

GLOBAL COMPETENCY

With Jed Willard

WHAT IS GLOBAL COMPETENCY?

“A global-ready graduate [is] a person with a grasp of global systems, global issues, the dynamics of how things are interrelated and interconnected in the world, and how society can best address global issues.”

- Ron Moffatt, Director of the San Diego State University International Student Center

“The skills to listen, observe and evaluate, analyze, interpret, and relate.”

- Darla K. Deardorff, Director of Duke University’s International Education Administrators Assc.

“The ability to be fluent in at least one other language, such as Spanish or Mandarin; fluency with e-commerce and the Internet; a well-versed knowledge of geography; and, maybe most important, some knowledge of the political and cultural history of one or two countries or regions outside of Western Europe.”

- Carol Conway, Director of the Southern Global Strategies Council

WHAT SPECIFIC SKILLS DO GLOBALLY COMPETANT GRADUATES HAVE?

- Initiative
- Enthusiasm
- Inquisitiveness
- Interest in continuous learning
- Courage
- Self-reliance
- Self-confidence
- Self-control
- Self-knowledge
- Positive outlook toward adversity
- Independence
- Appreciation of Diversity
- Perseverance
- Creativity
- Flexibility
- Comfort with uncertainty
- Open-mindedness
- Language and communication skills
- Assertiveness
- Sense of humor

Most important to employers, according to a study by Michigan State University, are **resourcefulness** and **adaptability**.

WHO CARES?

Given that finance, trade, technology, and information now move relatively freely across national borders; governments, corporations, educational institutions, and the international community at large need managers and professionals who possess a broad understanding of our interconnected world.

"All major hiring companies need global citizens. Global sensitivities, global perspective, global insight; along with maturity and a capacity for risk-taking, are exactly the skills every major organization is looking for – in every industry."

- Kevin Gill, Global Director of Staffing for Honeywell

"In the financial world, cultural awareness and cultural adeptness are far more important than undergraduate major or existing skill sets... These needs touch all industries, from banking to healthcare to engineering."

- Jonathan Jones, Firmwide Campus Recruiting Director for Goldman Sachs

THE EDUCATION SECTOR & GLOBAL COMPETENCY

"With some notable exceptions, our public schools are doing a woeful job of teaching students about the world outside America's borders... These trends have serious consequences. In the 21st century, young people who understand the dynamics of global economic and intercultural relations will have a distinct advantage in securing good jobs.

"In today's world, the status quo is tantamount to a kind of educational isolationism. That is unacceptable... [we must] foster teaching excellence in international education, and create a new cadre of highly qualified teachers who understand the international dimensions of their subjects... teachers must be qualified to prepare young people for the opportunities and challenges of globalization."

- Excerpted from Michael H. Levine (Progressive Policy Institute), *Putting the World into Our Classrooms: A New Vision for 31st Century Education*, April 2005

Over and over again, studies have shown that American students lack even basic geographic knowledge, not to mention exposure to world regions, languages and cultures. Given our increasingly global economy, this lack leaves US students educationally and economically handicapped.

Globally Competent teachers offer:

- Extensive exposure to a wide variety of learning styles and cultural backgrounds
- Firsthand experience in effective, hands-on teaching approaches
- In-depth exposure to foreign cultures
- A fresh, valued perspective on education

In addition, having observed firsthand the reciprocal effects of economic growth on educational systems, and having close knowledge of multiple educational structures, Globally Competent

teachers can provide their homeland with valuable insight into much needed changes in educational administration and policy.

State and federal education leaders are not unaware of the need for new initiatives to promote global literacy.* Evidence:

- Statewide "audits" examining the status of international education (A dozen states have held summits to raise awareness about the importance of international education; six have issued task force reports requested by their governor or legislature on the issue)
- State legislation or board of education policies to promote international education
- Systematic statewide initiatives that include new curricular standards, teacher professional development programs and investments in technology
- Model programs including internationally themed schools, virtual high schools that teach Asian languages and exchange programs
- Programs expanding teacher training to deliver rigorous study in world history, geography, global science and economics – key subjects in a transformed economy
- World language "pipelines" from primary school on, especially focused on critical languages such as Chinese
- Task forces working on high school redesign and new graduation requirements to motivate better achievement and promote key international knowledge and skills
- Innovative uses of technology to expand the availability of international courses and sometimes virtually linking US students to peers in another country

* Bullets from *States Respond to Challenges of a "Flat World"* (Asia Society), December 2005

Policy makers are not alone in recognizing the importance of improving the global literacy of American students. Americans at large – including those who sit on alumni, advisory, and professional educational boards – have named international education as a key to preparing their children for success in the global age:

- "90% believe it is 'important' or 'very important' to prepare future generations of Americans for a global society;
- "92% agree that knowledge of other languages will give future generations a competitive advantage in career opportunities;
- 94% feel it is important for future generations to have knowledge of other countries and cultures."

