

HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In the increasingly complex and competitive world market societies are more skill driven than at any other time in the world's history. The most robust economies and most productive and prosperous nations have well established education systems that feed the pipeline to support growth and productivity. One of the most effective means to improve skills and increase competition is through challenging higher education system that can meet the rapidly changing demands for knowledge to support growth.

Developing nations that do not have an established higher education infrastructure are at a disadvantage. The costs involved in creating institutions from the ground up are astronomical. The investment in individuals to teach and manage the institutions requires a waiting period that may be too long for a developing country struggling to meet the most basic national challenges. The challenge to build the support systems necessary for an intellectual institution such as libraries, laboratories and communication systems is beyond the reach of many developing nations.

The more traditional approach to higher education has followed two tracks for much of the developing world. The first track has an emphasis on comprehensive student engagement programs in a broad range of professional pursuits. The second track is to create institutions from the ground up that emulate some of the most prestigious and successful of institutions in the world. Both approaches have been effectively used throughout the world.

However, large student exchange programs create the risk of losing the best and brightest students to the host country. Far too many exchange students seek citizenship in other countries after long periods of study abroad. Creating brick and mortar institutions take years to establish to be competitive and can be so expensive as to take funds away from much-needed domestic services that the government must also provide.

Fortunately, with the advent and widespread use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), it is possible to enjoy the best of the possible solutions. ICT makes it possible for many students to stay home and experience very challenging and competitive educational experiences. Through efforts such as faculty exchanges, brief student exchanges, and structured distance learning class offerings, developing countries can tailor a higher education infrastructure that challenges students at home in a very cost effective basis.

The University of Oklahoma (OU) is one of the world leaders in alternative approaches to delivering content to students. It is also a leader in working with students from developing and transforming them into world-class professionals and scholars. A partnership under the UN Alliance can be established with OU to engage students in a manner that will lead to addressing the demands for productive professionals in any field.