with little significant new material emerging from the data. This is sometimes referred to as reaching saturation (Creswell, 2007).

Before beginning, I received permission from my own institution's Internal Review Board (IRB) and contacted the IRB at Land-Grant University, as well. As I was the sole interviewer, LGU's IRB allowed me to proceed using the IRB approval from my own institution. All participants signed an IRB-approved consent form. A copy of this form appears in Appendix B. All but one participant allowed me to audio-record the interviews for later transcription. I conducted interviews in the closed offices of the participants. In accordance with my IRB approval, I took care to ensure the confidentiality of data, including assigning pseudonyms both in describing the institution and specific participants.

### *Data Analysis*

I carefully organized my data throughout the research process. Soon after completing the interviews, I employed a commercial service to promptly transcribe the interviews, and reviewed these summaries personally. I logged and classified all documents to carefully track them. For each document, I kept an original copy untouched while using a second copy for coding and analysis activity. I backed up my data, recordings, and documents and stored them in a locked cabinet in my locked office on campus. Recordings and any identifiable information will be destroyed 3 years after the study is complete.

Early analysis of data is an important part of fieldwork and contributes to the quality of data collection and overall analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data analysis thus began concurrently with collection of documents as well as interviews. I took margin notes during the interviews and summarized key information gleaned from the interviews in a separate document. This supported reflective thinking during the interview and document collection process, and also provided input to subsequent interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The major internationalization initiatives at LGU discussed during the interviews included a collaborative project in Africa, expanding study abroad, sending faculty to Asia to foster new partnerships and programs, and the opportunity to open an international branch campus. These became the embedded cases that I used to compare and contrast through the course of my analysis.

I began developing themes during the process of data collection, creating matrices of what I was hearing and cross-cutting themes. After transcription, I returned to the conversations and through annotations and summaries, conducted a form of pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to “let the data speak”, I put my earlier matrices aside and did a bottom-up approach of coding and repetitive grouping to let categories emerge. Through this



process I subsequently identified categories and themes (Creswell, 2007) as presented in this report. In order to develop the case description, I also created a timeline analysis of major events for each sub-case, major decisions and issues, referred to by Miles and Huberman (1994) as a time-ordered matrix.

### *Data Validation*

Authors debate how data validation should be applied in qualitative work in light of differing philosophical approaches (Merriam, 1998). Two forms of data validation include internal and external validity (Merriam, 1998). External validity seeks to determine whether the results might be replicated by another researcher (Merriam, 1998). As a qualitative case study, the results of this case will be highly associated with this case and therefore external validity is not possible in the same way as might happen in quantitative research. With the information I provide in this chapter, however, a researcher could undertake a similar study at another institution. On the other hand, internal validity looks at whether the results of a study match reality, that is, that they are trustworthy (Merriam, 1998). This study used several techniques to achieve trustworthy results.

Considering the process from multiple points of view and using multiple information types added to the study's credibility and rigor through triangulation (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Stake (2000) defines triangulation as "a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (p. 443). This technique allows a "convergence of evidence" within a single case study that gives added credence to the investigation (Yin, 2009). In this study, I interviewed stakeholders from varying organizational levels and with differing roles in the process. I also triangulated results by comparing interview feedback with data obtained through document analysis. As themes developed, I used a

validation technique called rival explanation development (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009), being watchful to follow and develop multiple lines of explanation or causation. This included following lines of questioning during the interview to uncover conflicting opinions and perspectives, as well as adding new interviewees through snowball sampling to offer alternative perspectives. In addition, a peer reviewer (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) examined how I developed the case explanation and themes. She uncovered no significant issues or inconsistencies in my analysis.

### *Study Usefulness*

As a case study at a single institution, this research is not intended to create conclusions from which one may generalize (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). At the same time, through the detailed description provided with this case, others in similar settings may consider how the situation and lessons learned through the study of Land-Grant University might be similar to or different from that on their own campus. Hence, lessons learned by LGU may still provide insight for others (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

### *Researcher Background*

In conducting qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to be explicit about the background and experiences she brings that may affect her analysis of the case (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In addition to a long-standing general interest in cross-border education, I was involved in the establishment of an academic site in Dubai for my home institution. Although I was not involved in the initial decision process directly, I subsequently participated in one of the key coordinating groups on campus working on its implementation, and travelled to the region in order to help establish information technology infrastructure for the campus location there. Later, I oversaw undergraduate admissions for that instructional site as well. Although I selected a

different institution than my own as the site of my research, in conducting this study I was careful to bracket my prior experience working with an international branch campus and work with my peer reviewer to limit the impact of my prior experience on the current research.

### *Summary*

In sum, I investigated how an institution framed various international initiatives using an embedded, qualitative case study approach. The case study used semi-structured interviews and a descriptive approach in order to learn more about a process that is not well understood. By using multiple interviews as well as a variety of documents, I used triangulation to improve the rigor and credibility of my research. Employing a peer reviewer also contributed to credibility.

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## Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter summarizes the main findings of my study at Land-Grant University. The chapter begins with a brief overview of Land-Grant University with emphasis on its international activities. The rest of the chapter describes how LGU has approached international strategy. To preserve confidentiality, I use pseudonyms for the institution, its units, and all participants.

### *Background*

Land-Grant University (LGU) is a large, research-extensive institution with a history dating back more than 125 years. Through this period, the university expanded beyond its early roots; its more than ten colleges now enroll tens of thousands of students from undergraduate through the Ph.D. level. Like other land-grant institutions, LGU embraces its tri-partite mission of learning, research, and engagement, and its responsibility to the state. LGU also enjoys a strong national and international reputation. While LGU has branch campuses in the state, this study focused on the main location, which remains the largest.

Over much of the last decade, LGU enjoyed relatively stable leadership in the form of the much beloved President Schugart and Senior Academic Officer Nickels. During this period, LGU inaugurated new, world-class research facilities and expanded campus internationalization. Due to retirement and other opportunities, both administrators left the institution a couple years ago. The new president arrived soon after and has led LGU since. Upon arrival, President Zelinski initiated the development of a new strategic plan. The plan was completed within a year of the president's arrival with much fanfare. The plan places LGU's mission in a global context and describes institutional goals and direction in very "broad strokes." Yet, progress on international goals, as well as many others, has recently slowed. A number of administrators expressed concern over the new president's leadership.

During the same time, there has been significant turnover in other senior administrative positions, including the Senior Academic Officer (SAO) role. The previous Senior International Officer (SIO) was required to retire over a year ago, but a search for a replacement failed. On top of this, the global financial crisis created new challenges for the state and the institution.

Over previous decades, Land-Grant University demonstrated significant progress in traditional internationalization, and achieved national recognition for these efforts as a result. For instance, administrators are proud of the large number of international students the institution enrolls, noting how these students as well as a large compliment of international faculty bring a different worldview to campus. Many administrators highlighted LGU College of Agriculture's leadership in international engagement. The college's international office was the first of its kind on campus and provided a model for the institution overall. Over at least four decades, the faculty in Agriculture has worked on dozens of externally-funded development projects in remote parts of the world. Yet, one administrator noted the college's international portfolio primarily benefited individual faculty members and students, and did not significantly change the university's global focus.

During President Schugart's era, study abroad numbers steadily increased, putting LGU at a comparable level with many of its peers. Administrators attributed this increase to Dr. Schugart's attention to and strong support of study abroad. Not only was the number of students on study abroad a key metric for academic deans during this time, but the central administration injected funding to fuel its expansion. Land-Grant University's colleges continue to promote and grow study abroad, although the rate of growth has slowed since Dr. Zelinski's arrival. At the same time, LGU academic units have also given increasing attention to international service-

learning projects, overseas partnerships, international research, and at least one overseas masters program.

Through the last decade, the university began moving toward international projects requiring cross-college collaboration and of larger potential strategic importance. For example, President Schugart provided seed-money that helped units establish partnerships with a number of Asian institutions and even companies. Some colleges, as well as the International Division, are attempting to designate a smaller number of inter-institutional arrangements that serve multiple purposes and missions, rather than proliferating many small agreements. Second, a number of colleges are contributing to an engagement effort in Africa that focuses on important health and economic issues. This collaboration involves other domestic as well as international institutions. LGU also provided expert consultation across a number of disciplines to help a group of private investors establish a new, independent, overseas campus in a developing country.

Most significantly, Land-Grant University spent several years negotiating with overseas sponsors to develop its own overseas branch campus. This effort, however, was not highly publicized, and in fact was noted to be “hush hush” by some. This effort arose after a consultant to the investors, reportedly with some association with UNESCO, approached the president. Soon after, the administration appointed a retired vice-president of LGU as a part-time project director to lead the process of reviewing the offer and developing a proposal. This project entailed a brick-and-mortar facility overseas---a full campus---awarding LGU degrees. Those close to the project characterized it as “bold,” “sexy”, and able to put LGU on the map like no other. More than one administrator described it as the largest project of any sort the institution had ever attempted, and the first of its kind. LGU was on the brink of signing when the global

financial crisis struck. Although not officially closed, most administrators believe the project to be effectively dead.

While the overseas branch campus project is currently on the shelf, the institution still espouses its goals to expand internationalization efforts and grow its global presence. The most recent strategic plan gives considerable attention to becoming a more globally-focused institution. This plan arose through the efforts and input of key constituents across the university. A globally-oriented work group created working papers that provided input to the strategic plan and are still referenced by administrators today. Shortly after completion of the strategic plan, the Senior Academic Officer (SAO) at the time commissioned another task force to further LGU's international efforts. This group also had broad participation and worked for over a year before recently releasing its recommendations. Its report to the SAO redefines key metrics for internationalization, recommends a branding and marketing strategy for LGU's global efforts, creates some processes and infrastructure for better tracking and coordination of LGU's international efforts, and prescribes an on-going global committee to provide leadership on numerous areas of international work, including how to select strategic international partners and signature projects. Time will tell which of these recommendations the administration will adopt.

In light of its current reputation in the international arena and its global aspirations, Land-Grant University provided an interesting setting in which to study how an institution goes about making strategic international decisions.

### *International Strategy Development at LGU*

In this section I summarize what I learned concerning the current ways in which international strategies develop and are communicated at Land-Grant University. I begin by noting how participants understood LGU's international work tied to its institutional mission. I

then describe the use of metrics and rewards in encouraging LGU's international activity, the organization and communication mechanisms that support international strategy development, and how leadership turnover has impacted this development. I conclude by describing how international projects are initiated at LGU, noting how the branch campus stood out as a special case, and discuss LGU's concept of a global presence.

### *The Tie to Institutional Mission*

Across the board, participants readily understood and identified with the tri-partite mission of Land-Grant University: learning, research, and engagement. The global committee for the strategic plan had as one of its primary recommendations the infusion of a global perspective into all three areas of mission. The administrators acknowledged the necessity to integrate a global view while understanding this internationalization as a work in progress. One member of the more recent internationalization task force noted:

The task force that I was on, or am on, takes a look at the new strategic plan. It has many divisions, but one of the divisions having a mission statement. And in our mission what we tackled was how do you globalize the mission itself, and still maintain the commitment to the land-grant university, to local, state, national, now international areas. And I've been working on that for some time. Also, then, how do we globalize the vision of the university? We take the strategic plan, take a look at the vision and say "If we were globalizing the vision, how do we do that?"

Participants uniformly saw the expansion of the mission to include a more global dimension as natural and necessary given the impact of globalization on students, the economy, and the state. One faculty member noted "...what we do globally should be reflected in benefits to the state...and to our consumer community, whether it's businesses in the state, education in the



state, or research activities in the state.” This reflects a commonly held notion that infusing a global perspective into LGU’s mission is not only good for LGU, but can position the institution to better serve the state.

Among the aspects of mission, student learning in an international context was voiced as critically important. Representatives from every college interviewed noted the importance of preparing students to operate in a global world. Internationalizing the curriculum, though frequently mentioned in the literature as part of internationalization strategy (de Wit, 2002; Knight 1993), was rarely mentioned; one participant stated updating curriculum to add an international dimension had received emphasis a number of years ago, implying it was not a priority item today. On the other hand, most emphasized the importance of expanding study abroad opportunities for students. A large number remarked that developing globally-aware students includes doing even more. One dean noted:

...there was a recognition that in this global economy the world's shrinking and that most students who leave here are going to work for global companies that are going to be working internationally, and how could we build experiences, not just study abroad but how could we build experiences regardless of whether it be an activity on campus, a short-term study abroad, one of these two-week, three-week travel abroad with faculty member types of experiences too – truly a semester study abroad where more of our students could have a significant global experience, recognizing they're going to be working in a world where it does require understanding of other cultures.

In sum, departments recognized that traditional forms of internationalization, including study abroad and other internationally-focused on-campus learning opportunities, are vital for students in today’s world.

Furthermore, as a land-grant institution, engagement has long played an important role, although the degree to which engagement included an international focus has varied by college at LGU. International engagement has a long history in the College of Agriculture, where one participant noted faculty members have many international projects and want to “have impact on as big a scale as they can.” According to one faculty member, “...as a College of Agriculture, yes, we have a duty to the people of the State .... and to the country but also to the world.” With a slightly different approach, the College of Engineering has more recently begun emphasizing international engagement in the form of co-curricular activities for its students. For example, engineering students have recently worked on service projects in countries such as Bolivia and Kuwait. An Engineering faculty member commented on how such projects can provide a two-way learning experience between students and other cultures:

...we are encouraging our students to look particularly into service-learning sorts of activities, taking their engineering skills into developing countries, working with developing countries to see how we can learn from them in terms of receiving the richness of their culture and their heritage and their indigenous intelligence and giving to them in terms of our technology, our own American indigenous traits or qualities.

