Higher education consortia are transforming the nature and scope of international education in the United States and around the world.

By Lee Sternberger

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF UNIVERSITIES, TRANSATLANTIC SCIENCE STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM, MID-AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES INTERNATIONAL, UNIVERSITAS 21.

WORLDWIDE UNIVERSITIES NETWORK. If you recognize these names, then you are well-informed about one of the most important trends in the field and profession of international education: the creation of formal multilateral relationships among institutions of higher education around the world. Whether you are a senior university administrator, an international education officer, or a faculty or staff member, it is important to be familiar with the visions and strategies of these timely, integrative, and innovative organizations—which I will refer to as international higher education consortia or IHECs—not only because your institution may now or soon will be a member, but because IHECs are transforming the nature and scope of international education in the United States and around the world.

Consortia in Context¹

During the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, a number of university groups—often building upon preexisting relationships—banded together to form multilateral consortia. From the beginning, IHECs appear to have engaged in a common set of activities, including developing mission statements, strategic plans, and systematic rationales for international engagement; promoting international opportunities for faculty (e.g., collaborative research projects); promoting the shared use of scare resources including funding, specialized skills, and research technologies; facilitating greater mobility for faculty and students (undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral); supporting entrepreneurship particularly around the development of new technologies and online courses; and developing clear and effective mechanisms for networking and communication. The increase in the number of IHECs over the last 20 years or so parallels the growing recognition of the impact of globalization on higher education and the need for "internationalized" institutions to better integrate outside perspectives, implement delivery methods acces-

sible to a broader range of students, share scare resources, and systematically engage with international corporations, governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and higher education institutions.² Indeed, the multilateral nature of international consortia mirrors the complexities of the internationalization process and the need for a range of perspectives and opportunities to develop truly internationalized higher education institutions.3

More specifically, based upon survey results from this current analysis and subsequent follow-up correspondence, it appears that the impetus for the development of IHECs over the past two decades is derived from a number of common social, economic, and institutional opportunities and realities. Those opportunities and realities include: the call for the internationalization of universities and the recognition of the impact of globalization on higher education; the advent of the Internet, which permits instant communication around the world; the need to combine resources and create partnerships with other institutions (e.g., to offset shrinking government support and leverage influence to funding sources and systems); the desire \vec{S} TransAtlantic Science Student Exchange Program
MidAmerican Universities International
Universitas 21
Worldwide Universities Network

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to collaborate with and learn from research and teaching colleagues around the world; increased demand for study abroad and exchange opportunities by students; and the zeitgeist of our time, in which terms such as "global village," "international community," and "world opinion" have become part of our common vernacular, as has the unprecedented recognition that in a "shrinking world," we are "all in this together," for better or for worse. Ultimately, it would appear that this final factor—our collective interdependence—is the principle paradigm driving all of these collaborative arrangements. There can be little doubt—to administrators, faculty, students, policymakers, and funding systems—that the future truly belongs to those who seek to understand different world views and establish international partnerships with institutions of higher education across the globe.

Student Exchange and Beyond

Although IHECs have developed impressive portfolios of activities and initiatives, for many, a principle focus has been the creation of student exchange opportunities (whether working with regional partners, a more representative set of international partners, or within specific disciplines), with the goal of providing students a range of courses and language training unavailable at any one institution. Among other exemplars of this approach, the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) is a nonprofit membership organization, founded in 1979, with 245 members in the United States and 35 additional countries. ISEP notes that it is the "world's largest network for postsecondary institutions" designed to help "member institutions to cooperate as equal partners to further the internationalization of their campuses, collectively achieving goals beyond their individual reach."4 Another established system is the Utrecht Network, which began in 1987 as an Erasmus program—a European Union student mobility scheme—and currently exchanges approximately 1,000 students among 27 member institutions across Europe. In addition to exchanges that cut across a wide range of courses and disciplines, a number of consortia focus on the exchange of students within a particular discipline. For example, the Global Engineering Education Exchange (Global E3)—which was formed in recognition of "a growing demand for internationally experienced engineering graduates"-provides students with academic coursework, intensive language training, and applied experiences at 53 universities outside the United States.⁵ Similarly, the TransAtlantic Science Student Exchange Program (TASSEP) provides science students with exchange opportunities in Canada, the European Union and the United States. Noted on the TASSEP Web site is the recognition that, "As scientific activities in private industry as well as university and government laboratories become increasingly international in scope, it is essential that science students become familiar with foreign cultures, languages, and economic systems." Programs such as Global E3 and TASSEP facilitate exchanges for students that might not fit other, more general exchange programs because of highly prescriptive majors and specialized lab and equipment needs.

