

# *The Guardian Higher Education Summit 2008*

## *Managing International Partnerships*

Dr. Don Olcott, Jr., Ed.D., FRSA, Chief Executive

The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE)

- *What are the most effective techniques?*
  - a) **You never have a second chance to make a first impression.** Do your homework before, not after, you establish an international partnership. Research your partner organisation, it's culture, language, history, current partners, partnership record, financial stability, and how the organization is perceived in their own country. What do they bring to the table that you need? *What are the potential benefits for both partners?*
  - b) Build partnerships that compliment your organisational strengths? Does your potential partner view these attributes as your strengths? Why or Why not? Do not attempt to be all things to all people.
  - c) Establish formative and summative performance review processes – managerial, programmatic, and financial from the outset. Presume from the start that you will need to make adjustments, modifications and perhaps major alterations to your partnership strategy. Global economic, cultural, political, and social environments can change rapidly, can you?
- *How do you create sustainability?*
  - a) Create a diversified investment strategy – one partner but additional stakeholders who perceive value in the endeavour and may invest money, people, and time. Remember international partnerships particularly in higher education must be approached as a business venture.
  - b) Build contingencies into your budget planning. Every higher education budget on the planet looks good on paper, when it hits the real world is when the problems start. Build your budgets based on real costs plus inflation and the projected costs of doing day-to-day business.
  - c) Conduct extensive market research on your customer (s) base. If your financial plan is highly dependent on student enrolment tuition and fees, analyse the changes that are occurring in this sector for the partnership country and surrounding region. Students are becoming more mobile and more selective with more higher education choices.

- ***Collaboration and the curriculum.***
  - a) If your university-department is the primary content provider, you retain control of the curriculum, period. From a practical standpoint, however, connecting your faculty with international faculty in the partnership country can be beneficial and strengthen partnership collaboration.
  - b) Align curriculum delivered abroad with the process of ‘internationalising’ the curriculum on the campus. Developing curriculum that is culturally, socially, historically, ethnically, and gender accurate and sensitive are prerequisites for all international curriculum.
  - c.) Diversity your delivery modes. Can you deliver a significant part of the curriculum via educational technologies (distance learning)?
- ***How do you present your partnerships to internal and external stakeholders?***
  - a) Leaders must be able to articulate how the partnership aligns, strengthens, and enhances the mission of the university. How will the partnership impact specific stakeholders?
  - b) Benefits –benefits-benefits? What are the benefits from the partnership? How will these benefits be assessed and by whom?
  - c) Provide status reports to all key stakeholders, particularly academic deans, faculty, and board members.
  - d) What is your exit strategy if the partnership must be terminated? Do you have an answer? Indeed, you will be asked this question by multiple stakeholders. Have you considered this from a public relations, reputation and marketing perspective?
- ***Staff diversity to reflect the partnership.***
  - a) Foreign-based partnerships – hire local staff to strengthen instruction and support services. Take advantage of the culturally and language rich human resources available to support your program and partnerships
  - b) Campus-based – ensure you have diverse staff with the communication, language, cultural awareness, and social skills to interact effectively with your international students.
  - c) Ensure that partnership staff, faculty, and students have multiple opportunities for sharing comments, suggestions, and recommendations. This should be an essential part of the partnership and program assessment process.

## Resources

ALTBACH, P.G., & PETERSON, P.M. (2007). (Eds.). *Higher Education in the New Century: Global Challenges and Innovative Ideas*. Boston: Centre for International Higher Education, Boston College and SensePublishers. <http://www.bc.edu/cihe>, <http://www.SensePublishers.com>

CONNELLY, ST., GARTON, J., & OLSEN, A. (2006). Models and Types: Guidelines for Good Practice in Transnational Education. *The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education*, [www.obhe.ac.uk](http://www.obhe.ac.uk)

KNIGHT, J. (2005). Borderless, Offshore, Transnational and Cross-Border Education: Definition and Data Dilemmas. *The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education*, [www.obhe.ac.uk](http://www.obhe.ac.uk)

MCBURNIE, G. & ZIGURAS, C. (2007). *Transnational Education: Issues and Trends in Offshore Higher Education*. London: Routledge

OLCOTT, D.J. (2007). *Global Trends in International and Borderless Higher Education*. Presentation to the Wales International Consortium, Powys, Wales, United Kingdom, 14 December 2007.

OLCOTT, D. J. & HARDY, D. (Editors). (2005). *Dancing on the glass ceiling: Women, leadership, and technology*. Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing.

VERBIK, L. & MERKLEY, C. (2006). The International Branch Campus – Models and Trends. *The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education*, [www.obhe.ac.uk](http://www.obhe.ac.uk)

---

### ***The Observatory – Crossing Tomorrow’s Higher Education Borders Today***

#### **Dr. Don Olcott, Jr.**

Chief Executive

The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE)

Woburn House

20-24 Tavistock Square

London, WC1H 9HF

United Kingdom

Tel: 44 207 380 6714

Fax: 44 207 387 2655

Email: [d.olcott@obhe.ac.uk](mailto:d.olcott@obhe.ac.uk)

Web Site: [www.obhe.ac.uk](http://www.obhe.ac.uk)