

California, Louisiana, Texas, Nevada:

Putting Their States on the International Education Map

THERE WAS NO CHAMPAGNE after Susan Bender of the University of Nevada, Reno, helped engineer passage of a joint resolution by both houses of the Nevada legislature one morning last May—no balloons, no flowers, not even a sheet cake from Costco. Bender and her colleagues did not even stay for lunch after sitting on the floor of the Senate and Assembly while the lawmakers declared international education to be “a crucial component” of higher education in Nevada. Bender hopped in her car and headed straight back to Reno to make her afternoon appointments as director of the Office of International Programs.

Nevada became the fourth state, after California, Louisiana and Texas, to pass legislation stressing the importance of international education. The Nevada educators had a strong ally in State Senator Dina Titus, the Senate minority leader for the past dozen years as well as a political science professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Senator Titus was the champion of this effort and was instrumental in the writing and passage of the resolution. For international educators such as Bender and Susan Thompson, director of international programs at UNLV, the resolution reinforced what commitment and hard work can produce. Thompson noted that advocacy skills that had been learned through participation in NAFSA helped her to understand how to work with elected officials and how to provide them information in an appropriate format.

As easy as it looked on the morning of May 12, 2005, Bender knew otherwise. “I tried to do this once before. It was actually the spring and summer of 2001 and we were just poised to take it forward when September 11 hit and we had to pull the plug. The media was really misrepresenting international students and international education at that time,” she said. “We had to basically sit back and wait until the time was right.”

While their principal objective was to influence

public policy by convincing lawmakers in Carson City of the importance of international education, Bender, Thompson and their colleagues also had another audience in mind. They hoped that passage of a highly visible state resolution would help to highlight how important international education was to the intellectual health and vitality of their campuses and curricula.

They got fast results. Four months after the passage of Nevada Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 38, University of Nevada, Reno, President John Lilley kicked off the 2005-2006 academic year with two speeches emphasizing the need for Nevada’s colleges and universities to provide an education with “a global perspective.” In an address to the World Affairs Council in Las Vegas, he declared, “We need to prepare our students for communicating, living and working in this new world of intensifying global competition, and geopolitical shifts—even if their lives and careers never take them out of this state.” Two days later, Lilley made the need for a global perspective the central theme of his State of the University address.

The 750-word Senate resolution encouraged Nevada colleges and universities to make the following enhancements:

Develop courses of study in as many fields as possible to increase students’ understanding of global issues and cultural differences;



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Texan international educators and students at the Texas Capitol in Austin on April 4, 2005.

Developing Grassroots: California

Bender launched her lobbying efforts after traveling to Washington in March 2004 for NAFSA's annual grassroots advocacy day on Capitol Hill. She is the whip for Nevada in NAFSA's team of volunteer lobbyists, and she and other whips were inspired by hearing Rice University's Adria Baker tell how she and other Houston educators lined up 60 colleges and universities in support of an international education resolution that sailed through the Texas House. The enthusiastic Baker had offered to share her playbook and policy draft. "I became very excited and immediately came home and rewrote it for Nevada," said Bender.

The grassroots movement to get international education resolutions enacted in state capitals started in California in 2002, and there it was in part a defensive response to some lawmakers' antipathy towards international students in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Mary Jacob, director of the Office of International Students and Scholars at the University of California, Santa Barbara, wrote an account in the November/December 2002 *NAFSA Newsletter* that detailed how she turned lemons into lemonade. Jacob was invited to a contentious hearing in Sacramento on student visas, then given barely five minutes to make the case

Expand foreign language courses to prepare students to seek careers in a global marketplace and enhance their understanding of other nations' values;

Provide opportunities for students in all majors to study abroad;

Provide opportunities for domestic and international students to interact effectively and routinely to share views, perceptions and experiences; and

Develop innovative public educational forums and venues to explore global issues and showcase world cultures.

The advocates realize that advocating for international education is not a one-time event. "It's a constant effort to keep people

aware of what the issues are," said Thompson, director of international programs at UNLV. "You have to keep working toward the goal of making international education a central focus of higher education." Thompson, and her colleague Carmelo Urza, director of the University Studies Abroad Consortium, had worked in the past with the Nevada legislature on another state resolution in support of education abroad which was also supported by Senator Titus (State Concurrent Resolution No. 34, April 2001). "NAFSA provides members with the skills to be an advocate for international education, and at UNLV we have been blessed with a very supportive administration for years," said Thompson.