In fact, LGU’s interest in the Africa Project developed primarily as an engagement effort. A former dean described the motivation for the Africa Project as allowing LGU to be “involved in something long-term over there, which will really make a difference.” Those involved see the project as first and foremost a form of engagement, yet hope it will develop to cover other aspects of mission. This project has attracted interest across many colleges, and is viewed as a project with cross-college, interdisciplinary potential. One dean, however, described the project with disappointment as turning into a form of one-way “technical assistance.” He noted a desire

for and belief that it could develop into more than that. In addition, administrators, while supportive of the Africa Project, expressed concern about sources for future funding. The next chapter discusses funding issues in more detail.

In a number of ways, LGU administrators reflected that addressing the big, global challenges affecting our world today relates to the outreach and engagement mission. A senior executive remarked:

So our recommendation about engagement was that we needed to think also about our global engagement, and what that meant was to be engaged around the world in projects that addressed what we called grand challenges and society's greatest problems. So practical is not the word that I want to use, but problem-focused research in selected – and we talked a little – in selected regions of the world. We can't be all things to all people. We cannot go everywhere.

Indeed, the strategic plan expressed a desire for the institution to align its engagement activities to contribute to serious world issues. To some extent, such effort has the potential to overlap with LGU's research mission. Yet, as I later discuss, the two are not identical and have some significant differences when it comes to institutional strategy.

Within the research mission, once again central administrators saw the need to increase the international dimension. Research is becoming more important than ever as a component of the international agenda at LGU. Several individuals mentioned the current president has set a goal of doubling total research funding in the next several years. A former dean commented, "I think that to a large extent, research interests are gonna drive the international interests now." On the other hand, international research opportunities, to date, appear to have developed in a more distributed manner in the organization, for example through faculty doing projects with

colleagues abroad that shared similar research agendas. Some administrators sought to move toward creating a more focused group of research partners, aiming to develop a few, strategic international partnerships in specific regions of the world as a means to promoting international research and find external funding and facilities. One department chair indicated, “I’ll never have faculty on sabbatical at these places unless they would be research-level partners.” A faculty member from the LGU Research Park described the goal for his unit as making LGU the “choice of institutions for global collaboration,” stating that if anyone seeks a research partner in the U.S. “the name [LGU] should come in front of them.” Thus, research is playing an increasingly important role in how LGU views the internationalization of its mission.

Many of LGU’s internationally-focused endeavors fall fairly cleanly into one of the three aspects of mission, although there are sometimes spillover effects between areas. For instance, while study abroad programs primarily help students develop a new, global perspective, faculty involved in these programs may secondarily meet international faculty with whom they later collaborate on research. On the other hand, there were differing views on how the branch campus aligned with mission. Some felt it addressed all three aspects of mission. For instance, in answering how this project related to institutional mission, one dean responded:

All of that. I mean, we would have our students. Our students have the opportunity to go there to study abroad. We were gonna try to develop a research agenda there eventually that would open doors for us to be involved with hopefully meeting some of the global challenges there in the [region], giving our faculty more research opportunities. I think people saw it as a way to engage with companies there that are there, you know, Fortune 500 that are there and funding for projects and research. I mean, we tried to view it as

having a broad range of opportunities – both academic fundraising, business connections, research, the whole nine yards.

Yet, some close to the branch campus initiative questioned how tightly the project tied to the mission of the university at all. One of the administrators involved in the core group that evaluated the branch campus opportunity felt the relationship to mission was not that strong, except “what we saw was an opportunity to develop research and capacity, and to get paid to do it sort of in an overseas environment.” An administrator from the Research Park felt that the focus for the branch campus project was not research, but rather undergraduate programs. The vice-president for research was not reported to be involved in the branch campus project, perhaps because of a retirement and the resulting change in leadership at that time.

The one area of consensus was the branch campus would establish a significant overseas presence or “footprint” for LGU. A senior executive noted in addition to giving incredible opportunities to LGU faculty and staff, the branch campus “promotes the name of the university in a part of the world where we don’t have a presence” and also helps attract graduate students to the home campus.

Despite some differing views on the how the branch campus related to mission, participants generally saw consistency in the institution’s international aspirations and its historical mission. A senior administrator summed it up as follows:

...if you think of the land-grant institution of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we basically said we – just like in the 19<sup>th</sup>, the land-grant university was the hub for sort of region, state, or quasi-regional information flow, the Ag Extension and all that... And so how does that change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Well, [Land-Grant University] needs to be a global hub, pulling partners and technology and ideas from around the world and then redistributing it as a

state university...to the state. So the scale of the region where we draw the information and partners and technologies from changes.

This demonstrates the common theme across interviews that in today's world, serving the state involves serving the world across all three dimensions of Land-Grant University's mission.

### *The Role of Metrics and Rewards*

Across the board, administrators noted the important role metrics and rewards play in implementing any kind of change at Land-Grant University. The institution publishes an annual digest with great detail of metrics and trends of importance across the institutional missions. The most recent strategic plan includes high-level dashboard metrics that allow senior administrators and those external to LGU to quickly grasp how well LGU is doing in comparison with peers.

One senior administrator summed up the role of metrics in the institution's global work:

When there is a new initiative....one way you communicate and articulate a value, an interest, a commitment to anything is, one, by allocating resources to it, and communicating the availability, and one of the things that I think [LGU's] been especially good at, demanding metrics and following up. So metrics on what do you hope to accomplish in this initiative, by what methods are you going to provide evidence that you've been successful? So very good at doing that! We set goals about doubling study abroad and increasing – I don't know what the exact metrics were for increasing initiatives in Asia, but they varied by project. So you communicate it by inserting globalization into the overarching plan by – there are at least two things that will change people's behavior in universities, and one is money, because it makes possible opportunities, and two is if you measure it. If you measure it, people will do it, by and

large, because that's – if you have to report it, you will find ways to put together things that seem like you're doing it, or you will actually start engaging in it.

Through the interviews, others echoed the same sense that what the senior leadership measures is what is important. Most attributed the growth in study abroad numbers to the president stating this as a goal, but then also following up and measuring progress. An Associate Dean described the growth in study abroad:

...and then finally [I] got [that SAO]... to put in [the SAO's] annual or actually semiannual reporting with the deans the topic of study abroad numbers. So, the deans would have to report every six months... on things like, okay, faculty initiatives, budget problems, diversity initiatives, blah, blah, blah, and at the bottom was study abroad. They had to tell [the SAO] how they were progressing with study abroad. And that's when you saw some good movement on what the individual colleges were doing. So, that's what happens at that level.

In this culture, metrics also are important to the planning process along multiple levels. One former dean indicated each unit is responsible for tracking progress against plans, and that the assessment office brings this together to prepare reports to the Trustees and others. He noted, “Every plank in the [strategic] plan has a metric to measure against.”

On the other hand, some viewed the measures in the strategic plan as vague. One associate dean noted the difficulty in measuring certain kinds of international activity across disciplines. He was particularly critical of the relative value attributed to publishing in various journals, for instance those in English versus other languages. This suggests potential challenges in setting measures that are meaningful across the institution. Another administrator, troubled by the simplistic measures assigned to measure progress in the strategic plan remarked:

These are what we used to call in high school, "idiot lights." There's certain brands of cars where you don't actually have an oil pressure gauge. All you have is a red light that goes on. You have no idea, you know, I mean, it just goes on. And then you think, "Oh, I'm out of oil." Well, that's what we've got. We've got the simplest, stupidest reporting. So, it's not working for us. We have no real way to do this. We've gone back to a situation where it's kind of up to individuals in this place to decide what internationalization means to them and how they want to work for it and how they want to measure it.

This administrator found not having meaningful measures no better than having no measures at all.

While there was overall buy-in to the importance of metrics at LGU, some saw a lack of specific, measurable goals akin to the former goal of increasing study abroad numbers. This left some units unclear as to what is currently most important with respect to global activity. Many were looking to the recently released internationalization task force report to add clarity. The very first recommendation of the report of this task force was to implement metrics to support LGU's internationalization objectives. The task force presented a handful of metrics for the deans' semiannual reporting that align with the three key areas that arose in the global working papers and strategic plan. The measures capture quantitative information, such as the number of programs and partnerships of an international nature. Only one item, a unit-defined measure of the quality of a study abroad experience relative to defined student-learning outcomes begins to measure any depth or impact of the activity.

Beyond the metrics reported by deans, two other items were noted as key in impacting behavior. First, several respondents mentioned how seed money from central administration or



the International Division prompted faculty and units to engage in activities that might not otherwise have been possible. A prime example was how such seed money helped units develop new programs and relationships in Asia over the last decade. Also, uniformly, respondents understood the need to tie international work to the promotion and tenure process. One dean observed:

.... because faculty is so key in a lot of this, they have to be incentivised. Their main incentives now are to, you know, the proverbial publish or perish phrase is still very prevalent. And for them to be involved in what some colleges might not reward, meaning international things, whether it's study abroad or certain international collaborations, why should they? I mean it risks their promotion – not only their promotion, but their tenure. I mean, tenure and promotion is the key process that has to be affected. ... only one college really, College of Ag, has any semblance of rewarding faculty in the promotion and tenure process for involvement in international things. Some are moving more toward that, but without that tying the international agenda to the promotion/tenure process in some way or form, shape, whatever, it just can't be done very easily, because otherwise, you're just looking, you're depending upon individual champions or ways you can entice people through grant programs. And those are spotty and hit and miss.

Worth noting in light of the previous quote, the recent task force report suggested moving the institutional practices for promotion and tenure toward more consistent recognition of international activity. So, uniformly participants acknowledged the importance of metrics measured by the central leadership in driving behavior and changes at Land-Grant University. Participants widely suggested these metrics help them know what is valued at LGU. Also, because the faculty is so vital in accomplishing international goals, administrators recognized the

importance of a meaningful international dimension in promotion and tenure, the ultimate metric for faculty, in moving the international agenda forward.

### *Organization and Communication Mechanisms*

Land-Grant University's organizational structure and communication flows facilitate the review, formation, and dissemination of international strategy in a number of ways. This section describes the various structural means supporting international strategy development and communication at LGU.

#### *The International Division.*

The International Division oversees both study abroad and international student and scholar support at LGU. While it encourages and assists academic units, it does not have any direct line responsibility for academic programs. The International Division administers some internal grant money aimed at expanding internationalization, such as funding to help faculty set up study abroad programs. It also helped administer the funding for the Asian project.

LGU has had a Senior International Officer (SIO) at a dean-level or above to coordinate much of the institution's internationalization work and lead the International Division for nearly two decades. The SIO, reporting to the Senior Academic Officer, is recognized by many as the unit to serve as a conduit and mouthpiece of the SAO's international priorities. One dean stated:

Well in the past I think the dean of international programs is included in meetings with the academic deans... So they're included – they have a voice at that table and reports directly to [the SAO]. So that's probably very, very important. So just as key initiatives come out of the graduate school and [Donald Markham's] the spokesperson for that, that would be...true for international programs. So historically that office has been the – for me in my experience anyway, as the dean, has been the spokesperson for new initiatives,

new programs, the priorities, and we've always made the assumption, and I think correctly, that when [the International Division dean] spoke on behalf of international programs that he was speaking on behalf of [the SAO] and the president.

As noted, a search for a new leader, with an upgraded title, failed. Hence, since the retirement of the former Dean of the International Division, Land-Grant University has had a person in an acting SIO role. While the acting lead continues with the current programs and attempts to focus international partnerships, several administrators acknowledged that as an interim, the holder of that position is necessarily constrained in what they can accomplish.

*International committees and task forces.*

Several committees and task forces have contributed in a “bottom-up” manner to the development of strategic plans at LGU, at least in the international realm. These groups have been short-term and temporary, tasked with creating a set of recommendations and then disbanding. The groups had representation from a broad number of campus units. Furthermore, they also solicited input from across campus to their recommendation documents, including overseeing campus forums open to the campus community. One senior administrator described the process for developing the strategic plan:

Well, I think for the strategic plan, we had faculty, staff, and student...teams. And so one of the things we're proud of about our strategic plan is that it was a very ground-up effort. Sure, administratively there were some guidelines, there were some frames put around things. But in terms of internationalization, a ground-up swell of ideas and plans. So I think that that's one really important part of setting these priorities.

On a more on-going basis, the International Division coordinates a group of international representatives from each of the colleges. This group meets monthly to share information from

central administration and across the colleges. Many of those interviewed were part of this group and spoke positively about it. Consistently, they represented this group as a communication tool, a networking structure for internationally oriented initiatives, and advisory in nature; the international representatives group is not a decision-making body. Many of the international representatives served on the strategic planning and internationalization task force, as well.

Finally, as mentioned, the more recent internationalization task force recommended an on-going policy committee coordinate and help create strategy for LGU's global efforts. The institution had not adopted this recommendation at the time of this study.

*Written communications.*

Administrators described several ways in which strategy and objectives are communicated through written means at Land-Grant University. Administrators immediately pointed to the strategic plan when asked how the institution communicates its international direction. The LGU strategic plan is intended to guide the university's mid-range direction across all areas, including international. Although the strategic plan lays out direction in very broad strokes, it creates common language and purpose that was evident in most of the interviews. Everyone is familiar with the plan, and everyone could describe the three major tenets put forth in the plan. Participants often framed international efforts within these tenets, using the exact wording from the strategic plan. This suggests an understanding of fitting the work in their units within the larger framework set out in the strategic plan, or at least portraying it as such.

