

Eubank, Roxanne. Annotation of “The Nature of International Partnerships Conducted by Regional Exemplar Institutions of the International Association of Lasallian Universities” by Rebecca I. Hopkins. Ed.D. diss., Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota, 2015. *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 6, no. 3 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota: 2015).

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## ANNOTATION

Hopkins, Rebecca I. “The Nature of International Partnerships Conducted by Regional Exemplar Institutions of the International Association of Lasallian Universities.” Ed.D. dissertation, Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota, 2015, 173 pp.

This research study endeavored to understand the following question “What is the nature of international partnerships conducted by regional exemplar institutions of the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU)?” (p. 23).

The author explored the literature on international partnerships between Lasallian universities and the historical documents of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. A thorough review of the literature revealed the complexity of developing and maintaining international partnerships. The literature explored the conceptualization of internationalization and the motivations for partnerships which guide the types of partnerships created. The literature continued with an exploration of the characteristics of successful partnerships and the importance of considering these characteristics when designing international university collaborations. Finally, the literature review explored the aspects of relationship cultivation and the competencies needed by the people who engage in international partnerships.

In order to explore the question “What is the nature of international partnerships conducted by regional exemplar institutions of the International Association of Lasallian Universities?” the author designed a unique study which included at least one Lasallian University from each of the five regions of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In order to study partnerships, the author identified “exemplar institutions” within the IALU network. Exemplar institutions are defined as “an institution in each region, of the IALU network, that demonstrates significant experience with the continuum of international initiatives as defined in the literature and is validated by regional and international experts” (p. 27).

In order to identify exemplar institutions, a three part process was used. First, the author reviewed the website of each of the 67 member institutions of IALU. Based upon criteria identified in the literature review, each institution was assessed and the following evidence was documented:

- Searchability of the website, in multiple languages
- Website allowed for English translation
- Commitment to international partnerships was evident in the university mission and vision statements
- Identification of personnel responsible for international initiatives
- Offered study abroad or student exchange
- Offered course work with an international component
- Offered degree programs with an international component

- Offered joint or dual degree opportunities
- Maintained a branch campus in another country
- Maintained a virtual presence
- Actively engaged in collaborative research with an international partner
- Engaged in faculty or expertise exchange
- Hosted international events
- Provided a list of formal memorandums of agreement with other universities

Based upon the review of university websites, the top three universities were identified in each of the regions of the Institute.

The next step was to request the General Councilor, for each of the five regions, identify which institution on the list was the exemplar for their region. Finally, the identified exemplars were submitted to the General Councilor assigned to the IALU executive committee for validation. Through this process five institutions were identified. However, a sixth institution was also identified as a historic and recognized leader in international collaborations within the IALU network. This institution was used in the study as a foundational example to corroborate, extend, and enrich the findings from the exemplar institutions.

Semi-structured interviews were held with the chief academic officers of each institution. In addition to responding to interview questions, participants were asked to identify individuals in their universities who were knowledgeable about the institution's international collaborations and additional individuals who should be interviewed.

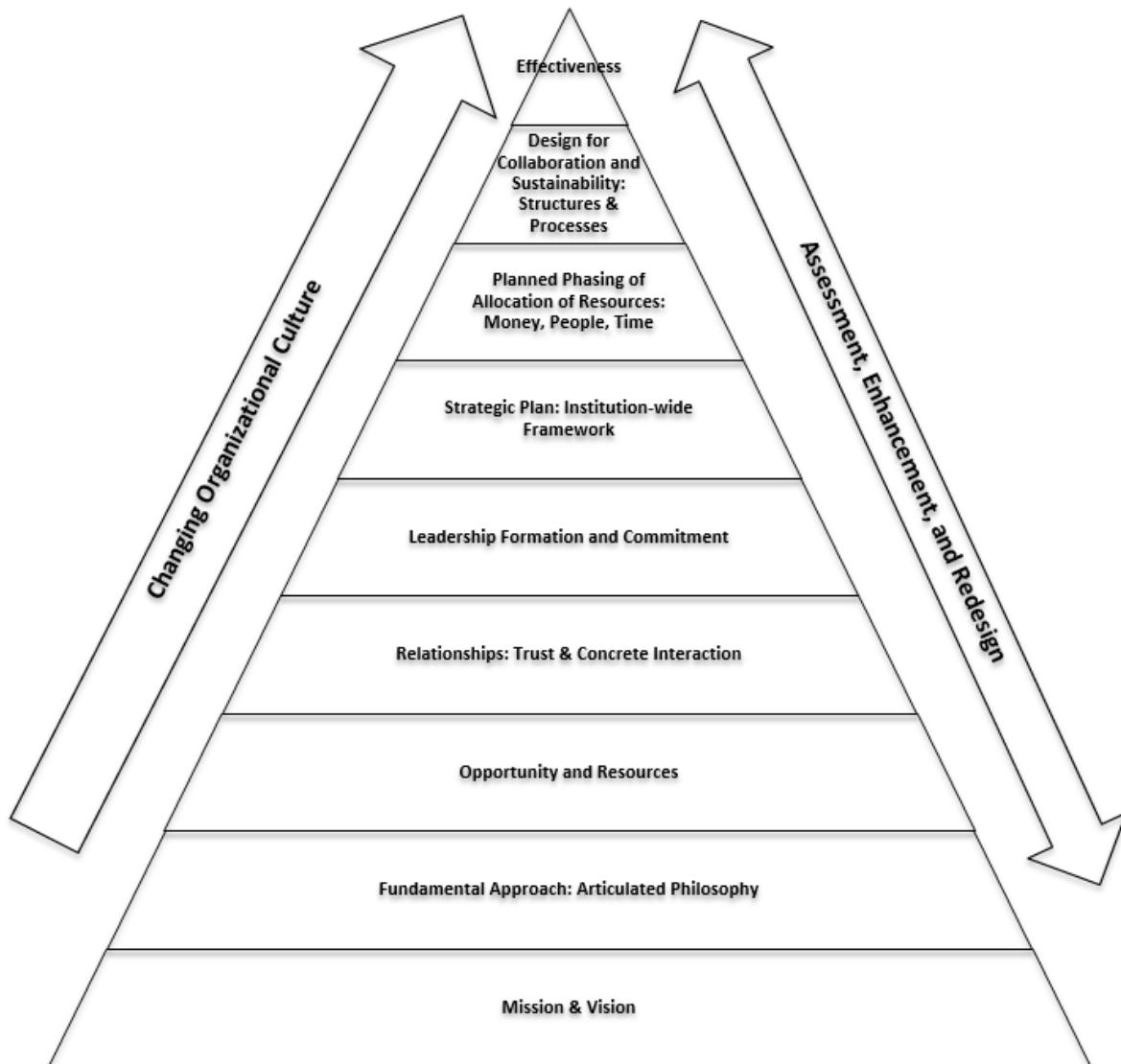
Participants were asked to provide documents to aid in the understanding of the institution's international partnerships and collaborations. Submitted documents included: organizational charts, mission and vision statements, lists of partners, and the nature of the relationships.

