

Where Are We Going in Brazil?

A Summary of Comments Made by Provost Wilcox and Acting Dean Jeffrey Riedinger at Global Encounter: Brazil

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 as Michigan State University seeks to move from "land grant" to "world grant" 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, input is needed from all parties potentially involved in efforts on and off campus and in Michigan, the U.S. and internationally.

Provost Wilcox acknowledged that MSU takes great pride in its international programs, but pointed out that the campus does not look much different today from other campuses. MSU has a long history of international engagement; however, the Provost has become aware of concerns over international programs at risk and the sustainability of programs once a "lead" faculty member leaves or retires. He affirmed that MSU needs to create sustainable internationally-related model(s). In the past, the focus has been to work in a traditional model, but the Provost recognizes the need to think outside the box. He urged the group to think about the University holistically; consider MSU as an operation that has teaching, outreach and research, all interdependent. Yet there are few places around the world where we have these three intertwined. MSU has individual teaching programs or research or outreach, but it is not common that we have all three in the same location. MSU should be taking these three across the globe together. Universities are also all about identifying opportunities. Brazil is a great example of an opportunity. Currently, MSU has little exchange of students between MSU and Brazil, but we do have some faculty engagement. Today there are not enough of the three key areas (teaching, outreach and research) to sustain a long term relationship with Brazil. MSU needs to get to the level of integration where we learn from Brazil here on campus, and they help us solve some of our problems as well as our becoming involved in the country and with Brazilian universities and organizations.

The North Central Accreditation evaluation in 2006, with a special emphasis and self study on internationalization of the University, including discussions of MSU's current efforts and future goals for internationalization, made us look at what will be different in 10 years. Some areas to investigate in all the Global Encounter

events, including Brazil, 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 the students will come. Our new model will be to design curriculum jointly, sharing curriculum ideas with foreign institutions and coming to a common curriculum.

Why should MSU develop a strategic agenda? MSU cannot do everything, everywhere. We have faculty and students interested and engaged all over the globe working on many different themes. As part of the initial analysis for the first Global Encounter session <www.isp.msu.edu/globalencounter>, we looked at where our faculty is working now, the origin of our international students, and where our students go on study abroad programs. Surprisingly, there is relatively little overlap. Through the Global Encounter process we hope to identify where we should concentrate resources, and think strategically about which countries, which partner institutions, and what topics/themes MSU will address in the future. In any department on campus, there are ideas that could apply to many countries, but there is not the faculty available to implement these ideas everywhere. We need to make strategic choices on where MSU should develop deep collaborative partnerships on research, student exchanges, curriculum, and degree programs to allow us to build sustainable programs.

How would a MSU Brazil Liaison Office function? MSU recently opened a Beijing Office to support the China Initiative, but MSU likely will not be able to afford that model in each country where we need to be represented. Therefore, other model(s) need to be considered as part of the development of MSU-Brazil activities. We need to consider MSU alumni within Brazil and from Brazil to 1) better serve them, 2) determine how they could assist MSU faculty and students, and 3) become an extension of our operations in their home country (e.g., recruitment).

What is our current engagement in Brazil?

There are modest numbers of students coming to MSU from Brazil, and limited numbers of alumni there, with no formal alumni club. There are a few study abroad opportunities, but all are MSU faculty led which are harder to maintain when faculty members are no longer available. We have not developed direct enrollment study abroad programs in Brazil. Portuguese language is offered on campus, but historically these offerings have been compromised by financial, enrollment, and instructor challenges. There are funds available for faculty to travel to Brazil, and limited support for graduate student to travel there. We have linkage agreements with partners in Brazil, but part of the Global Encounter process is to determine which current and potential partners have the deep connections and attributes to allow us to move to a sustainable model of engagement.

For additional information on current engagement in Brazil, see **An Overview of Current Activities** and the **MSU-Brazil Linkage Agreements** included in these proceedings.

Questions from the Participants

Why should MSU consider Brazil from the MSU Administration's point of view?

.MSU has more than 20 faculty whose research is on, about or in Brazil. That is one of the largest groups of Brazilianists in the U.S.

.Brazil is a large country with geopolitical, economic, and other global interests. If MSU did not have other connections to Brazil, however, these interests would not be adequate for Brazil to be a "strategic country" for MSU. MSU must have a comparative advantage in a strategic country, which we do have in Brazil.

.MSU has a long history of engagement with Brazil, especially in faculty engagement.

.The group of Brazilianist faculty at MSU has discussed what is going on among other U.S. institutions in Brazil. In China, this information is readily available as engagement is controlled by the government and operations are available on-line. Brazil activities are not as easy to determine, but the faculty group has been collecting information on what things other universities and groups are doing in Brazil with the aim of identifying MSU's niches of strength.

Why has there been a decision to focus on a single country and not a wider geographic area?

Brazil is an important part of what MSU does south of the U.S. border, but we have not forgotten about Mexico and other Latin American/South American engagement on campus. The Global Encounter process does not exclude other discussion on strategic areas or partners. There will also be Global Encounters or other focused discussions around themes which will cover multiple countries and continents (e.g. water).

This material was generated from Global Encounter-Brazil, <<http://www.isp.msu.edu/globalencounter/brazil>>, held at Michigan State University on November 7, 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 Brazil (and to some degree Lusophone countries).