- Excerpted from *American Public: International Education is Key to Preparing Next Generation* (NAFSA), January 2006

Some additional background reading:

Nation's governors take global view on education – National Governors Association (2005)
Global competition brought to Americans' doorsteps by the latest technology and newest business practices means new challenges for schools.

<http://www.dmregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050717/NEWS09/507170368/1001/archive>

THE CORPORATE SECTOR & GLOBAL COMPETENCY

"Globalization is causing policy and business leaders to call for new competencies to advance U.S. competitiveness, leadership in global markets, scientific innovation, security, and proactively improve international relations... These new realities demonstrate that future workers seeking careers in business, government, health care, law enforcement, and a wide variety of other jobs will all require global knowledge and skills."

- Excerpted from Michael H. Levine (Progressive Policy Institute), *Putting the World into Our Classrooms: A New Vision for 31st Century Education*, April 2005

"Business, education and political leaders are grappling with the question of how to produce workers and citizens who can remain competitive in a world that seems to be shrinking before our very eyes,"

- Vivien Stewart, Vice President of Education, Asia Society, December 2005.

The Michigan State "Recruiting Trends 2005-2006" report identified "geographic awareness and global understanding" as the primary "new competencies [for job seekers] critical to future success." The report notes that, "as businesses become realigned globally, having employees with an awareness of space..., social and cultural geographic movement, as well as dominant physical assets of a region will be critical to a company's vitality."

Globally Competent managers:

- Understand the importance of international trade to their home state's economy
- Understand the multicultural nature (even if not multinational) environment of successful corporations, and possess intercultural sensitivities preparing them to flourish in that atmosphere
- Ask critical questions about diverse business practices
- Possess foreign language skills

While each industry and operational scale will have unique hiring needs, business leaders at all levels are facing a growing need for talented team members who can bring a broad worldview to the workplace. Even at strictly domestic companies, the following skills will be considered valuable by managers:

- Thriving in diverse environments
- Eagerness for challenge, change, and life-long learning
- Awareness, understanding, and empathy for different ideas and ways of doing things
- Comfort interacting in multiple, often challenging contexts

THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND GLOBAL COMPETENCY

"By studying foreign cultures and languages and living abroad, we gain a better understanding of the many similarities that we share and learn to respect our differences. The relationships that are formed between individuals from different countries as part of international programs and exchanges can also foster goodwill that develops into vibrant, mutually beneficial partnerships among nations... Collectively, the same skills and talents that bolster an individual résumé can make the country more secure and economically competitive.

"This is the great challenge facing America at the beginning of a new millennium: to give its citizens a thorough understanding of the world and its crosscurrents, to help them see what others value and believe."

- Excerpted from *Securing America's Future: Global Education for a Global Age, Report of the Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad* (NAFSA), November 2003

Some background reading:

Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee – US State Department (2005)
Rice spoke about the importance of Americans making a serious effort to understand foreign cultures and languages and said that our interaction with the rest of the world "must be a conversation, not a monologue."

<http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2005/RiceTestimony050118.pdf>

States Prepare for the Global Age – Asia Society (2005)

"A movement to prepare our young people to succeed in the global marketplace and to become informed global citizens has begun."

<http://internationaleled.org/statespreparefortheGLOBALAGE.pdf>

IDENTIFYING GLOBAL COMPETENCY: SOME DEFINITIONS

Internationalist

- Excellent intercultural communication skills
- Learn through listening and observing
- Thrive in multicultural settings with a diverse range of personalities and learning styles
- Establish rapport quickly
- Able to work effectively as a part of a multinational/multicultural team
- Effective and knowledgeable in working in cross-cultural settings
- Learn quickly

Comfort with Dissonance

- Capacity to adapt and be flexible in new and changing situations
- Handle difficult situations
- Extremely adaptable and resourceful in new and challenging environments
- Function well in multiple, dissonant environments
- Capable of working in difficult and ambiguous settings

Multicultural Leadership

- Effective and cooperative team player who also works well independently
- Take initiative and risks
- Communicate despite barriers
- Understand cultural differences and similarities
- Handle stress
- Identify problems and utilize available resources to resolve them
- Highly developed cross-cultural communication skills combined with ability to motivate others to excel