A number of participants noted this plan is relatively general in nature, and pointed to other documents that provide additional context. One of these is the globally-focused planning document used in creating the strategic plan, still available online. Another is a recently released report of an internationalization task force. One task force member stated:

The strategic plan was created and then our task force was created by [the SAO] to take that and do something with it. And so, for the past 18 months, we've been trying to take the recommendations of the strategic plan and really, the strategic plan is a very global document. Very – that's a bad word. It's a very, very general document.....[refining the components] means looking at their recommendations, implementing those that we can, clarifying others, refining them, making further recommendations for implementation after collecting data.

In sum, while the strategic plan provides high-level direction, the outputs of the planning committees add additional detail and context for some administrators. On the other hand, it is not always clear how the upper-level administration views the committees' work. One task force member reflected:

But the frustration actually is that we were not told very clear direction, or that means that they just present a report. But we are afraid after we have written a report and it just will be something on the shelf.... We don't know how they value the report.

Almost as if keeping with this administrator's comment, at the beginning of this study, LGU's home page had a direct link to the strategic plan. More recently, however, this changed. Soon after the study, LGU's home page instead linked to pages highlighting how LGU planned to address its financial challenges in the coming years. One could link to the strategic plan there and from a few other places, but it was no longer highlighted at the same level.

Most colleges at LGU also have their own strategic plans, although the degree to which a global component is evident varies significantly across them. In the example of Engineering, a global component is woven throughout the vision, goals, and text; whereas a few others have used the words "global" or "international" but the depth of commitment is not as obvious.

Beyond these plans and the supporting working papers, however, communication is more scattered. Central units use a daily news update, distributed via an email to interested subscribers, as a common way to announce new initiatives. There is, however, no segmentation of this news into an internationally-focused distribution. Several administrators mentioned the on-going challenges in communicating effectively on a large, distributed campus such as LGU.

On Land-Grant University's web pages, a global component is present but outside of a few colleges and units, it is not very deep. There is a global tab from the home page that directs one to another page that is mostly a set of links to a few units engaged in international work, such as study abroad. The visuals, such as photos that come up somewhat randomly on web pages, have very few international ties. The International Division has its own web pages, but again, these are mostly a set of links to other units. The Division has a newsletter for international alumni and friends, but the last edition was posted on the web over 18 months ago.

#### *Senior leadership communications.*

Many administrators take cues from the president and senior academic officer in looking for what is important at the institution. The senior leadership of LGU periodically gives speeches and holds internal forums in which they are able to communicate priorities and immediate issues. Several interviewees noted how Dr. Schugart used such opportunities to advance his agenda regarding increasing study abroad numbers and creating greater engagement in Asia. In contrast, participants are not currently hearing much of substance from the administration at this time concerning LGU's global agenda. Some reported other priorities such as the financial crisis in the state and the institution's budget challenges may simply be taking the forefront.

#### *The Genesis of International Projects*

As administrators described the various international opportunities in which LGU was engaged, they frequently remarked how projects developed through relationships, an external invitation, or, as one project director put it, “all kinds of almost serendipity.” Over and over, I heard faculty describe how they developed projects with someone they met at a conference, mentored as a graduate student, or knew from growing up overseas. One faculty member commented on the typical way collaboration between faculty members in developed nations’ works:

So some molecular biologist working on a certain protein finds out that somebody ... in the Netherlands is working on the same thing. And they have reason; there are synergies in working together. And basically it means communicating. There might be a student who goes back and forth once in awhile. But it isn’t expensive and it goes on. And those are often disciplinary activities. And they’re often started by faculty interactions. These two researchers meet each other at a meeting somewhere and it goes from there.

Another faculty member described how he developed a study abroad program in his home country in Asia over the last several years:

I think if you talk back in [Asia] this is something I really want to do. So I went to – this is more like my personal friendship type of arrangement. So I went to talk to my former classmates in college so we got some donation and then so that helped out very well. And so and then we found a very good partner school and then we talked about how to arrange this program.

This is not to say that all international projects develop in this manner. Certainly many activities, such as some U.S.-government-sponsored projects in developing countries, followed a more formal process. Yet, the role of relationships in putting together a team and sustaining the

work afterward remained important. These projects were largely the work of individuals, not an overall institutional effort. One associate dean distinguished the typical inception of disciplinary versus cross-disciplinary, capacity building projects. As mentioned, disciplinary projects often develop through one-on-one interaction among faculty.

...capacity-building grants which are like what we originally did in [South America], what we did in Africa...tend to be institution-to-institution linkages and start because of some institutions, some political or other link. And then there are opportunities for faculty to be involved. And so for multidisciplinary capacity-building projects [the dean's office is] almost inevitably involved. And on all of those continuums there are things that are in-between that it depends on the individuals and the circumstances of a specific case.

In giving an example of a capacity-building project, however, this same faculty member described a project in Eurasia that grew to involve over 50 faculty members. The initial invitation to get involved in the country came about through an individual relationship; a faculty member had been in that country in the Peace Corps and received a call from a friend who was then serving in an important role in the Ministry of Education. Hence, even though some larger projects can grow to develop more institutional links, in the past, at least, they have often originated through personal connections.

For instance, two university partnerships deemed “strategic” by a department chair emerged through a generous gift from an alumna. One of the institutions with which LGU would partner was her alma mater, the other was an institution started by her father. Similarly, an invitation to assist in a capacity-building project in which LGU staff provided assistance to help establish new, private, overseas university arose through alumni. In these last examples, while



there was a relationship of some kind in place, the project itself came about by invitation; it was neither part of a longer-term plan nor a jointly conceived endeavor.

As described in more detail later, the branch campus project also began with the invitation of an external investor. In this case, however, the investment group that approached LGU did not previously have a relationship with university. In light of the number of projects instigated by parties external to LGU, some participants described the institution's international strategy as "reactive." One dean observed:

For [LGU], in terms of where our international programs development is and our mindset in the campus, having these three more university-wide initiatives – one in the [region], one in [continent], one in [country] is a good start. So, it fits in that way. Did we go out and seek these? No. I think we were, we're still very much a reactive stage. We react to what comes to us.

Similarly, a central administrator summed up the LGU's approach with respect to internationally-focused initiatives:

You are either proactive or you're reactive. Sometimes a combination. If you're good it's a combination. It depends on how entrepreneurial you are. So, if you're proactive, you have a VP, or someone in a similar title, going out and finding opportunities, making opportunities. If you're reactive, you wait until they come. {LGU} is a reactive institution. Everything that has come to us, most, has been somebody from the outside saying, "We'd like to do X or Y. Would you like to be a part of it?" [The branch campus project] is a classic example.

On the other hand, a few initiatives at LGU demonstrated more proactive thinking. The former president's initiative to create relationships in Asia is a good example. Although the

specific partners were left to units to determine, the president strongly encouraged college faculty to travel to Asia to strengthen institutional ties and programming in the region, and provided money to help make that happen. One of the research park groups also conducted a very intentional, structured review of potential partners in India. The sense of a number of administrators was that to move its global agenda forward, the institution needs to take more initiative and set clearer direction, for instance by focusing on a few key world regions and partner institutions. One administrator remarked the competition to pair up with the more prestigious institutions in certain countries means that if one does not move proactively, the opportunities may later be gone.

### *Leadership Turnover*

Land-Grant University began the millennium with a period of stability, as both the president and SAO were in place for over five years and appeared to have a good working relationship. Since the two of them left the institution, there has been significant turnover in other key leadership positions at LGU.

The change in presidents came up repeatedly in interviews. More than one administrator observed folks on campus still refer to Dr. Zelinski as the “new” president, even after several years. This proved true in my interviews. Participants described perceived gaps in leadership and direction since Dr. Schugart’s departure. Nearly everyone acknowledged that under the new administration, direction was less clear, that where objectives existed, they lacked specifics. Some assessed this as an implicit expectation that others would figure out the details. In describing the goals for study abroad, for example, one administrator contrasted Dr. Zelinski’s approach to Dr. Schugart’s definitive goal-setting for study abroad:

...under this president [Zelinski], we're not hearing particular numbers.... But under the current president, there's an insinuation that we should grow, but ... that's not [the new president's] style to say, "I want there to be this number."

One administrator commented that not only does the current administration not have the same priorities as the former, but that this administration does not seem to have priorities, at least in the international arena. A senior administrator described the institution's international efforts as "on hold." Another felt, "There's been no hand at the tiller." One leader noted, "We have leadership that has some idea, but no real good direction of where they'd like to take this." A dean summed up the current situation:

... we can only do so much with the money that we have and the vision is not a grand vision right now. There's these ideas, but it's not the – I feel like there's not really strong marching orders.

These observations suggest there is some vague direction, but administrators do not see a common vision to advance action in the international arena. Even with the strategic plan and the institution's general commitment to becoming more global, administrators in this study remained unclear as to exactly what the objectives, strategies and priorities are at the top. Nevertheless, participants indicated they continue to work on global activities. Without more explicit direction from the top, "...people find themselves continuing on with what they're doing, creating their own vision, and working out their own problems and opportunities." This echoes the feelings of another dean who stated, "...when you don't have someone at the top firmly defining what it is to be expected, then you're just groping and guessing and trying to find the match."

Many administrators were direct in assigning the lack of clear direction to the presidential level. They noted the current president's hands-off management style and lack of decisiveness.

More than one felt that the change in presidential leadership was a major factor in not completing the agreement for the branch campus. In reference to the branch campus, one dean suggested the president simply couldn't decide. In several interviews, administrators speculated that some of the current lack of leadership might be attributed to the economic crises and associated budgetary challenges, suggesting this has preoccupied Dr. Zelinski and taken time away from other matters. Several people suggested the president's priority has been on other aspects of the strategic plan. "[T]he only item that is receiving full attention is the student access and success," according to one associate dean. Observing the differing agendas, another associate dean reflected that presidents are "all unique in what they want to accomplish." Hence, among the explanations given for the lack of progress are the president does not place the highest value on international activity, has other priorities, is distracted, or is indecisive. There may be other reasons as well. In any case, administrators are forming their own opinions based on what they see or do not see happening at LGU.

Meanwhile, there has been a revolving door in the position of senior academic officer. As of this summer, the institution will have had four different people in this role in the last several years, including those serving in interim roles. Participants did not voice as directly frustration with turnover at this level, although they were generally saddened to see the last SAO depart. Participants reported the branch campus project had started under a different SAO, and that SAO's departure also contributed to delays in that project moving forward.

As noted earlier, there has also been turnover in the leadership of the International Division. With a failed search for a replacement, the interim dean continues to serve as SIO. This position also serves as an assistant senior academic officer. At least when last posted, the intention was to upgrade this position to a vice-presidential level due to its growing importance

to the institution. A central administrator voiced the important role of a lead person for the International Division:

If you have a strong and articulate leader, his or her job is to persuade the senior administration that this needs to be done. So it's not always top-down. It helps, but that's what the role of the leadership in international affairs is all about.

Several people gave explanations for the failed SIO search. One indicated the president and SAO could not agree on the position itself. Another close to the search was told that none of the four candidates, all of whom were internal, was "prestigious" enough in Dr. Zelinski's mind to lead LGU's international efforts. Another dean felt the administration now viewed funding the position as a concern. A couple respondents wondered whether the president planned to have a new global institute director assume some of the SIO's potential duties rather than elevating the SIO position. In any case, nobody was clear on the future of the position, and several people attributed the lack of significant institutional progress on the international front to the absence of a permanent person in this important position. The post will likely remain as it is at least until the new SAO is in place.

In sum, while the presidential role in leadership is significant, the perceived gap with respect to global issues is compounded by turnover in the SAO role and not filling the International Division leadership position. Many of the administrators reported that during these leadership changes, the direction of the institution's international efforts faltered. One administrator summed up the current situation:

And a lot of what is going on right now is, I wouldn't say subterfuge, but there is just not a lot of direction. And yet we still keep talking about how global and international [LGU] is. Well, it is, but if you listen carefully, you don't hear the engines working on this. I

mean, we're still moving through the water, you know what I mean, but we've kind of shut down the motors a little bit. We're drifting in other words.

At the same time, administrators experienced “stalled momentum” in the international arena over the last several years. A senior executive observed:

I think [LGU] is at a crossroads right now. A crossroads now because we have new leadership at the top – I mean, well, the president who's been here a couple of years now. But we are in that mode of a number of our vice-president-level people retiring. And so our dean of international programs has retired, and we are sitting sort of an interim spot. So this is a really critical time for the university to determine where it wants to be internationally. And what kind of leadership – and I don't just mean what kind of a person, but what's the title of that person, what's their status at the university and so forth. I think we have to figure that out. It's a really important time.

In sum, many people noted the changes and in some cases, gaps in leadership in important roles with respect to international initiatives.

### *The Branch Campus Decision*

All of those interviewed were familiar with the branch campus project. Some had not been involved heavily, while others had been key players in the process. Consistently, those with some level of involvement recognized the project as different than other international initiatives the institution examined. Although a number of people and units at some point examined aspects of the proposed project, participants described the process as very top-down and quite confidential in nature. Yet, it was perhaps the largest project Land-Grant University had considered, domestic or international. This section further describes how LGU approached the branch campus project.