Where to Begin? Build on What Other States Have Done

What's the first step to take to get a state legislature to adopt a strong international education policy?

International educators in California, Texas, Nevada and Louisiana have gotten lawmakers in their states to embrace and articulate such policies over the past three years.

In most cases, it happened because a single individual stood up and decided to make this her cause. In California, it was the University of California, Santa Barbara's Mary Jacob; in Texas, Adria Baker of Rice University; in Nevada, Susan Bender of the University of Nevada, Reno. Jacob was the pioneer, challenged by a California assemblywoman to draft the language herself if she really thought it was so

important for the state to have an international education policy.

Now those policies are out there, readily available on the NAFSA Web site for international education advocates to borrow from as they draft their own state policies.

Rice's Baker, in her role as NAFSA advocacy whip for Region III (Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Arkansas), has posted a raft of Advocacy Tips and Links on the Region III Web site. Here is the "Top Ten" list of advice that she and Michelle Dass Pickard wrote to accompany their article, "Building International Bridges One State at a Time" in the September/October 2004 *NAFSA Newsletter*.

Top Ten Tips on Building a State International Education Policy

By Adria L. Baker and Michelle Dass Pickard

that international education and exchanges were in the state and national interest.

At the hearing's end, the chair of the Assembly Committee on Higher Education asked Jacob if she could draft the language for a state policy on international education. She came through and the language that she produced—vetted by representatives of California's other public colleges and universities—became the basis for the resolution that both houses passed in August 2002 and that then-Governor Gray Davis signed into law on September 11, 2002. It was Jacob's story and example that inspired Adria Baker to mount her effort in Texas. "Mary had never written a bill before. I thought, 'Man! I'm Texas whip. We can do that in Texas,'" she said.

But there is an unhappy twist to the California story. The political landscape can change overnight. California's budget crisis led voters to dump Gray Davis in October 2003 in only the second recall of a governor in U.S. history. If California's international educators harbored hopes that funding would follow the words of support from Sacramento, they were in for a disappointment, as the state's colleges and universities suffered through the fallout from the Golden State's \$34 billion deficit.

One casualty was an arrangement that the University of California Education Abroad program had made to share the costs of a California House in London with the state's trade and commerce agency. "The trade agency pulled out and we were left high and dry," said John Marcum, director of UC Education Abroad. The study abroad program now is moving to less expensive quarters in the British capital.

Texas: Building on Success

It's a happier story in Texas, where Adria Baker and her advocacy team followed up last year's success in the House of Representatives (see Texas House Resolution No. 143) with a State Senate resolution adopted in May 2005 that makes an even more clarion call for the state its colleges and universities "to meet the challenges of a global society" by encouraging more stu-

dents to study abroad, to expand foreign language and other offerings "that address global issues and examine other cultures," and to encourage international students and faculty to come to Texas "to further the free exchange of ideas and to facilitate an appreciation of different cultures" (see Texas Senate Resolution 532).

After their initial success in the Texas House, Baker and Michelle Dass Pickard of the Institute of International Education in Houston, coauthored a how-to account for other NAFSAs that appeared in the *NAFSA Newsletter* ("Building International Bridges One State at a Time," September/October 2004). Baker has posted a map on the NAFSA Region 3 Web site showing the four states with international education policies and provided a wealth of resources for those hoping to get their state onto that map.

national exchange, and what it could lose (economically, educationally, culturally, and with homeland security) if they don't establish a policy.

