

# ***Where Are We Going in India?***

## **A Summary of Comments Made by Provost Wilcox and Acting ISP Dean Jeffrey Riedinger at Global Encounter: India**

### I. Introduction

The Global Encounter discussions were generated from a conversation between Acting Dean Jeffrey Riedinger and Provost Kim Wilcox during a January 2006 trip to Thailand. The Provost stated that it is time for International Studies and Programs to engage a wide cross section of the university in open discussions in order to 1) chart the University's course for international engagement for the years and decades ahead, 2) determine what kind of investments we should make and 3) determine in what countries these investments should be made. He affirmed that for MSU to be successful and to maximize our effectiveness, input is needed from all parties potentially involved in efforts on and off campus and in Michigan, the U.S. and internationally.

An important benefit of the campus-wide Global Encounter discussions in April 2006 <<http://www.isp.msu.edu/globalencounter/first>> was connecting MSU faculty and staff with others on campus and in the community who are working in the same countries, regions or on the same themes. Many participants did not know each other or know that they had common interests prior to the event.

### II. Where Are We Going in India?

In November 2004, while in China with then President Designate Simon, she asked ISP for a paper on how we could engage in China. With the global pressures for international higher education enrollments, post 9-11 visa issues, views of U.S. as less welcoming, and other countries' push to keep their students home with more investment in higher education; the University needs to evaluate its involvement globally. In the past, U.S. institutions including Michigan State went to build institutions overseas. Today we operate as equal partners with the international institutions. MSU has the opportunity for fundamentally different relationships with our overseas counterparts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The North Central Accreditation evaluation in 2006, with a focus on international, made us look at what will be different in 10 years. Some areas to investigate include hiring faculty with direct involvement with our partners abroad or hiring in tandem with our foreign partners to share faculty. Currently, we design courses and hope that international students will choose to come to MSU. A new model will be to design curriculum jointly, share curriculum ideas with foreign

institutions and come to a common curriculum. The outcome may include dual degree programs where students finish with a degree from both institutions or a diploma issued by both institutions jointly. This is happening on a limited basis with the U.S.-China collaborative turf grass management program <[www.css.msu.edu/turfgrassmanagement](http://www.css.msu.edu/turfgrassmanagement)> in which students receive an MSU degree and a degree from their home Chinese university. We could have MSU faculty teaching overseas as part of their normal load, students starting at MSU and taking significant courses overseas, or other types of relationships. We also need to look at how we can provide international experiences for those MSU students who do not or cannot take advantage of study abroad, international internships and other options internationally to ensure that all our students are getting international experiences.

MSU cannot do everything, everywhere. Today we have faculty and students interested in and engaged in many different themes all over the globe. This was evident when as part of the initial analysis for the first Global Encounter session we looked at where our faculty are working now, where our international students come from, and where our students go on study abroad programs. Surprisingly, there is relatively little overlap in these. Through the Global Encounter process we hope to identify where in the world we should concentrate resources and think strategically about which countries, which partner institutions, and what topics/themes should be priorities. In any department on campus there are many ideas and programs that could apply to any country, but MSU does not have the faculty and resources available to implement these everywhere. We need to make strategic choices about where to develop the deep collaborative partnerships in research, student exchanges, curriculum, and degree programs. India is logically one of the important countries to consider. But the list of where we should be is not set in stone. This series of faculty discussions are part of the process to help identify other strategic countries, areas, and themes.

### Why India?

Acting ISP Dean Riedinger used the slide presentation (see appendices) to provide some of the facts and figures supporting the selection of India as a strategic country for enhanced MSU engagement in the future.

Provost Wilcox said there are opportunities and resources at MSU and there are needs and opportunities around the globe. We have a wide breadth of interests and expertise at MSU, which is great, but it requires us to make strategic investments. The beauty of the land grant mission is that we have the opportunity to sustain our impact. We can change the society through continuing our efforts in the areas selected. But it is hard to sustain the efforts

and the continuing impact with a wide breadth of topics and countries. So MSU needs to focus.

Through the initial Global Encounter in the spring, we came together as a community to focus on which topics and which parts of the world should be considered for strategic efforts. India and South Asia are natural areas to focus. India's future questions are similar to those of the U.S., and we can look together at addressing common issues.

### III. Questions from the audience and answers provided by Provost Wilcox and Acting ISP Dean Riedinger

#### 1. Why is MSU interested in this approach?

We have much to learn. The U.S. is not the repository of the world's wisdom and knowledge. Learning can benefit Michigan and the Michigan economy (e.g. biofuels, emerging and infectious diseases). We recognize that we operate in a global context and everything going on in Michigan is impacted by what is going on in the world. That answer applies to why MSU is engaged at all in international activities. Why did MSU start ISP 50 years ago? Our leadership at the time recognized that we needed to be globally engaged. Now the question is where should we be globally engaged? Sometimes the decision is based on the "return on investment," but our international engagement is not primarily a focus on cash return, but more a focus on the impact. Where, and with what key partners, can we have significant, positive and sustaining impact domestically and internationally?