*Project initiation and planning.*

Like many opportunities at LGU, the proposal to create a very large overseas branch campus came from external sources; this specific opportunity was not something the institution initially sought. LGU had previously investigated establishing a branch campus in collaboration with several other universities, but that effort never came to fruition. Yet, that experience opened the initial thinking regarding engaging in a cross-border venture. In the more recent case, an external consultant representing the investors approached the president. The investors did their homework, and were “shopping for the best programs in the country” in specific disciplines. Hence, the offer from the investors was very flattering to the institution. After some initial internal conversations, LGU’s senior leadership decided to explore this opportunity.

From that point, the review of the proposal was managed by a small circle of senior administrators. Several administrators described the former SAO as a “champion” of the project. One member of the core project team indicated President Schugart was knowledgeable “at every step of the way” about the progress of the team. In order to provide resource bandwidth for the review, the administration appointed a trusted, retired senior administrator to lead the project on a temporary basis. He, two others who reported directly to the SAO, and a lead financial officer formed the core group examining the opportunity. The core group involved a number of others through the course of its investigation, such as representatives from housing, information technology, international admissions, and certain academic units. Nevertheless, the consensus of those interviewed was that this was a top-down driven initiative. Beyond the core team, no formal task force or committee was reported to be involved, and the international representatives group played no direct role. With the investors’ interest in picking top-branded programs, participation in the project was by invitation. One department chair characterized the situation as

being told by the senior leadership of the institution, "Congratulations, you have a program [overseas]. Come to a meeting and we'll tell you more about it." Eventually, however, colleges and department administrators with programs selected for the project travelled overseas and had some input to the process. Key senior leaders and program directors visited the overseas site for short visits, including several Board members. The SAO visited, and one colleague reported, "[The SAO] was enthralled, just like everybody else who's been there."

The core project team worked over several years and developed what administrators characterized as an "elaborate plan," including an academic plan and a 20-year financial plan. One dean remarked, "[LGU] really did its homework." Staff from a variety of units contributed to the planning process, and the project team researched and benchmarked other branch campuses abroad. There was some degree of risk analysis done, including negotiating a plan to ensure that should the campus have to close for some reason, there would be a means for students there to complete their education at no additional cost to LGU.

*Excitement and momentum.*

Through overseas site visits and conversations with the investors, interest and excitement in the project grew among senior leaders. Several administrators highlighted the energy the branch campus project generated. One associate dean remarked:

Now, the discussions you talk about is, as to whether is this something that [LGU] wants to do? Will this help meet our institutional objectives? I'm sure those discussions were going on among two or three people at a time in a committee and not on a committee. But the overwhelming emphasis from my point of view—maybe I'm biased, I don't know – was here's an opportunity to do something big and splashy. Here's an opportunity maybe to make some money. Here's an opportunity to catch up with [our peers].



One team member described the project as one that would “put us on the map in a way that nothing else will.” Based on such comments, it appears likely the size of and energy behind this project was significant and impacted the support for the project overall. A member of the core project team described it as the largest venture of any kind ever facing the university:

I don’t think the university has been involved in anything of that scope. We’ve said it’s the largest project that [Land-Grant] University has ever gotten involved in, including creating a new regional campus.... And I think that’s true. If you’re talking about a campus that’s probably four miles square, ten thousand students in ten years, you can add up the numbers of what the operating costs and so forth would be. And so if we went into that project, it would be the largest project in the history of the university—the largest single contract. We haven’t signed it yet, so it may not ever happen. I think that is quantum leaps above over kinds of projects that we’ve ventured into in the past.

One administrator indicated the overall project budget reached into 10 figures. Multiple administrators were quick to clarify that no money would come from the U.S. campus; the investment group abroad was financing the project in its entirety, based at least in part on planned revenue from related real-estate developments. To some degree, the size and visibility drove interest in the project. Another senior administrator noted, “It’s interesting, this decision. So that momentum is contagious, and people were getting excited about it, and then every so often, there would be a glitch.” Despite periodic “glitches” the project had widespread support among key administrators. The senior campus leadership shared the proposal with the Board at an appropriate point:

Eventually, it was presented to the Board of Trustees, and very carefully, very well thought-out... It was presented to the Board of Trustees with a great deal of enthusiasm

and care to increase the possibility that the Board would like it. It was – everybody involved in it wanted it to go. That was – I mean, it had lots and lots of momentum. So, at least among those closely involved the project gained significant support and excitement. Over and over, administrators mentioned the institution was poised to sign on the bottom line up to the point the financial crisis hit. At that point investment in the region of the campus and worldwide slacked off, and interest in the project fell as well.

*Confidential nature of the project.*

Over the several-year examination of the proposed project, publicity or open campus discussion appeared non-existent. Although this was the largest project ever considered at LGU, many people viewed the deliberations as “below the waterline” and “hush hush.” I was unable to find any mention of the project in the regular university publications from Public Relations or even the student newspaper. I only found one mention of it on a planning website for the Campus Information Technology Department. More than one campus leader was hesitant to talk about the project at all during the interviews, opening up only after I mentioned that others had already shared information on the project. Another observed, “The other thing that has been interesting to me, how you can spend five years talking about such a major project and not become much more visible.” One senior administrator remarked on the confidential nature of the project:

[The branch campus project] was almost as though we get this group of people over here in a hotel room, and they’re just gonna figure it out. That’s – we don’t go meet in a [major city] hotel to figure out whether or not we’re going to introduce a new major or whether or not we’re going to – how we’re gonna cut our budget... So that was different. I mean, it was not through the formal channels, not through – it was a group of people

who just were out there moving, making it go forward, and sort of, you hope they will throw out a bit of information every now and then to tell us how it's going.

Even those close to the project acknowledged that this more closed approach was different than how LGU approached other large efforts.

This is not to say that no one beyond those asked to assist in the proposal review knew about the branch campus initiative. Some administrators felt there was fairly widespread awareness of the project, at least in certain circles. And in some of those circles, there was also concern. Yet, not all departments considering offering programs in the branch campus discussed the idea with faculty; where faculty were involved, it is not clear their voices were heard. The same administrator that discussed the closed-door nature of the project also observed:

It was questioned all along the way by faculty. Why are we doing this? What is it gonna get us? Isn't it gonna be hard to sustain? Who's going to deliver it? Is it gonna get old after a while? Are we really going to get in it without putting any cash? There were a lot of questions, a lot of questions. The talk on campus was people were concerned. At the same time, it was a very sexy kind of excitement. There was excitement about it, and looking back, why was there so much – because it seemed big. It seemed... maybe it was the first international initiative of that scope.

Possibly, the energy and secretive nature of the project appeared to have occluded some of the concerns that were raised. The investors projected enrollments within a few years of 10,000 students. Those close to Admissions were skeptical about such a target, and one of the core project members declared, "I kept saying to them, I can't find an institution in the world that's grown that rapidly. But if you have the money and you think you have the students, we're

willing to give it a try.” In this manner, the project planning moved ahead despite some significant concerns about its viability.

#### *Current status.*

At the time of the interviews, the project was not officially canceled, and administrators interviewed expressed slightly different perspectives about whether it was dead or not. A couple indicated some possibility of resurrecting the plans, while the majority assumed that due to the current economic situation, as well as significant turnover among administrators, LGU was no longer seriously considering the option. One person observed that during the course of the project, the institution had two presidents, and four SAOs, as well as turnover in other key executive roles, making it difficult to sustain. Some attributed the lack of a decision, in part, to the current president’s initial indecision about the project. One administrator speculated that culturally, the investors may not want to say that the project is no longer viable, as LGU may believe closing the project could force the university to recognize it will not be reimbursed for expenses to date. Still, the project leader continues to have periodic conversations with the overseas investors.

In sum, the branch campus was distinct not only for its size and potential importance to the university, but also in the manner in which it progressed over several years of deliberation.

#### *The Meaning of a Global Presence*

The administrators in this study all recognized the institutional aspirations to expand LGU’s global presence. At times, participants seemed to use the words internationalize and global presence interchangeably. Some respondents believed there were slightly different concepts on campus of what having a global presence entailed. An associate dean remarked, “Most institutions want to internationalize. What does that mean? That means different things to

different people.” A number of administrators expressed frustration with the general nature of the strategic plan and lack of specific internationally-focused goals and objectives, seeking more specific direction from the administration. On the other hand, a senior administrator portrayed the lack of an exact definition of global presence in a positive light:

Well, we talk about being a global institution, about having a global reach. We want – and I think that means many things. ... It’s very strategically ambiguous. And strategic ambiguity is a good thing because it means that we purposefully embrace language that everyone can agree on, but everyone doesn’t necessarily interpret it in the same way. So the concept is you have unified diversity. Everybody agrees on this concept, even though their understanding of what the concept is, is very different

In this administrator’s interpretation, the vagueness in the terminology, this “strategic ambiguity,” is intentional and plays a valuable role in helping the university community support the idea of a global presence. As an example, administrators interviewed recognized the strategic plan’s objectives were general in nature. At the same time, they were able to quickly articulate those goals and appeared to buy in to them.

Despite the lack of specifics in the strategic plan, participants revealed a common understanding that global presence relates to institutional image. The importance of image, prestige, and rankings surfaced in a number of places, though with slightly different wording. The associate dean mentioned in the previous paragraph went on to note the important role of international activities that “help increase the profile” of the institution as important in setting international goals. Another suggested LGU has a “global vision as to position the university at its highest esteem among world-leading leaders, looking to solve critical life problems.” Several participants echoed this issue of having the esteem of external, international players. A research

park director expressed the goal that when those seeking an institutional partner worldwide look for a collaborator, “the name of [LGU] should come in front of them.” Another associate dean directly tied the concept of global image to rankings:

“What is a global presence?” And that is dealing with rankings. A lot of universities go out and they seek funding; we would like to position ourselves, eventually, to where if some institution or some agency has a need, one of the first things that they're going to think about is that [Land-grant] University can do this.

One former dean pinned this emphasis to the current president, stating, “This is a president who is all about rankings...all about rankings, and standing and prestige.” The same administrator added that at this time, “The focus of the university is international research, international prestige—international sort of pizzazz.”

Across these statements, one sees a thread of rankings and prestige emerging as a driving force in the concept of global presence. Beyond a passive view of institutional image, the concept of branding the institution in the world came up as important to LGU’s global future. An associate dean summed up this point of view:

[LGU] needs a global brand. Most institutions do. Some have it already; most do not.

And so, we want to increase our profile, raise our presence. We need a brand and then we need to market that brand. That's a strategic direction of any institution.

Another administrator that participated on the global committee for the strategic plan echoed this goal as well:

We talked about a presence almost as – and we used the word “a brand,” just as we – a brand visibility, that when people heard “[Land-grant University],” that they would think of certain – excellence and, you know, particular expertise. That presence means not

necessarily physical presence, but that our presence be known and recognized and understood in these areas. So you have to be physically present to cultivate that global brand recognition, but it doesn't mean that you have to build buildings there or move people there and have them stay there. That presence was almost an ephemeral kind of notion in the same way that it could be a physical idea. People had to know who we were. The latter comment helps distinguish that "global presence" is not entirely a physical concept, although some degree of physical presence may be necessary to attain it. In this administrator's conception, global presence is more closely aligned with branding than establishing any number or type of projects.

The need to push the branding effort came out in the recent internationalization task force recommendations as well. The very first recommendation under the general area of global presence was to create a deliberate global branding and marketing strategy and campaign. This appeared before other recommendations such as expanding connections with international alumni, creating specific country strategies, or selecting signature projects of global impact. One might infer that pointing to branding first implies the dominance of this over other institutional activities.

In addition, some suggested a global presence links closely with creating a global mindset within the LGU community. One senior administrator extended the concept of a global presence as viewed by external parties to how members of the community think, stating:

....that idea of a global presence needs to exist on your home campus as well as people outside knowing you. There is a felt presence on your own campus that being a part of the larger world and even a part of the solution to world problems and even thinking in

terms of the world problems as opposed to or in addition to local problems. So it penetrates all that you do.

Another college administrator visualized having a global mindset by saying, “you walk on this campus – is it obvious that this is a university with global intent?” In this formulation, global mindset relates more to the culture and imagery on the home campus, whereas global presence relates to how those outside of the country view LGU.

This emphasis on perception and image does not mean no one sees issues of substance in a global presence. Repeatedly, administrators discussed the importance of creating international opportunities for students and faculty to help them develop a more global worldview to operate effectively in this century. Faculty also discussed projects that are important to solving critical issues, such as water and health. The Africa Project is an example of a project with such potential. Yet, a divide between research to position the university strategically and engagement to address important issues seemed to be emerging. One administrator noted:

The official internationalization priorities are in the strategic plan. And they focus on making the whole university much more international.... Unofficially, there’s a disagreement about what it means. So for the president and some of the leadership of the university, internationalization means particularly developing relationships with elite universities worldwide, particularly those listed on the London Times list of 100 best universities. In Agriculture there is a strong tradition that internationalization has; I guess the best word is an engagement focus. So there’s a strong history of work in developing countries, of service learning type activities for students. And those two goals are not necessarily contradictory but they’re not the same.



While participants from several units mentioned the Africa Project, the priority and momentum to work with high-profile international partners was stronger at this point for LGU according to those interviewed. A former dean felt that due to its lack of large revenue potential and visibility, the Africa Project may not be sustained:

I'm not sure that it's gonna be a priority for the president or [the new SAO] here, because it isn't bringing in hundreds of research, hundreds of millions of research dollars, and it isn't leading to big NSF grants, and it isn't getting written up in the *Science Times* or something.