Other IHECs were established or have evolved into more complex organizations that implement a wider range of activities than student exchange. For example, the membership of Universitas 21 (U21), established in 1997 and incorporated as its own legal entity, includes 17 large research-intensive universities from around the world with the objective of working around three areas of activity, those that are "collegial, collaborative, and entrepreneurial."7 Its activities include a robust and comprehensive student exchange program, joint "short course" summer programs (on topics such as "Global Technology Entrepreneurship" among others), and student research symposia. Other activities include research projects in environmental sciences and medicine, joint electronic publications, benchmarking projects (e.g., for the process of hiring key administrators), and shadowing programs (e.g., among university librarians). Moving into the realm of graduate education, perhaps Universitas 21's most ambitious endeavor is the development of an online "global graduate school" in conjunction with Thompson Learning (part of the publishing house Thompson Corporation), entitled Universitas 21 Global. Currently, Universitas 21 Global offers an MBA program, targeted towards qualified students in Southeast Asia, India, and the Middle East. Each student who graduates with an MBA from Universitas 21 Global receives a diploma with the names of participating U21 universities. Indeed, Universitas 21 has also established an independent accrediting agency, U21 pedagogica, to monitor and ensure the quality of its online MBA courses, taught by member institutions around the world.

Similarly, the International Network of Universities (INU) founded under the leadership of vice-chancellors Michael Osborne (La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia) and Ian Chubb (Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia) was formally launched in October 1999. INU currently comprises 13 members from Australia, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, the People's Republic of China, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In inaugurating INU, consortium president Michael Osborne notes that its aim was "to allow the member universities to provide a richer array of educational and research opportunities for students and staff than any one university acting alone. INU would go beyond typical bilateral programs be developing global access and mobility to internationalize degree programs by drawing upon the academic range of partners."8 In addition to the foundation of undergraduate mobility, current INU priorities include the development of a package of e-courses; faculty and graduate student exchange; administrative and professional staff shadowing programs; discipline-specific, applied study abroad, workshops, and meetings on specific themes or activities (e.g., student exchange officers); and collaborative research projects, including the assessment of international learning.9

The Utrecht Network, with its roots in student exchange, has also evolved into a comprehensive IHEC (with the legal status as a nonprofit association), engaging in cooperative activity "in the areas of internationalization in the broadest sense of the word." ¹⁰

Current activities include student and faculty exchange programs, internationalization of curricula, joint courses, summer school, and degree programs. While the 27 member institutions exist within the European Union, the Utrecht Network now works cooperatively with other exchange schemes including those operating in Central and Eastern Europe, South Africa, and China as well as another consortium—Mid-American Universities International (MAUI)—in an consortium-to-consortium exchange program.

As a final example and in contrast to consortia with roots in student exchange, the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN) was formed with faculty/research collaboration as the overarching mission. As noted on its Web site, WUN is an organization that "builds on its partners' commitment to research quality and innovation in

order to develop collaborations in interdisciplinary areas of global significance."¹¹ Each year, the WUN management team estimates the costs of possible projects and asks member universities to make voluntary contributions. This money—as much as a half a million dollars per year—in turn is used as what CEO David Pilsbury describes as "intellectual venture capital" to fund collaborative endeavors, from faculty travel, to international conferences around specific disciplines or themes, to seed money for joint research projects. ¹² Pilsbury notes that WUN is not looking for financial return, but "intellectual return" on its investments. He observes that "if you connect highly gifted in-

dividuals from high-powered research universities and put in a tiny bit of cash, you reap enormous returns."¹³ Pilsbury works closely with campus liaisons as well as presidents and vice chancellors to facilitate dialogue among member institutions, with member institution faculty leading the WUN agenda. In addition to a number of collaborative research projects (e.g., around such areas as economic geography and global information systems), other WUN projects include a robust faculty and graduate student exchange program, the joint supervision of graduate students, and a recently established undergraduate exchange program.