- 1 Create strategic partnerships and gain support for your proposal from as many different constituent groups as possible. Possibilities include: your university president and other key administrators, legislators, and business leaders.
- 2 Create an ad hoc committee to write the proposal for your state. The committee should include at least one member from each of NAFSA's knowledge communities.
- 3 Work with your institution's government relations officer from the beginning.
- 4 Seek out a state legislator to introduce it as a bill. Focus on legislators who sit on higher education or international affairs committees. Talk to them about the importance of international education in your state, what your state gains from inter-
- 5 Talk with the legislators from your district, even if they don't serve on a key committee.
- 6 Always include an economic impact statement, which provides a clear picture of how much international students contribute to your state's economy. See the state-by-state economic data on NAFSA's Web site.
- 7 Don't worry about writing your proposal in "bill language." Legislative staff will do this from your proposal and supporting facts.
- 8 Plan ahead, as some states have only part-time legislators.
- 9 Make the effort to meet with your legislators in person.
- 10 Have fun!

Baker brought boundless enthusiasm to the task of figuring out how the levers of power worked in Austin. "I'm very persistent," allowed Baker, who earlier this year received Rice's top staff honor. "It was really neat to see how politics in your state worked....I learned so much."

When she and her cohorts started their effort, "we didn't know what a joint resolution was. We didn't know anything. I mean, I took Texas government pass-fail," Baker said with a laugh.

But they did their homework, drafted a policy and made appointments to see lawmakers in Austin. "They were really nice. You have to know what you're going to ask because these people have only a few minutes to talk with you," she said. "They'd say, 'Okay, how much is this going to cost?' And we said, 'We're not asking the state to give

anything—but it's going to cost us if we *don't* get a good resolution that continues to encourage international education."

"You never know what kind of seeds you leave," said Baker. The conversations with lawmakers were "just as important as actually getting the resolution. Getting it is great, but if you don't have that banter and all the questions back and forth...you lose out on educating them."

New Jersey Is Getting Started

As Mary Jacob's story inspired Baker, the Texas tale is spurring activity in other states.

"We decided to try to be one of the next states to get this through. We've just begun our efforts," said Stephen Ferst, the director of study abroad for Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and the NAFSA whip for New Jersey. A state resolution without funding is "a baby step, no doubt about it," he added, "but it's a start."

Ferst has already started canvassing international educators across New Jersey and hopes to get a resolution to the legislature in time for action in 2006. On the advice of a Rutgers' lobbyists, he is concentrating on rounding up support not from college presidents, but a wide spectrum of professionals

in the field of international education.

"If it succeeds, it will give international educators document to impress the leaders of their institutions, be it boards, provosts, deans or presidents, and to say, "Hey, the legislature here feels this is important; we think you need to raise this in the priority of our college or university," said the Rutgers official.

You Have to Start Somewhere

Mary M. Dwyer, president of IES: Institute for International Education of Students, the non-profit study abroad consortium, and a member of the Lincoln Commission on study abroad, is skeptical of "warm and fuzzy" resolutions that offer words of support, but no dollars.

But "you've got to start somewhere. As someone with a background in public policy analysis, it's very clear that legislation occurs most effectively when there's a rising tide of interest," said Dwyer, former executive associate vice chancellor for research at the University of Illinois. The Lincoln Commission, she noted, is poised to ask for as much as \$50 million a year in new fellowships for study abroad.

Victor C. Johnson, the NAFSA associate executive director for public policy who leads the organization's advocacy efforts,

ADVICE

"Expect the Unexpected"

The freshet of activity in state capitals on international education policies underscores what Vic Johnson, NAFSA's associate executive director for public policy, wrote in a note accompanying Mary Jacob's article in the *NAFSA Newsletter* three years ago:

Always expect the unexpected; if you propose that legislators do something, they'll probably ask you to do it for them; know your message and be prepared to deliver it in five minutes or less; the resources that you need are there if you look for them; proposals are a dime a dozen, but only hard work will get you there; and producing the statement isn't the end of the road, but only the beginning. But most of all, it demonstrates that you don't need a Ph.D. in advocacy to do this; all you need is the courage to take the first step.

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said, "An act of a legislature is always something more than symbolic....It's all part of the overall consciousness raising that we need in this society to have purposeful policies about international education."

Mary Jacob put it this way: "A state policy on international education is kind of like a coat rack, and now we have to go hang our hats there and do things with it. That's the stage we're at here in California."

In Texas, Adria Baker added this observation: "As many places as we can get to do it, everyone gains....The game is worth the candle. If you do the game and don't get the candle, it's still worth it."

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