In sum, those interviewed portrayed a global presence as being more about raising profile and ranking than actually being physically out in the world working at a grass roots level on tough problems.

Furthermore, a few administrators reflected a sense that this emphasis on global presence belies a hegemonic approach to internationalization. The same former dean quoted above lamented that LGU tends to approach projects in a somewhat imperialistic fashion:

[Africans] have things that they can teach us. We have things we can teach them. The dominant mode in universities like this is we don't have anything to learn. We're good. We're nationally ranked. We're smart. And so, we're kind of snapping back into that mode of technical assistance. Let's get a grant, let's go there for three weeks. Let's do this, that or the other and then let's come home.

Later, this administrator characterized the faculty as suffering from “hubris,” thinking of themselves as the experts and not being willing to admit how much they still have to learn. A program-director echoed this view, reporting, “... as I understand the university’s approach, it’s more of a what can [LGU] do out there and less of how the two of us interact as partners.” She

noted how her division strives for two-way learning, despite the larger institutional tendency toward technical assistance. While many faculty members exhibit this hegemonic behavior, a number of administrators told stories of faculty who, though expert in their field, were transformed by overseas visits. One story involved a professor brought to tears by his experience in an African community. He had never experienced poverty of that nature.

In sum, creating a global presence surfaced as one of the shared, priority objectives for Land Grant University. While staff are not entirely in agreement on exactly what that means, an overriding sense is that the institution needs to be widely recognized abroad, a part of which involves developing an international institutional brand. There is still strong interest in doing projects and other work involving a physical presence in other countries. Yet, some believe in the current climate, projects will be more successful in gaining institutional support if they enhance institutional prestige and image. Furthermore, some administrators felt many of the institution's international efforts were hegemonic in nature, emphasizing how LGU gain for itself and how it could help others abroad, and less about how LGU and its people might learn from others.

### *Summary*

This chapter summarized key findings in my research at Land-Grant University. The next chapter examines these findings more critically and discusses their importance for practice and future research.

## Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

In the last chapter I described the ways in which Land-Grant University constructed its international strategies. In this chapter I return to the study's research questions, exploring how these findings answer them, as well as some additional issues that emerged. Following that, I consider the implications of these findings for practice, theory, and further research.

### *Strategic International Decisions Redux*

The purpose of this study was to understand how an institution approached various strategies for internationalization. Three research questions guided this research:

- How do various forms of internationalization connect to overall institutional strategy?
- Who is involved in strategic international decisions and in what role?
- How does the consideration of the opportunity to open a branch campus parallel or differ from decisions regarding other forms of internalization?

The following sections examine how the findings at Land-Grant University address each of these questions.

### *Connecting Internationalization to Overall Institutional Strategy*

This study revealed a changing emphasis in how internationalization relates to overall institutional strategy at Land-Grant University. Specifically, international prestige and rankings, as well the pursuit of new revenue overseas, play an increasingly important role in LGU's longer term direction.

Participants readily understood that despite on-going support of traditional internationalization such as study abroad and bringing international students and faculty to LGU, the institution was moving toward a newer, broader conceptualization in which a global dimension is imbedded in institutional image and identity. Administrators identified the

institutional goal of expanding the Land-Grant University's "global presence" as a current priority, even if none were certain which specific objectives senior administration had in mind to achieve this. One administrator referred to this as "strategic ambiguity," in which everyone agrees on the concept despite potentially differing ideas on what it means. At this point, expanding global presence is as much, if not more, about branding and image as any more tangible international initiative. In this way, the institution seeks to create a competitive advantage over other large, international research institutions, promoting itself in order to influence its prestige and rankings. Such an emphasis on image and brand aligns with Gioia and Thomas's (1996) study of image and identity in which institutional leaders identified efforts targeted to achieve a future institutional image as strategic. Additionally, LGU leaders wish to create a "global mindset" on the part of internal stakeholders. Such a mindset allows international dimensions and perspectives to seep into everyday interactions in the classrooms and laboratories across campus. This is consistent with Chaffee's (1985) interpretive approach to strategy, in that creating a new global mindset attempts to alter how stakeholders perceive and relate to the university.

The focus on international prestige and presence as a key component of international strategy is a relatively new development at LGU. In the past, many of the institution's larger, international projects, including the branch campus, came about as a result of external invitations or stimuli rather than proactive scanning of the environment. Several participants noted Land-Grant University frequently seemed to be "reactionary" in these situations, rather than proactively identifying projects. This behavior is characteristic of an emergent approach to strategy (Bess & Dee, 2008) in which the organization takes action and attributes the decisions after the fact to some kind of strategy. Furthermore, the way in which LGU reacted to periodic,

external stimuli rather than proactively identifying large projects that align with longer-term strategy may be characteristic of challenges in focusing attention for any length of time on specific initiatives, referred to as organizational “Attention Deficit Syndrome (ATD)” by Tierney (1999). Tierney (1999) further notes ATD in higher education is exacerbated by frequent leadership turnover, such as LGU has faced in recent years. The absence of more intentional identification and pursuit of significant international opportunities may also reflect a “trash can” approach to decision-making (Cohen & March, 1986) in which the timing and coalescence of various events results in actions taking hold or not. On the other hand, by emphasizing global presence in written and spoken word and developing a branding campaign, LGU is ostensibly attempting to move from an emergent to a more interpretive approach to strategy (Bess & Dee, 2008), as mentioned. That is, the institution’s emphasis on global image represents an *intentional* shift in how it approaches international strategy.

Although LGU leadership appears to increasingly take an interpretive approach to strategy, institutions may demonstrate multiple approaches concurrently (Chaffee, 1985). For example, in some ways Land-Grant University appears to be more calculating and methodical as it puts forth its international agenda, exemplified in high-level plans and metrics for some areas of internationalization. The recent internationalization task force report proposed a process to proactively identify as LGU priorities strategic international foci and key world regions. This proposal reflects a somewhat more linear approach to strategy (Bess & Dee, 2008; Chaffee, 1985) in that the task force outlined a logical set of steps to follow to arrive at the specific recommendations. Yet, given the limited influence of plans and committees on the larger internationalization strategies at LGU in the past, it is unclear how far these efforts will go in the future. Another way in which LGU’s international efforts suggest a more linear approach is the

use of metrics. Respondents suggested institutional culture revolves heavily around the use of metrics, and measuring specific goals was reported to yield changes in behavior in the past. Alternatively, one might argue that during Dr. Schugart's era, LGU exhibited an adaptive approach to strategy (Bess & Dee, 2008; Chaffee, 1985). In this approach, one is constantly scanning the environment and adapting to changing conditions (Chaffee, 1985). The decisions to expand study abroad and to create seed money for Asian partnerships could be examples of leadership reactions to an environmental scan. In any case, the institution is not monolithic in its approach to international strategy, although the emphasis on a global presence, a global mindset, and prestige suggest LGU leadership is favoring an interpretive approach at this time.

In addition to emphasizing the institution's image and prestige abroad, Land-Grant University's strategies for internationalization increasingly center on projects with the potential to create new revenue streams. At LGU, the selection of institutional-level international partners, for example, is influenced by the relative prestige of the partner as well as the ways in which such a partnership might give rise to new funding or support for research. To this end, North-South partnerships, that is, partnerships with institutions in regions such as Latin America and especially Africa might be hindered due to the overseas institution having lower ranking on world league tables and more limited budgets (Holm & Malete, 2010). Although LGU is currently participating in a multi-university partnership in Africa, the lack of long-term funding for that project has created questions about its sustainability and strategic importance to LGU. Notably, LGU's emphasis on revenue in defining strategy internationally is similar to how many institutions operate today domestically (Levin & McEwan, 2001; Zusman, 2005). Other authors have previously listed revenue as a driver in transnational education (Green et al., 2007; OECD, 2004), and indeed revenue was a significant attractor as LGU considered a branch campus. This

study also points to revenue as a driver in additional areas of internationalization, such as research funding and donor giving, discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

This is not to say that revenue and prestige are the only factors in LGU's global pursuits. Over and over, faculty described the way in which opportunities for students to study abroad or for faculty to do research in developing countries were life-changing experiences. They reported how students worked on the ground in service-learning projects overseas that enriched both sides. There remains an important, sincere, altruistic aspect of internationalization at LGU closely aligned with the core mission, especially the teaching mission.

Nevertheless, this study suggests that at least at LGU, solving the world's great problems and challenges is only strategic to the extent it creates new sources of revenue or enhances institutional prestige and ranking. One can assume universities will require significant resources to address the world's largest challenges. One might posit that only the world's most elite research institutions will gain access to the kind of funding needed to pursue meaningful work on the most daunting issues, so that LGU's focus on rankings and prestige represents an instrumental approach to position the university for future funding opportunities. However, such a justification was not directly mentioned in the interviews. Also, one might hope that solving such problems will involve those most affected, including entities in developing countries. On the other hand, LGU's current approaches to work in developing nations suggest a more hegemonic view of providing technical assistance in a unidirectional manner, according to some participants. If widespread among leading research institutions, such strategies potentially contribute to a rise in neocolonialism and exacerbate existing power structures between center and periphery universities and North and South (Altbach, 2004). Davies (1998) observes the

limited attention European institutions have given to “Southern” institutions, noting the challenge this creates for developing countries. Holm and Malet (2010) echo this concern:

Top-quality universities in Europe and America want to do projects only with institutions of comparable quality. We have been told on more than one occasion—usually by universities in Europe or Australia seeking to improve their images internationally—that they cannot work with our institution, because it does not have adequate status in global-university rankings. In effect, the product or learning experience that emerges from a partnership does not matter. It is strictly a means to raise status. (¶ 7)

LGU’s focus on branding and prestige with respect to establishing international partnerships echoes these authors’ views and creates a longer term concern on the implications for higher education worldwide. While LGU is trying to work in the South with its efforts in Africa, neither the project’s momentum nor interviews with current campus leaders signaled that project was considered highly strategic, and it may not even be sustainable.

Just how prestige and rankings relate to LGU’s land-grant mission emphasizing teaching, research, and service, is also not clear. In this study, administrators readily recognized the need to extend the LGU mission beyond the state into a global context. In this century, a global perspective is frequently important to serving the state’s students and solving local issues (NASULGC, 1997; Simon, 2009). Unknown is whether the thirst for prestige pushes the institution’s global agenda beyond the degree of internationalization that may be necessary and practical to serve the needs of the state and its students.

For instance, the dialog around the proposed international branch campus was heavily weighted toward making the institution known and creating a major presence than to any specific reasons that the project might benefit constituencies at home. Benefits such as expanding



research and creating ties to companies were mentioned briefly, but these appeared to be secondary relative to the gains in visibility, prestige, and revenue generation. Further, there was no mention of how such a campus would benefit the host country or region. Again, such rationales may have existed, though unstated. However, the tone in the interviews was not one of excitement surrounding building up higher education in the region as much as providing gains for LGU. As such, the ties to mission, in particular the land-grant mission, were questionable.

This situation mirrors what Knight calls a “lamentable shift” (Knight, 2009, p. 9) from capacity to status building. At LGU at least, this shift is intentional. Other authors have raised the concern that the pursuit of profile and prestige is to the detriment of students (Kelderman, 2010). The added pressure of gaining not only high national, but international rankings and prestige is likely to exacerbate this concern. These shifts suggest some internationalization efforts have the potential to hurt mission attainment, rather than enhancing it in the sense Zemsky et al. (2005) suggest.

### *The Players in Determining International Strategies*

International strategies at LGU arose both in bottom-up and top-down ways, although the kinds of projects that followed each of these two paths differed. Most traditional internationalization at Land-Grant University developed in a bottom-up manner. Faculty have been the cornerstone of efforts to internationalize the curriculum and more recently, in developing new programs in study abroad, encouraged, at times, through various institutional grant programs. As one associate dean remarked:

And then, from the ground-up or bottom-up, there have always been people—academic advisors, study abroad liaisons, people that are quietly advocating study abroad and have for 30 and 40 years, kind of before study abroad was in vogue, they’ve been pushing that

and talking about the utility and the value of that. So, there's always been the ground-up stuff.

While not all of LGU's international work arose strictly through individuals, the role of faculty is still vital. Several of those interviewed that are highly engaged internationally themselves noted how personal interest and passion often play a role in developing study abroad and other internationally-oriented programming and projects. One department chair quipped, "But at the end of the day, there's some crazy person that has taken it on themselves to make it happen." In other words, much relies on the personal interests and commitments of individuals, in particular members of the faculty and other academic staff, to move the international agenda forward. No matter how much a unit or the institution wants to push an agenda, getting faculty on board is a key element. A former dean summed it up: "... okay, you can't impose stuff on faculty. If they don't want to do it, they won't do it. It's that simple."

An administrator in the International Division pointed out that historically the focus of internationalization has been for each college to develop its own plans, with the International Division assisting and providing support to their efforts. He observed, "I'd say at this point, most colleges have the mindset of just doing it [internationalizing] on their own." Only more recently has LGU begun to look at more institutional-level planning.