#### 2. Why are we now pushed to an international focus? Over several decades the administration push has been to be domestically focused on Michigan and the U.S. Why now is international being encouraged?

International engagement has been encouraged over the years, but there is a greater awareness of its value and commitment to it now. The trend is moving towards more engagement. But, for junior faculty without tenure, the push is still to work domestically and then do international work after one is tenured. International graduate students also are encouraged to work domestically in the U.S. Then Provost Simon chose International as the 2006 NCA self study focus. Provost Wilcox is continuing to push these global discussions. The question now is not whether we will be globally engaged. The questions are where, in what and how we will be engaged.

#### 3. One thematic area that is not included in the topics under discussion today is philosophy, culture, religion. Is MSU open to other thematic areas that are not included as topics for this encounter?

Yes, the list is not written by the administration (Provost), but the decisions will be made by these group discussions and others that will follow. The institutions we talk to have themes they want to have MSU consider. They are in the buyer's position. Schools all over the U.S. are engaged with many of the same key institutions across the world. They read the U.S. News and World Report surveys; they know which U.S. universities are experts and highly ranked in what areas.

We have strong cultural study strengths at MSU and in the community. How do we take the expertise in these cultural areas to strengthen both MSU and our partners? We need to link the expertise in the cultural areas to strengthen the expertise in all other thematic areas. We cannot be successful in other themes if we do not understand the cultural implications. The cultural expertise needs to be imbedded in all of the themes and activities.

4. Joint degree programs – how do these work?

The current dual degree of most prominence at MSU is the American-Sino Turfgrass Education Program with four universities in China. In developing joint degrees, the biggest limitation is our own restriction on curriculum. How do we teach, how many credits, what is included in the coursework, etc.? In order to move ahead, we need to maintain quality, but think differently about how we organize ourselves. The current model of instituting these joint programs still seems somewhat paternalistic. We need to move to a more equal position over the next decade, working in tandem with our partners, but not dictating what our rules are. Scheduling of MSU courses is under our control. We need to share the commitment to study abroad, countries, and themes across the campus and with our potential partners. Then we will be able to think more creatively about the curriculum.

5. Many students from India cannot afford to come to the U.S. Is there any way that we can facilitate the enrollment and retention (e.g., waive tuition) of the top notch students from India?

This is a challenge, and the current budget struggles restrict our ability to solve this problem. MSU is now over 50% funded by tuition. It is hard to defend to any constituency bringing a group from another country at a discount as that constituency will also have people who cannot afford higher education. But if we have a small number of initiatives that we can see the benefits to MSU, the U.S., and India, those are the options where we can move forward.

6. What is the rationale for MSU engagement? I see the traditional MSU value of exchanging knowledge, but we are also under lots of economic pressure. How do these two coincide? The Faculty is told it needs to have an economic return on its work. Is the faculty's goal to build linkages for long-term return or to realize a short-term goal or for exchange of knowledge? And how do the domestically-focused faculty determine which activities they will be involved in – do they have the same pressure for return?

There is no difference in pressures for domestically and internationally engaged faculty. Each department has some area of strength, where more funds are invested, to the advantage of the collective. Some activities are generating dollars, others are not; some get investments, others do not, but the push is always towards external dollars. Of all the people on campus, only the faculty can generate dollars. So this pressure is always present. There will be some efforts that generate dollars and others that do not. There will always be strengths and expertise. This is the same for domestic and international efforts. We will move individually and collectively to where the money is. These frustrations are present, but they exist for both internationally and domestically focused faculty. The impact is also crucial – an important consideration should always be where can we have a positive impact?

7. How are the benefits and costs considered? In the turf grass program, for example, there are high costs up front to develop the dual program and then ongoing costs to maintain the relationships. What are the opportunity costs and the benefits compared to other programs that do not have the administrative burdens that these programs have (e.g. external research, study abroad, external linkages without the curriculum focus)?

We are always trying to judge the time and effort involved. The turf grass program is an opportunity to try a collaborative program, but it is relatively expensive per student. We need to consider where we want to try other creative options? We have to try to innovate collaborative and curriculum models, but need to have a good idea of what parts of the world to engage in so we can focus these efforts, especially given the high costs.

**This material was generated from Global Encounter-India, <<http://www.isp.msu.edu/globalencounter/india>>, held at Michigan State University on September 22, 2006. This interactive and participatory event was designed to obtain input and to elaborate in a country-specific forum on relevant themes, opportunities, issues, and opportunities affecting MSU's current and future engagement in India and to a lesser degree southeast Asia.**

