Global Portfolios and Strategic International Partnerships of a Major Research University: A Case Study of the University of Toronto

Anatoly Oleksiyenko
Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education Group
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
OVERVIEW

- The changing context of internationalization of higher education in Canada
- The importance of a major research university in internationalization of research: U of T as a case-study
- International Strategy Framework: Findings and Recommendations
THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN CANADA

- The decreasing role of a Canadian major research university in international development

- Accountability frameworks and changes in internationalization of higher education at the turn of the 21st century (1996-2006)

- Demands of the Changing Global Context for Internationalization of Research
  - World poverty
  - Conflicts and social disruption
  - Environmental degradation
  - Global health
THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN CANADA

- The changing role of government policies and the pursuit of global economy objectives at the turn of the 21st century:
  - Trade
  - National competitiveness
  - Productivity
  - Innovation

- The changing role of Canadian universities and the shifting emphasis of internationalization of higher education from aid and collaboration to trade and competitiveness
THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN CANADA

- The Canadian university is becoming more interested in:
  - How international strategies are set up on an institutional level
  - How a diversity of individual responses can be consolidated in order to enhance the institutional profile
  - How to communicate its image internationally in order to make the global brand-name fit the interests and needs of various domestic and foreign funding agencies and client groups

- Interest in a more proactive institutional response is growing

- The development of institutional global portfolios:
  - To select and manage a limited range of international research and development projects
  - To promote partnerships that enhance international reputation
  - To promote partnerships that can increase revenue generation
THE GLOBAL PORTFOLIOS/STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS PROBLEM DEFINED

- What we knew:
  - international collaboration plays an important role in the internationalization of Canadian universities (Knight 1995)
  - the lack of effective government policies and an inability to provide funding for outreach by Canadian universities spearheaded a diversity of entrepreneurial responses supported by funds from individual researchers and private donors (Bond and Lemasson 1999)
  - the marketization of higher education changed the character of research, education, and community relations, and the related frameworks of budgeting and planning for international partnerships (Lang 2002, Jones et. al 2005)
  - strategic planning at universities is a set of thousands of individual research and teaching strategies devised by faculty, which pull the university apart, while pulling it together (Minzberg and Rose 2003)

- What we didn’t know:
  - whether globalization and interaction with global markets changes the strategy planning process and makes the public university’s response more integrated and focused
  - what are the major challenges that the major research university encounters in developing a focused global response
U OF T AS A CASE-STUDY

- Canada’s largest and most research intensive university

- Ranking: 1st for 13 consecutive years in Canada’s Maclean’s magazine, 24th among the 500 universities ranked by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and 29th of the world’s top 200 universities ranked by the Times Higher Education Supplement (2005)

- 70,000 students and 11,000 faculty and staff in 17 professional divisions, on 3 campuses, with an operating budget of $1.18 B

- International R&D: out of $2.2 B total research revenue over 1998-2003 ($440 M annually), $270 M (12%) - international research and development ($54 M annually)
UT - Berlin
Siena Toronto Centre
U of T Hong Kong Foundation
## U of T International 2005: International Partnerships - Regional Distribution of MOUs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia/ New Zealand</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and South America</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>127</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESEARCH METHODS

- Context analysis based on literature review, archived documents and participant observation

- Content analysis of 50 interviews with representatives of academic, administrative and entrepreneurial units within five selected divisions (Medicine, Engineering, Education, Arts and Science, Scarborough Campus) and central administration

- Focus group survey (convergences and divergences of opinions across functional and disciplinary affiliations)
FINDINGS: INEVITABILITY OF DECENTRALIZATION

The major research university inevitably heads towards decentralization in the process of building international strategy and defining its strategic partnerships because of the following three factors:

1) **systemic** (devolution of powers to the ground level in the absence of centrally coordinated discretionary funds)

2) **structural** (size and scale of operations, and differences in environmental conditions); and

3) **characterological** (research intensiveness, as well as functional and disciplinary differences).
FINDINGS: INEVITABILITY OF DECENTRALIZATION