Even in composing the strategic plan, faculty played an important role. While President Zelinski initiated the process to construct a new strategic plan, several administrators described that process as a "ground-up effort." Another noted that committees with broad representation prepared the institution's long range plans, with ample forums and other opportunities for input from the campus community. No one gave a sense that Dr. Zelinski drove the content of the strategic plan, although the president may have influenced aspects of its final form. At the same

time, this broad input did not result in a plan with many specific recommendations. Perhaps for that reason, at least in part, shortly after the release of the Strategic plan the SAO announced another task force with yet broader participation to further the internationalization of LGU. Again, the senior leadership of the institution invited bottom-up involvement to provide more specific input into how the university might work toward the goals set out in the strategic plan.

As illustrated, many of the institution's traditional internationalization efforts were driven bottom-up through departments and colleges. For example LGU study abroad programs largely come out of the faculty in a loosely-coupled manner. This typifies a professional bureaucracy in which the operating core, in this case faculty, proposes most initiatives (Mintzberg, 1979). LGU administrators know that to be successful, faculty must embrace and drive the "heavy lifting" of international strategies. Seed money, such as that which faculty might access to develop projects in Asia, can encourage but not force faculty behavior. Again, in a professional bureaucracy leadership must resort to more informal forms of power such as seed money, rather than asserting its will (Mintzberg, 1979).

LGU also had has a number of committees and task forces promoting internationalization efforts. Recently, the internationalization task force recommended creating an on-going international advisory committee to the SAO to oversee many of the organizationally-oriented steps the task force recommended to move toward a robust international strategy. The rationale behind this suggestion was not stated, but may have several explanations. Using Chaffee's (1983) models of organizational decision making, one might attribute the task force's proposal for on-going status as reflecting a collegial model. In the past, LGU leadership has used committees to assist in framing its strategic plans, and recently, to detail some internationalization priorities. The task force might have suggested this structure as a

way to continue internationalization through a consensus-oriented approach. Alternatively, one might view this proposal through Chaffee's (1983) political model of decision-making. In this interpretation, the task force may have proposed establishing a committee to address the needs its members see for internationalization despite the lack of action by senior leadership. In that sense, by ignoring the empty leadership position and proposing a new committee structure, the task force may have been asserting its power, making a statement, and challenging the administration. Within a professional bureaucracy, committees often exist to control administrative decisions that may affect them (Mintzberg, 1979).

Paradoxically, while administrators talked about the high degree of bottom-up input through various committees, the important role of faculty, and the independence of the colleges to create their own plans, they still looked for direction from the top. One senior executive observed:

So we really do need to allocate leadership to this effort if it is going to be a part of who we are. Activities will happen. Faculty are really the drivers. But for it to be coordinated and focused and strategic, and for you to become known for particular areas of the world or particular expertise about global issues, it needs leadership. You need somebody to coordinate and to articulate the strategy.

Many administrators mentioned the top-down manner in which former president Schugart set goals that resulted in clear direction. Participants indicated the development of the research park, expanding study abroad, and the seed funding for partnering in Asia were communicated from the top as priorities for the institution. The general tenor among administrators was that these top-down goals were positive. One central administrator stated:

Sometimes the goals were a bit audacious to be—in my opinion, but they were also a blessing in disguise because if the president says, “I would like there to be 1000 students annually on study abroad,” well, in a cynical viewpoint, I might say, “Well, how’s that different than saying I want the basketball team to make 10 percent more points next year—or next game than they did last game?” That’s not just something I can wave my wand and have happen, but, again, it’s that blessing in disguise where we can say to these different international program officers, different people that are in charge, “The president has given us a goal. We understand that this is a community effort, a shared effort. This is how we understand that. We need your contribution to that”—or—so to speak.

Top-down goals stretched the university. At the same time, these top-down goals were not so specific as to hand-cuff the departments. In fact, administrators saw not only a top-down aspect, but also parallel bottom-up development in so far as units were given latitude in how to meet the goals. It is this in-between space that matters most, according to one program coordinator:

So the point being that it’s a two-way direction from the top down and from the bottom up, and I suppose the biggest bulge is in the middle where the two meet.... I mean the bulge is where the two meet and there’s lots more ideas generated and discussion going on. It’s different from saying, “Oh, I wish we had” at the bottom of the list and “I want there to be” at the top of the list. It’s the meeting point of students, faculty, and service people on campus who actually implement these things and help to make them happen.

This statement suggests administrators value some degree of both top-down and bottom-up leadership in the international arena. Importantly, the initiatives noted above as top-down were larger, of longer-term impact, and involved many units and other stakeholders. As such, these

fall into Bess and Dee's (2008) the category of strategic decisions. The largest international initiative to be considered, the branch campus, was also very much a top-down effort. Overall, projects of larger strategic importance involved a greater degree of top-down leadership at LGU.

### *The Branch Campus as Different*

The final research question examined how the decision process related to opening a branch campus parallels or differs from other international strategies. Like many other projects at Land-Grant University, the branch campus opportunity came as a result of an external invitation that was subsequently justified; hence it was again an emergent approach to strategy (Bess & Dee, 2008). This is where the similarities with other projects at LGU ceased. For example, as a result of another external invitation, LGU consulted on the creation of a new overseas university in the same region; however that project never rose to the same level of strategic importance as the branch campus. Although the overseas institution with which LGU consulted prominently notes its association with LGU on its web pages, one has to search deeply to find any mention of this project on LGU's web pages. Yet, respondents who had been involved spoke freely about that project. While the new overseas institution provided some funding in exchange for LGU's support, this consultation project was dwarfed in comparison to the potential financial support provided in the case of the branch campus, setting the branch campus apart from other projects in terms of its strategic importance. In the case of the branch campus, access to significant funding, the fact that the institution would bear the Land-Grant University name, and the chance to enroll thousands of additional students created the potential to make a splash, as well as creating new exchange and research opportunities on someone else's dollar. Of the various institutional motivators for cross-border education mentioned in the Literature Review, revenue and prestige

appeared to be the fundamental drivers in LGU's branch campus consideration. Other factors came up, but were not mentioned as consistently or as enthusiastically.

Given the potential prestige and revenue, the branch campus offer, in comparison to earlier inquiries and projects, was highly seductive. One might argue this opportunity, if realized, would be "mission-focused and market-smart" (Zemsky et al., 2005) by allowing LGU to enhance attainment of its mission while not negatively impacting the bottom line. Unfortunately, as mentioned in the previous section, this project may have wandered far enough from the institution's fundamental land-grant mission to call this idea into question. Since the project died on the vine, it is only possible to guess at how the tie, or lack thereof, might have played out over the long term. Yet, it raises questions as to how other land-grant institutions are balancing interests in internationalization, rankings, prestige, and revenue generation with their core mission, in particular during times of contracting state support.

Furthermore, the process employed to consider this opportunity represented a significant shift away from a bottom-up, collegial approach. The consideration of the branch campus was conducted in a closely held, quasi-confidential manner from the top. To its credit, LGU senior leadership involved a number of units in examining and analyzing the opportunity, and "did its homework" by putting together an elaborate plan. Nevertheless, this circle remained relatively small when compared to other initiatives on campus; there were no open forums, some of the usual committees were not involved directly, and there was nothing in writing on any of the usual publications or on-line media. To some degree in its approach, the institution appears to have intentionally avoided any input that might have challenged a "go" decision. The process used here is consistent with McBurnie and Ziguras' (2007) observation that transnational negotiations are frequently "commercial in confidence" (p. 40). It is understandable that all

negotiations will not be conducted in a public forum. Questions remain, however, as to the appropriate timing, breadth of input, and degree of scrutiny within a public institution for a project of this size and with its considerable potential long-term impact on an institution's reputation and finances.

Considering this issue in a post-modern frame, the high degree of confidentiality and secrecy surrounding the international branch campus raises questions of whose voice matters in such decisions? Do leaders keep out dissenting voices that may call their legacy-building plans into question? Does leadership consider views of those with specific expertise or experience, or limit involvement to a trusted circle with appropriate titles? Are leaders open to considering how they can learn from the experiences of other institutions, or is their vision limited by their own experience and that of others internal to the organization?

#### *Other Issues Affecting International Strategy*

In addition to these research questions, two areas arose during the interviews that are critically important to how institutions approach large, strategic international decisions. These include the important role of leadership and the sustainability of proposed initiatives. The following sections address these issues.

#### *The Role of Leadership*

Over the last decade, Land-Grant University made significant progress in expanding its international activities. As noted, LGU attracts a very large number of international students, expanded its study abroad efforts, and has made progress in establishing new programs and relationships in Asia. A major new branch campus was within sight when the economy collapsed. A common thread in all these efforts was the important role of leadership. All of these international initiatives at LGU evidenced strong support from central administration. While the



level of grass roots involvement varied, international initiatives extending across a significant portion of the institution involved clear communication and support from top levels in articulating priorities and setting goals. Largely, these efforts coincided with Dr. Schugart's presidency, and may in part reflect that leader's management style. Participants uniformly noted a clear sense of direction with respect to international priorities during Schugart's tenure. One administrator characterized that era as having "very dynamic and very focused leadership." A former dean observed how clear the agenda was under the former president, summing up his experience with that leader: "[Schugart] had it down to here's the goal, here's the objectives."

Across the interviews, many participants voiced the important roles of a leader. One role is to be an advocate, promoting strategies up the organization and outward to other stakeholders. Another is to push for results, creating focus across units, committees, etc. As one associate dean stated, "Leadership can cut across the grain, cut across decades of tradition and practice, and make things happen." A former dean echoed this in noting the need for leadership to channel faculty effort:

But if you want to focus that in some way, you've got to be a leader. So, it's not telling people what to do, it's explaining to them what we all need to get achieved and having them buy that and then let their own creativity and energy do it.

These sentiments align with Bennis' (1999) analysis of the important roles of leaders relative to followers in which he suggests constituents seek four things from leaders: meaning and direction, trust, hope and optimism, and results. Through this, Bennis (1999) says leaders help create goals and objectives, reliability and consistency, energy and commitment, and confidence in order to leverage intellectual capital in the organization. While not using these words specifically, deans and associate deans at LGU were looking for leaders to provide clear goals, commitment, and

continuity in direction, while supporting space for creativity at the institution with respect to its international strategies.

Between lamenting the current lack of direction and talking about examples of how leadership can help, administrators communicated that while bottom-up initiatives are important, and perhaps essential in working with faculty, the need for leadership is no less diminished. A senior administrator used the phrase “leadership matters” multiple times during the interview. Another went so far as to say, “leadership is everything.” He added:

I think the faculty is smart, the faculty is creative, the faculty carry most of the water and do most of the heavy lifting, yes, yes, yes. But if you don't have good leadership, you haven't got anything, because otherwise, faculty's gonna go off and do whatever they want to do, and that's not gonna add up to an institutional change.

There was, then, broad consensus on the importance of leadership for Land-Grant University to be able to achieve its global institutional objectives.

At this point, administrators interviewed see LGU struggling to frame the senior leadership structures needed to support its international efforts. Another new SAO began a few months after the conclusion of my interviews, and one might hope that person will address the open Senior International Officer position. Curiously, the task force working on fleshing out the next steps in internationalization at LGU, while recommending it re-incarnate itself as a permanent decision-making body, remained totally silent on the lack of a permanent leader in the international division or anything about the importance of, role, or placement of that position. Despite explanations suggested earlier for why the task force may have done this, ignoring the issue of executive-level leadership is surprising given the considerable feedback from participants, many of whom were on this task force, about the important role of leaders in

defining and implementing international strategies. It remains to be seen whether the administration identifies a permanent SIO and whether or how the new SAO uses the task force recommendations.

### *Sustaining International Initiatives*

As noted, Land-Grant University has had a significant portfolio of internationally focused projects for many years. Several deans and associate deans highlighted LGU College of Agriculture's engagement in developing countries over the last four decades. LGU, like other research universities, has many agreements with foreign universities. Administrators noted that while many agreements exist, not all are active or strategic. As the institution seeks to expand its global presence and create a few larger partnerships, perhaps even creating several "footprints" in the world, the issue of sustainability of such efforts arises. So far, however, only a few of LGU's international projects have been long-term in duration; others withered as a key faculty member retired or lost interest, or due to the loss of funding. For LGU to engage in efforts of longer-term, strategic importance, finding ways to sustain such work will be critical. This section discusses two important areas of sustainability in the international arena: leadership turnover and aligning funding.

#### *Sustainability and leadership turnover.*

The impact of turnover was evident at Land-Grant University not only in projects within the colleges, but in the loss of momentum and direction on larger projects as a result of the changes in senior executive leadership. As noted, many projects developed through relationships and efforts of key individuals and the role of certain key players in international projects came up in many interviews. For example, one administrator described the fate of a partnership with a European university that had been in place for many years:

And I think this is where my concern of sustainability came in, because I thought this was a great program and it was being done not only through physical exchange, but through video conferencing. So, it was innovative in several different ways. And then the guy who spearheaded it here retired. And lo and behold, nobody else in his ding-dong department cared two pins about this thing. They wouldn't say so at the time, but they just kind of let it wither. And I kept going back saying, "This is a great program. All this work that's been done." And they just let it go. And it's gone now. It's gone. I thought, well, that's a sad lesson. I mean, all that work and what? Nothing.

In this case, the department did not embrace this project; it was tied to the one professor's interest and passion. This situation illustrates concerns and questions raised by Amey (2010) as to how international partnerships that originate at the faculty level survive the loss the project champion. On this note, another dean suggested the need for an institutional commitment that transcends the individual:

You might get lucky sometimes and find a long-term project or partnership they can keep going, but without that institutional buy-in, it's hard to maintain. It's usually just dependent upon some key players and if they leave, it's not a system; it's been dependent upon individuals.