Within case and cross case analyses were conducted. A second coder was employed to control researcher bias and facilitate reliability. Both the primary researcher and the second coder coded the data. They compared their results and worked to find consensus.

First, each institutional interview was analyzed and the data coded to create a picture of each institution. Member checks were then conducted with each participant to insure the validity of the data. The next phase was cross case analysis. This involved the analysis of similarities and differences among the exemplar institutions. This data was compared to the data from the foundational institution.

The data analyses led the researcher to create a new model of transformational internationalization, composed of nine building blocks: mission and vision, fundamental approaches and articulated philosophy of internationalization, opportunity and resources, relationships, leadership formation and commitment, a strategic plan that includes an institution wide framework for internationalization, planned allocation of resources, design for collaboration and sustainability, and measures of effectiveness (p. 135).

## Transformational Internationalization Model



The author noted the bottom four building blocks are common in higher education institutions. However, the upper five building blocks reflect a more sophisticated approach to internationalization. While this model reflects a common process, it does not reflect that only a linear progression, through the building blocks, is common to all institutions. Rather, it identifies the levels of sophistication represented in the data.

Participants were asked to provide guidance to other institutions that are beginning to internationalize. The summary of comments include the following advice:

- Start out with focused and intentional efforts;
- Commit to it fully with the expectation that it will take time;
- Build capacity; and
- Move in ways that make sense for your institution, but know where you are going (p. 145-146).

Of note, is the recommendation of the chief academic officer of one of the exemplar universities that institutions not begin with student exchanges, but rather work to make the curriculum within the academic programs and pursue academic collaborations.

The following recommendations for further research are discussed (p. 150-151).

1. Develop a similar multi-site case study with the same institutions but interview different groups of stakeholders such as deans, faculty members, or students.
2. Develop a similar multi-site case study with a different faith-based network of higher education institutions, such as the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities. Utilizing similar methodology, as in this research, may provide valuable insights as to the generalizability of the themes depicted in this study and implications articulated for faith-based higher education networks.
3. Develop an in-depth case study focusing on one institution that has implemented an advanced internationalization plan with accompanying assessments, involving the range of stakeholder's perspectives on the resulting impact. This approach could utilize both qualitative data from interviews, as well as quantitative data from a survey tool.
4. Develop a study that examines the perspectives and experiences of faculty members who have participated in or "championed" international partnerships. The sample could be stratified by types of faculty (full-time, part-time, or adjunct) and compared, or one faculty group could be represented in depth.
5. Develop a study that focuses on students and the resulting impact of their participation in international programming. Focus groups of just returning students could be held, as well as data collected from young professionals as they grow in their careers.
6. Develop a study that either utilizes interviews or surveys of past International Lasallian University Leadership Program participants to ascertain impact and resulting attitudes. Results could be examined by role at the university, the number of years since the event, and by region.
7. Develop a study that compares and contrasts internationalization metrics, for example assessment rubrics, employed by higher education institutions and their perceived effectiveness. Institutions could be chosen that have similar approaches to strategic internationalization plans. Results may provide deeper understanding of ascertaining impact.

The author concludes by recognizing the potential for collaboration within the IALU network. The literature supports the theory that institutions with similar missions are natural partners. However, the structures of the universities and the internal focus could be a detriment to these efforts.