- **Systemic:**
  - Decline of funding for higher education and lack of governmental support for internationalization
  - Limited institutional powers to stimulate and support internationalization
  - Response to “demand overload” by creating a global portfolio (i.e., a selected list of initiatives that promise to provide the highest return on investment or which are considered as being politically or institutionally significant),
  - Devolution of powers to the ground level in the absence of centrally coordinated discretionary funds
  - Pursuit of entrepreneurial solutions
FINDINGS: INEVITABILITY OF DECENTRALIZATION

- **Structural:**
  - Sheer size and inherent disciplinary disparity
  - Academic divisions are driven by differing environmental conditions
  - Divisional relations with donors differ
  - Interdisciplinary or collaborative coherence is frequently coincidental
FINDINGS: INEVITABILITY OF DECENTRALIZATION

- Characterological:
  - Research intensiveness
  - Cardinal differences in how international strategies and strategic partnerships are interpreted by:
    - "academic heartland"
    - "steering core"
    - "developmental periphery"

- Despite the entrepreneurial character of internationalization, the MRU exhibits very little cohesion among the critical elements of the entrepreneurial framework, as defined by Clark (1997)
FINDINGS: CHARACTEROLOGICAL DIVERGENCES

“ACADEMIC HEARTLAND”

A round-table model

“You really need, if you are going to have a dramatic interchange of ideas, people sitting around a desk or a table together, or going out in the evening with a bottle of wine to dinner, talking about their enthusiasms, showing their enthusiasms. It’s not just exchange of information, structures. It’s actually the chemistry of people who provide the energy, become the motor force for these sorts of things. But strategic connections are important because, to some extent, those are the links, those are the instruments of intellectual mediation.”
FINDINGS: CHARACTEROLOGICAL DIVERGENCES

“STEERING CORE”

A model of “volcanic eruptions”

“the lava masses [are] rolling down the mountain”, making “indentation[s], where [there] was nothing before, and other areas [are] roll[ing] off into the sea”... “a constant shifting”... “Maybe the image of the volcano is destructive, but I think what is correct is that there is a lot of energy there, a lot of drive to implement change, to think how to make it work.”
FINDINGS: CHARACTEROLOGICAL DIVERGENCES

“DEVELOPMENTAL PERIPHERY”

A model of a modern vehicle

A craft “that’s going on its path and there are asteroids that hit it all the time, trying to divert it off course and you need to keep it going in a fixed orbit, to give it the reality.”

“Think of a cruise or ocean liner crossing the ocean: the ocean liner has to get from one destination port to another, it has to arrive there, but inside the ocean liner there are all kinds of people running back and forth and shouting and doing all those kinds of things, but from outside, you just see this ocean liner going across and you have no idea of what the hell is going on inside, and that’s the maintenance thing that is going on.”
FINDINGS: MOTIVATORS OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

1. Individual researchers’ interests 6.7
2. Research opportunities 5.7
3. Students’ demand for international experience 5.6
4. Trustful colleagues at partner institutions 5.5
5. Interdisciplinary research 5.4
6. “Moral imperative” 5.3
7. “Developmental periphery” 5.3
8. Divisional strategy and coordination 5.1
9. Opportunities to obtain resources 5.1
10. Prestige of international collaboration 5.0
11. Opportunities to manifest Canadian leadership 4.9
12. Multinational corporations’ interests 4.7
14. Donor groups’ interests 4.5
15. University-wide (institutional strategy) 4.5
16. Funding agencies requirements 4.4
17. External reviewers recommendations 4.0
# FINDINGS: DE-MOTIVATORS OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

1. Lack of federal and provincial funding  
   - Score: 6.0
2. Absence of proper administrative and budgetary mechanisms  
   - Score: 5.6
3. Extremely labour intensive processes  
   - Score: 5.5
4. Lack of political support from university authorities  
   - Score: 5.5
5. Changes and disruptions at partner institutions  
   - Score: 5.3
6. Imbalance of “import-export” in exchange programs  
   - Score: 4.9
7. Rules and regulations of professional bodies  
   - Score: 4.6
8. Lack of equivalent programs abroad  
   - Score: 4.6
9. Responsibilities before Canadian tax-payers  
   - Score: 4.0
FINDINGS: CENTRALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