LGU administrators recognize the need to get higher-level organizational commitment behind important initiatives in order for them to have a chance of surviving staff turnover and the loss of the original champion.

Yet, even at the institutional level, turnover among senior executives frequently leads to changes in course (Kezar, 2009). Within Dr. Zelinski's first year the institution developed a new strategic plan. This plan had a strong international theme of expanding LGU's global presence.

When inaugurated, Dr. Zelinski underscored LGU's global initiatives by inviting leaders from across the globe, setting the stage with flags from the world, and inviting scholars from other countries to speak. Despite the fanfare, some international efforts started by Dr. Schugart faltered as Dr. Zelinski came to the helm. In particular, several faculty members mentioned the funding to support visits to specific Asian countries in order to jump-start various efforts was not extended after Schugart left. Although that funding had been set up as temporary, it created a great deal of energy. One senior executive remarked, "Everybody was going to China," but the project was not continued by the new president, resulting in what this administrator called "stalled momentum." Another dean described this same scenario in more detail:

Well, yeah, [Schugart] committed three years [to the Asia project]. The new president came; [Zelinski] didn't continue it. And I always wondered why. Maybe [Zelinski] didn't think that – you always wonder if it's because something, it was from the former regime, or [Zelinski] just didn't think it had enough merit. But [Zelinski] had ample opportunity to morph it into something bigger and better... but [Zelinski] didn't, [Zelinski] didn't pursue it. And maybe rightfully so. [Zelinski] said, "I'm new; I want to do my strategic plan, then I'll consider these things." And as a strategic plan evolved, you know, it didn't, I don't know, I guess [Zelinski] didn't think it fit.

At Land-Grant University, momentum on some projects faded with the arrival of a new president. One LGU dean noted he had served under four presidents and found them "all unique in what they want to accomplish." According to Kezar (2009), leadership turnover frequently leads to changes in priorities, with a new leader bringing a new agenda:

But incoming presidents feel pressure to create new initiatives rather than implement existing ones, since campus stakeholders and trustees frequently regard innovation as the

sign of an effective and dynamic leader. So rather than continuing the work of their predecessors, they generally launch new programs, which take about a year to introduce.

By the time implementation has gotten very far, they leave. (p. 21)

In the case of Land-Grant University's branch campus initiative, implementation never got beyond planning, in part due to changes in leadership. Those involved in the branch campus project commented the new president visited the site and did not stop the project. At the same time, the president's actions did not push it as a top agenda item. Moreover, there was concurrent change in the SAO role and not long after, in the SIO position. Suddenly, a project that had engendered significant excitement, viewed as the largest the university had undertaken, lost its original champions, contributing to a slowing in momentum. At LGU, very big projects such as this and the research park were to a large degree top-down in nature. In such situations, the role of senior leaders is crucial.

In light of this turnover, had the branch campus project moved ahead, at some point LGU leadership changes may have still created challenges due the important role of relationships. The branch campus project did not come about through personal connections; rather, the initial invitation was a cold call to LGU's president, though based on significant research on the part of the external investors and their consultant. As time went on, however, LGU leadership on the project began developing relationships with the partners and at least some staff close to the project appeared to become vested in it. A few of the core LGU team members on the initiative worked with the investors and others abroad to develop some level of trust and understanding. Land-Grant University senior leadership met the overseas partners and visited them as well. A dean talked about the role of relationships in the branch campus project:

...when you're building a partnership like that it's really about relationships. And if two or three of those relationships disappear, for whatever reason-- sickness, death, whatever – when that relationship changes, it's not just between [LGU] and [the country]; it's really between people. That's I think the big challenge with sustaining some of the international programs that we have is building relationships that transcend a personal relationship. Had this initiative gone forward, those relationships might have become even more critical in sustaining that effort over time. As a long-term investment, the institution would have had to find ways to sustain the branch campus in the face of inevitable leadership changes.

*Aligning funding.*

Financing new initiatives in higher education is a challenge for all institutions these days (Zusman, 2005). Finding resources to fund overseas work brings special challenges (Chapman & Sakamoto, 2011; Stearns, 2009). As a public institution, LGU must be circumspect and transparent in how and where it uses funds. While opening up an extension office in a remote corner of the state can be easily seen to align with mission and serve the people of the state, the question of supporting an outpost in Beijing or Budapest may require other justification to demonstrate how funds benefit the state (Chambers & Cummings, 1990).

In the case of LGU, most of the institution's international efforts to date have been self-supporting or funding has come from external sources. Several people noted that the College of Agriculture faculty did extensive engagement projects in developing countries beginning in the 1970's. Largely this work was externally funded through grants awarded to LGU faculty members by agencies such as USAID. Like other grant-related projects, funding for the initiatives was there for a few years and eventually dried up, leaving staff to search for new resources. This constant search for money occurs in the domestic context as well. Yet, one

associate dean felt the options for acquiring internal, institutional resources were greater for domestic versus international projects:

....[S]o there's been the development of lots of energy-focused projects. And often those start with one or two faculty members becoming interested. There's an awareness that builds at the college level and eventually at the university level of the importance.

Probably the difference is that if it's a domestic priority there tends to be more internal resources available. Whereas international, most of it is us beating the bushes and coming up with money.

Drumming up money for international projects does not always follow the same path as for domestic endeavors. According to an LGU project director engaged in international research, while agencies and foundations in the U.S. commonly employ a request for proposal (RFP) process in the grant application process, acquiring research funding in some countries may not involve an RFP at all. In those regions, he stated one typically needs to work in the country and meet the key people before funding organizations will consider you for projects. In addition, the resources will likely only support research in that part of the world. He stressed the need to understand these differences and have the connections that allow one to gain access to such funds.

The requirement to be on the ground overseas before gaining access to funding sources or to coordinate other partnerships overseas implies a need for seed money (van de Water, Green, & Koch, 2008). For example, a number of administrators remarked institutional funding was important in getting some activities started, such as the Asian project that supported faculty visits in anticipation of establishing new partnerships. The Africa project also started with an injection



of internal funding. Thus, at times institutions need to provide some initial resources in order to position faculty to gain access to external funding later.

International alumni present another potential source of revenue (Stearns, 2009). Several administrators indicated that LGU is finally awakening to the potential of its international alumni, suggesting more emphasis in courting them to lay groundwork for future donations. One dean reflected:

There's been a realization, I think, in the last seven or eight years – maybe more in the last two or three or four, that as a big university ... when you're thinking about fund-raising we have by and large really ignored alumni internationally. Maybe not completely, but we really haven't recognized the fact that the vast majority of our international students come from India and from China. And a lot of them now, they go back home and start businesses and are very successful. So there's a recognition of the importance of connecting back with that alumni group for a lot of reasons, one of which they support us, and obviously from the corporate side they come and they recruit students and they're involved in things that we do, but there's also recognition that there's a fair amount of potential financial support out there.

Another associate dean described concrete steps LGU is taking to improve its international database and begin working more closely with international alumni. Indeed, already alumni have helped to support a few initiatives at Land-Grant University. In one case noted earlier, an alumnus provided significant funding to support exchanges with two specific universities in China. An associate dean reported that an alumnus was influential in helping establish an overseas masters program. That program continues to receive significant support from a private foundation. Alumni giving plays an important role in all kinds of domestic initiatives, so

leveraging international alumni funding is not exactly out-of-the-box thinking. Yet, for LGU at least, courting international alumni giving to support international initiatives is a recent development.

As a result of the challenges in funding international work, revenue becomes a key consideration in determining the longer term direction of large projects. For example, the Africa Project, which several respondents described as an important initiative spanning multiple colleges, already faces funding challenges. Despite whatever potential good that project might be to LGU and to Africa, the lack of external funding to date may limit its potential importance and viability. Early attempts at outside funding did not succeed, and one of the deans involved in the project mentioned they are working on how to fund the project now. According to several participants, concerns about the sustainable funding left the longer-term future of the project in question, though faculty are still optimistic that it can succeed at some level.

In contrast, the vision of a branch campus emerged in part because someone else was willing to fund this project. In discussing the branch campus, a few administrators were quick to point out that the project would not require internal funding. One administrator even suggested the project might contribute to the bottom line:

And so we started off talking to deans and they said, “Well there’s a lot of work in this. We’re not going to do this for nothing. .... You pay for my staff time, it’s still a lot of work”. And so we have been talking about additional cost or royalty cost or something that you get for the branding for the name. And then that rolls back in and helps with the overall goal of strategic plan. If we can pull this off, it couldn’t come at a better time when we’ve had a downturn in state funds and everything else. If they’re willing to fund us to do this, then we can use that. So, yeah, we want to do it for internationalization, for

culturalization, and those kind of things. But there's also a financial incentive to do this as well.

Hence, part of the rationale for considering this very large project in the first place was it had the potential to generate revenue. One administrator remarked by having external funding, LGU administrators approached the project differently:

Well, one huge difference probably that needs to be stated at the outset is that this project was not going to use any [LGU] money. So, it allows you to think differently if you're not having to come up with the resources to do it.

While in the case of the Africa project, leadership in the International Division identified the project as something worth doing and then sought funding, it appears that in the case of the branch campus, the fact that someone else was underwriting the costs impacted how LGU senior executives approached this idea from the outset. The potential for such funding appeared to take away significant risk in the eyes of many participants.

Overall, long-term funding of large, overseas ventures requires new ways of thinking, especially when such endeavors carry some degree of strategic importance. Davies (1995) asserts all international "business, "as he refers to overseas activities for higher education, must eventually be self-funding lest it become a drain on the institution's teaching and research mission and base budget. The need to find external, sustainable sources of revenue for overseas efforts while not drawing on domestic campus coffers has profound impacts on the kinds of strategic international projects public institutions may pursue, far different from the freedom corporations may have in deciding to expand abroad.

*Summary*

Strategic choices involve undertakings that alter the relationship of the institution with its environment, impact a wide number of stakeholders, and have a long-term time horizon (Bess & Dee, 2008). Hence, an important consideration in strategic international initiatives lies in making sure they are sustainable, at least through some planned time horizon. Sustainability is important for domestic as well as international projects. However, sustainability issues may be more complex in the case of international projects given the increased areas of risk in an international and global context, difficulty in funding them, and the potentially large impact of leadership turnover. As institutions venture into more and more international partnerships and other arrangements, they will need to address issues of financial sustainability and organizational continuity as an important aspect of strategy development.

#### *Implications for Practice*

As a single, qualitative case study, this research is not intended to create a basis for generalization (Stake, 2005). Yet, such studies can allow us to understand a setting in depth, referred to by Stake (1995) as “particularization” (p. 8). In this way, the findings provide insights and lessons learned that other public research institution administrators might consider as they forge their own international agendas. Leaders may then consider whether such issues may be present on their own campus. Among the areas of consideration for practice are issues of leadership, decision-making processes, sustainability, and partnerships.

#### *Leadership*

First, this study pointed to the important role of leadership in guiding international strategies. Davies (1998) notes that internationalization occurs within the constraints of the typical collegiums and professional bureaucracies within higher education, which create advantages but also challenges as institutions move toward more entrepreneurial forms of

international activity. It is in this more entrepreneurial space, especially as institutions look to identify international endeavors deemed strategic within the organization, that the need for leadership becomes increasingly important. Just as deans or vice-presidents for research and graduate studies provide a voice and focus for activities in those arenas, so can a senior leader serve as a beacon for an institution's international activity. Institutions with significant international aspirations should consider who will take the lead in such strategy determination and provide oversight thereafter. Increasingly, institutions are creating an executive-level position reporting to a senior academic officer or president to take on this challenge (Stearns, 2009). Institutions will want to consider the duties, placement, and reporting lines of such a position, as well as what other staff or committees support the role. In addition, universities will need to assess what kind of preparation and skills are most important for the senior international officer. As a starting point, NAFSA: Association of International Educators conducted an initial Delphi Study in which current SIOs suggested the skill set they believe to be most important in their work (Lambert, Nolan, Peterson, & Pierce, 2007).

The issue of leadership may, however, extend higher in the organization as well; an institution whose mission and direction is highly global in focus will need to consider the international orientation of its SAO and President. This is not to say that all international activity is or should be driven from the top; many projects rightly emanate from faculty, colleges, and departments. In the current study, however, larger, significant international strategies often come from the most senior levels, or at least require their support. It is at the most senior levels that resource allocation for strategic initiatives occurs. Felden (2010) reinforces this position, identifying seven important roles for university presidents relative to successful international

partnerships that range from setting the vision and strategy to managing the board of trustees and providing financial resources.

### *Decision Making*

Next, campus leaders should examine how they develop and decide upon international opportunities that have potential strategic importance. Administrators may find it advantageous to be more intentional in considering how such decision processes operate. Eckel and Kezar (2006) write:

Any experienced campus leader knows there is no shorter path to institutional paralysis than to tap the wrong decision process, overlook important options, not involve the right people, or follow procedures perceived to be illegitimate for their purpose. (p. 2)

Further, leaders need to align decision processes appropriately within institutional culture, in particular if they wish implementation to follow later (Eckel & Kezar, 2006; Tierney 2008).

Some universities have already established more concrete guidelines and processes for establishing overseas partnerships (van de Water et al., 2008) and NAFSA: Association of International Educators provides detailed guidance in setting up new study-abroad programs (Brockington, Hoffa, & Martin, 2005). Opportunities with the potential risk of a branch campus, however, pose new challenges. To deal with a more competitive environment and higher risk international activities, Davies (1995) suggests, “institutions need to evolve a precise planning framework for themselves appropriate to their particular settings, which include expressions in the international budget, personnel policy, academic plans, etc.” (p. 14). In so doing, institutions should be wary of the risk of closing out dissenting voices in the process that may raise valid concerns and objections. Also, universities must conduct realistic risk-assessments that look critically not only at a project upside, but downside potential as well. Although some degree of

confidentiality is understandable, leaders must carefully balance the need for confidentiality with the need for expert input and buy-in from those who will eventually need to support the endeavor over the long term.

### *Sustainability*

Somewhat related, globally focused institutions need to be both realistic and forward-thinking as they assess the sustainability of international strategies. Large, long-term international projects and strategies require a level of commitment beyond that which many institutions have encountered through forms of traditional internationalization. Institutions need to create the political will, identify financial resources, and develop the supporting infrastructure to sustain projects that establish direction for decades rather than a few years. Infrastructure may include a host of processes and changes in systems, administrative procedures, human resource contracts and the like required to support overseas ventures. As one example, Carnegie Mellon University spent \$6 million to enhance its financial systems to accommodate financial transactions for its overseas campuses (Green et al., 2008). If processes are not documented and agreed upon, operations can be upset through staff turnover as well. Ensuring support staff share a commitment to international efforts can also be an asset. For instance, an LGU associate dean found funding to take staff from the business office to Africa and discovered they were better able to work on international projects subsequently. Understanding, support, and buy-in at many organizational levels help sustain a project over time.

In working with large, international initiatives, faculty involvement is typically pivotal (Tubbeh & Williams, 2010). The execution of international partnerships, whether instructional or non-instructional, frequently falls to faculty and departments (Amey, 2010). While some faculty may be motivated initially, maintaining that commitment over time creates challenges, especially

if repeated, extended, overseas visits are required (Altbach, 2010). As noted above, if the energy for a project lies with a single faculty member that retires, the project stands little chance.

Knowing that leadership and other staff turnover is likely at some point, institutions need to consider sustainability early in project planning (Green et al., 2008). Without strong faculty buy-in, financial support, and appropriate infrastructure, projects are unlikely to sustain changes in leadership over time. Moreover, as international projects frequently involve partnerships with overseas players, the university must also assess the partner's ability to sustain leadership, political support, financial contributions, and overseas infrastructure pertinent to the specific agreement (Croom, 2011; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). This is a much more complicated task than in the domestic context due to differences in political structures, legal settings, culture, and economic environments.

In addition to leadership and infrastructure, sustainable funding models are needed for cross-border projects. As a public, land-grant institution, LGU faces scrutiny in its funding and expenditures (McPherson & Shulenburger, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Most overseas investments will need to be self-supporting or require external funding (Davies, 1995). Yet, it often requires some initial investment to position a university to access other funds. If global ventures comprise an important part of institutional mission and serve domestic constituencies, LGU and other land-grant universities must develop sustainable, risk-assessed funding models that reflect this. In such cases, some degree of institutional support may be justifiable. On the other hand, if such overseas strategies are not clearly serving institutional mission, then perhaps institutions need to examine more carefully their assumptions about doing them in the first place.

### *Partnerships*



Another way of expanding resources and capacity for international endeavors is by creating overseas partnerships (Eddy, 2010). Most of the administrators in this study discussed some kind of international partnership during the interviews. Several noted how their college or LGU as a whole is seeking a small number of “strategic” partners overseas rather than simply many small and often inactive agreements. The respondents generally discussed such partnerships in terms of LGU creating a reciprocal arrangement with an institution abroad. There was even a sense of urgency among several respondents to sign agreements with top-tier institutions before they have filled their dance card and are no longer looking to add partners. This is not surprising, in so far as collaborations of this kind are taking on an increasingly competitive dimension. Van de Water et al. (2008) write:

A hallmark of this entrepreneurial environment is competition. Institutions around the world are aggressively seeking to make their mark on the world stage. Institutions in many different countries are also aggressively pursuing partnerships to strengthen their higher education institutions and systems, enhance their prestige, and generate revenue, among other reasons. In a word, the United States now has more competition in the search for partners. (p. 4)

Most of the discussion on partnerships at LGU suggested one-on-one arrangements with other institutions; the Africa Project was a notable exception, as other domestic institutions had already laid the groundwork on that venture. In the case of the branch campus, participants reported the overseas partner envisioned eventually bringing in a couple other institutions to offer some courses at the campus abroad, although LGU was to play the lead role.

In order to bring the best resources and minds to the table to solve problems, one wonders if institutions ought to consider more collaboration with other domestic institutions in forming

overseas partnerships. Already, there is a trend for international collaborations that span multiple institutions internationally (van de Water et al., 2008). Recent National Science Foundation awards for international work point to the value not only of international, but national collaboration among institutions, evidenced by the recipients of Partnership in International Research and Education grants (National Science Foundation, 2010). In other arenas, some institutions have created cross-institution agreements for handling study abroad programs (College Consortium for International Studies, 2010). Across the pond, Europe has increasingly moved toward a regional approach to internationalization (de Wit, 2002); U.S. higher education institutions or organizations might wish to consider in what ways increased regional or national collaboration in the international arena might benefit stakeholders. For example, this could mean creating networks of institutions rather than relying on hundreds of individual agreements. At the moment, however, institutions bent on enhancing their own prestige and rankings seem to be focusing more on competition than collaboration.

### *Implications for Theory and Further Research*

As noted in Chapter Two, the literature on internationalization of higher education addresses factors in and considerations for internationalization, but lacks research on the dynamics of developing international strategies. Many articles suggest factors that may impact a decision, but little has been written on how specific strategies for internationalization may be determined. This study suggests a number of areas related to developing international strategies ripe for future research, including leadership, decision-making, and the impacts of international rankings.

First, in the area of leadership, scholars might examine the role and preparation of the Senior International Officer in various kinds of institutions. Widespread appointment of an SIO

is a relatively new phenomenon, and little research exists concerning this important position. As mentioned, NAFSA: Association for International Educators conducted an initial study (Lambert et al., 2007), but more is needed. In addition, future research should consider the role presidents and senior academic officers play in international strategy, in particular how people in such positions can shape or derail the institution's international agenda.

Further, future research might consider whether or how leadership needs in the area of internationalization are similar to or different from those in other areas of the organization. Questions might include: Do senior leaders approach issues of international strategy differently than other kinds of large projects? How does a leader's approach to strategy align with the historical approaches at a specific institution, and what happens when those differ? Do leaders' approaches to strategy differ depending on the nature of the initiative? If so, how?

Second, new research might examine various decision-making processes and organizational structures that give input to or enact strategic international decisions. While a number of descriptive studies exist, theoretical models are still lacking in the literature on international strategies. Several models of internationalization have been proposed (Childress, 2009; Davies, 1995; de Wit, 2002; Knight, 1994; Rudzki, 1995), but these models examine internationalization at a more macro level within an institution and do not address how institutions and their leaders approach specific kinds of strategies. This area would benefit from theoretical work to guide research and practice. The rapidly changing landscape of global higher education beyond traditional forms of internationalization makes it important to continue to look more deeply and uncover models and best practices in how institutions approach strategic international decisions.

In so doing, new models could examine how different forms of internationalization intersect with varying approaches to strategy. That is, there may not be one model of internationalization, but rather multiple models depending on the kind of internationalization under consideration. This may be especially true as institutions move beyond traditional internationalization toward more entrepreneurial kinds of activity. Moreover, there may be different models depending on how the institution frames strategic international opportunities in the first place. For instance, it is conceivable that an institution that approaches strategy as emergent may exhibit a different model than that of another institution that approaches strategy in an adaptive or interpretive manner.

The current study identified that the way in which LGU leadership framed and considered an overseas branch campus opportunity differed significantly from how it examined other international opportunities in the past. The high degree of confidentiality of the project was especially striking. Future studies might consider how an institution approached other large, strategic decisions in the university, such as those which may involve external partners, large investments, and may be entrepreneurial in nature. These might include decisions to expand domestically, such as opening up a branch campus in another state or a merger between two institutions. Potentially, the approach taken by LGU to consider an international branch campus might bear more similarity to these other strategic decisions than to decisions regarding more traditional internationalization.

Third, additional research should focus attention on how the race to raise international rankings and prestige impacts institutions and institutional stakeholders. A recent study by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (2009) examined the impact of rankings on institutional decisions such as admissions and hiring in Australia, Canada, Japan and the United States. The

authors found several positive effects, including the potential to improve quality assurance in higher education. However, this study ignored the potential impacts of worldwide rankings on higher education in a more global context, including their potential to dampen the expansion and improvement of universities in developing nations that would be perceived as less prestigious. More research is needed regarding the impacts of rankings. Important questions to address could include: How do policy-makers, students, and other stakeholders in various parts of the world understand and use various rankings? Do stakeholders associate these external rankings with actual mission attainment? To what extent do such rankings correlate with student success? How effective are branding campaigns in changing institutional rankings? What kind of impact is the emphasis on prestige and rankings having on institutional partnerships in developing countries?

### Conclusion

Through a qualitative case study, this research project examined how an institution approached strategic international decisions, including the opportunity to open an international branch campus. The study revealed a change in approach as the institution moved from traditional internationalization such as study abroad and injecting an international dimension into the curriculum, with more “bottom-up” involvement, to the considerations of more strategic approaches, including the opportunity to open a branch campus and the international branding of the institution. For strategic initiatives, the role of senior leadership was critically important, although leaders need to ensure appropriate input from others as well. At the same time, leadership turnover challenged the continuity of efforts deemed longer-term and strategic in nature. The need for long-term, external funding sources for international work also emerged as an important issue in identifying strategic initiatives. Finally, faculty raised concern that solving

the world's critical issues and engaging in poorer, developing countries were not priorities, and would only occur to the extent they might add to institutional prestige and ranking.

## APPENDIX A

**Project #i034449 Interview Protocol**  
**Institutional Strategy in a Global Context**

The purpose of this study is to understand how institutions approach various internationalization strategies.

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1. Please describe your role in the university and that of your division/department.
2. What do you understand to be the internationalization priorities and objectives of the university?
3. In what way do internationalization priorities and objectives relate to overall institutional mission and strategy?
4. How are internationalization priorities and objectives communicated? Can you give me some examples?
5. Who sets internationalization objectives for the university? How?
6. In what way do the internationalization objectives impact (or not impact) decisions and direction of the university? Your division/department? Why is this the case?
7. Who sets internationalization objectives for this college/department/unit? How?
8. How do decisions regarding specific international opportunities relate to these (and institutional) objectives?
9. Please provide an example of a particular opportunity and describe the decision process surrounding this opportunity.
10. How does (branch campus, study abroad, etc.) align with internationalization or overall institutional priorities?
11. How do decisions concerning whether/how to do (branch campus, study abroad, etc.) parallel or differ from other internationally oriented decisions in the university?



## APPENDIX B

## Research Participant Information and Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Study Title: Institutional Strategy in a Global Context #i034449  
Researcher and Title: Patricia Croom, Ph.D. Candidate  
Department and Institution: Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education  
Michigan State University  
Address and Contact Information: Room 250 Administration Building  
East Lansing, MI 48824  
517-884-6062 [croom@msu.edu](mailto:croom@msu.edu)

### 1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

- a. You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research project that will explore your observations and experiences related to your institution's internationalization strategies.

### 2. WHAT YOU WILL DO:

- a. The interview consists of 11 open-ended questions and should take approximately one hour.
- b. You can ask questions of the interviewer at any time during the interview.
- c. The interview you grant for this project will be audio-recorded. If you prefer the interview NOT be recorded, the researcher will take and transcribe notes from the interview. You will not be identified in any way on the transcription of the recording or the notes. When the study is completed all recordings will be destroyed.
- d. Upon request you may obtain a copy of the findings of this study, in the form of a final report, from the principle investigator.

### 3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

- a. You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of how institutions approach strategy in a global context.

### 4. POTENTIAL RISKS:

- a. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

### 5. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:

- a. The data for this project will be kept confidential. Interview data will be aggregated to identify themes and you will not be referred to by name.
- b. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous. Any names used in any paper, published or unpublished, will be pseudonyms in order to protect your confidentiality.
- c. Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law.
- d. Your decision regarding participation in this study will not be released to any other person or agency.
- e. Interviews notes and recordings will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office for three years after conclusion of the study and then completely destroyed. No one will have access to the original

data except the researcher. Professional transcription services may be used, and a peer reviewer may review findings; however, the researcher will apply pseudonyms to this data to protect confidentiality before sharing data with these parties

#### **6. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW**

- a.** Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all, or you may refuse to participate in certain procedures or answer certain questions or discontinue your participation at any time without consequence
- b.** If you choose to withdraw from the project, the interview will cease immediately and any recordings or research notes will be destroyed.

#### **7. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY:**

- a.** There is no cost of financial obligation incurred by you as a result of participating in this study.
- b.** You will not receive money or any other form of compensation for participating in this study.

#### **8. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS**

- a.** If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the principal investigator:

Dr. Marilyn Amey, Professor in Educational Administration  
418 Erickson Hall  
Michigan State University  
Email: [amey@msu.edu](mailto:amey@msu.edu) Phone: (517) 432-1056

- b.** If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu) or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

#### **9. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.**

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Please check the line which reflects your wishes regarding the audio-taping of this interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I voluntarily agree to have this interview audio-recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not want this interview to be audio-recorded.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

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