1. Institution-to-institution partnership arrangements  5.3
2. Donor relations                                  5.3
3. High-profile international delegation visits    5.1
4. Work with students                             5.0
5. Brand-name building and advancement            5.0
6. Research contract negotiation processes         4.7
7. Complexity of inter-institutional agreements    4.7
8. Academic standards                             4.6
9. Interdisciplinarity                            4.4
10. Accountability frameworks                     4.3
11. Vested interests                              4.3
**FINDINGS: DECENTRALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP BUILDING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Quality of client relations</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Faculty leadership</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Academic freedom</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Project-to-project relationships</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Innovativeness of research and scholarship</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Accessibility of services</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Expectation for better responsiveness to markets</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Expectation for more responsible management</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The need to advance structural identity</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS: BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

1. Enhanced institutional reputation and profile abroad  6.5
2. Increased networking opportunities  6.2
3. Enhanced personal research profiles  6.2
4. Improved quality of curricula and student experience  6.2
5. Opening of new channels for exchange  6.0
6. Creating a more responsive and responsible public university  6.0
7. Attracting good exchange students  5.9
8. Creating new forms of knowledge production  5.6
9. Spearheading innovative R&D ideas  5.6
10. Creating opportunities for student employment  5.6
11. Improving institutional knowledge about new markets  5.3
12. Increased revenue generation  5.3
13. Improved capacity to evaluate funding environments  5.0
14. Ability to pool resources and create cost-effective responses  4.0
FINDINGS: COSTS OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

1. Require additional human resources 5.1
2. Trigger opportunity costs 4.7
3. Overload academic and admin. units with new demands 4.5
4. Produce liability issues 4.4
5. Cause academic process disruptions while faculty travel 3.6
6. Raise expectations about admin. services 3.4
7. Create conflicts of interests 3.3
8. Instigate inter-divisional conflicts 3.3
9. Negative implications on the university’s brand-name caused by disruptions in politically and economically unstable regions 2.9
FINDINGS: GLOBAL PORTFOLIOS

- Global portfolios:
  - "steering core": from broad policy statements, to selection of international initiatives based on political rather than economic or financial criteria, to failed top-down integrative initiatives
  - "developmental periphery": market-oriented and revenue-generating sets of strategic initiatives
  - "academic heartland": although successful initiatives evolve and are developed at this level, management fads are largely ignored and derided; portfolios are randomly used by entrepreneurial faculty

- Dichotomy between the high level aspirational institutional story and the grassroots level empirical story
- Focus on individual performers
FINDINGS: STRATEGIC INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Strategic international partnerships:
  - Based on trusting personal relationships among individual researchers pursuing collaboration, which receives political support and resources in the home institution, as well as financial support from national and international funding agencies.

- Successful partnerships begin at the grassroots level, and central plans and strategies are often ignored as ineffectual.

- Despite the perception that “academic capitalism” creates pressures for marketization of international strategies, the Canadian practice of internationalization revolves around the concept of “social entrepreneurship” with an emphasis on individuation.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- **A**cknowledge that government funding is crucial for promoting internationalization of universities (work with government, public and individual stakeholders)
- **R**ecognize the difference between the high level aspirational institutional story and the grassroots level empirical story
- **E**mpower individual performers for championing strategic initiatives
- **S**tudy carefully and continuously the grassroots success and failure stories
- **E**ngage the grassroots successes in exchange of ideas and planning
- **L**earn how to lead and follow at the same time (think of dance as a model)
- **C**ommit to mutual evaluation and periodical adjustments to make decentralization work effectively
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Anatoly Oleksiyenko
Higher Education Group
OISE, University of Toronto

anatoly.oleksiyenko@utoronto.ca