Trust, Communication, and Commitment

In the context of the scope description in this article, an understandable question for administrators, international education officers, faculty, and students alike is, how do IHECs actually function? More importantly, what makes for an effective set of interrelated partnerships—often among quite distinct universities—that can best facilitate the mission of an IHEC? Results of the current analysis suggest that a foundation of trust, communication, and commitment is at the core of any successful IHEC. Indeed, professor Michael Clarke, vice-principal of the University of Birmingham and chair of the U21 Management Group, has identified trust as the single-most

important facet of consortium management. He notes that, "trust does not happen overnight. It takes time to know one another and each other's institutions. It is difficult to make progress if consortia haven't built trust." In fact, it was Thompson Corporation that approached U21 as a possible partner for an online MBA program because of the level of cooperation and commitment among consortia members. But how is trust built among diverse institutions represented by university leaders with competing demands?

First, it may be helpful to clarify how IHECs are typically managed. Most if not all IHECs appear to hold annual meetings attended by university presidents, vice presidents, senior international education officers, and other university officials. Typically, annual meetings set the overarching agenda for consortia activities, handle budgetary

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matters, and determine membership among other activities. Importantly, annual meetings provide a forum for IHEC communication. As Liz Carey, secretariat for INU observes, the annual INU Council meeting allows for "face-to-face meetings, which are more effective than communicating solely via electronic means and provide a chance for member representatives to reconnect with one another."15 Annual meetings thus provide a forum to update, share ideas, network, and build working relationships and personal friendships. In addition to these events, many consortia hold other, more specialized meetings for university faculty and administrators, who are tasked with implementing specific consortium projects. For example, U21 Contact Managers (the campus administrator or faculty member designated as the official contact person) meet three times a year to suggest projects—which are presented at the annual meeting—and then coordinate and implement those projects. In addition, U21 deans (e.g., engineering and medicine) meet frequently to discuss collaborative projects. Similarly, INU holds an annual executive committee meeting where the leadership team meets to handle more specific consortium activities and issues including the development of a detailed work plan and determination of annual dues. WUN solves the communication problem through a top-down, bottom-up approach. As Pilsbury notes, "The acid test of any international colWhat makes for an effective set of interrelated partnerships that can best facilitate the mission of an IHEC? Results of the current analysis suggest that a foundation of trust, communication, and commitment is at the core of any successful IHEC.

laboration is that it generates genuine additionality, as there are real transaction costs involved...We have done this through a simple but absolute commitment to a hands-on partnership with our communities at the grass roots level." With multiple representatives working to balance individual university needs with IHEC agendas, the potential for lapses in communication or miscommunication—particularly via e-mail—is great. Consequently, the development of systems for regular and timely dialogue across multiple venues and the careful and deliberate cultivation of relationships among institutional partners, are both a cause and effect of trust, communication, and commitment, and key to the success of any IHEC.

Project Development and Implementation

IHECs function most effectively when members have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the consortium as a whole, the specific mechanisms for participation, and the value added for home institutions by participating in specific projects. Of course, the composition of the membership is crucial (e.g., size, type of institution, areas of strength). Most IHECs have been organized around a particular objective (e.g., the exchange of engineering students) or within a certain region or by type of institution. Others reflect a more diverse range of members that are designed to complement relative areas of strength. In any case, it is important to recognize the motives that could compel a university to establish an IHEC partnership, such as the prestige of membership, the economic benefits of sharing resources and expertise, and the opportunity to engage in institution-congruent activities that might otherwise be unavailable without such a partnership. The likelihood of successful collaboration with tangible results is enhanced when the implicit needs and motives of member institutions—and institutional representatives—are made explicit. Thus, IHECs need mechanisms for articulating institutional motives for membership, particularly when new members are integrated into an existing IHEC—and other members are released—as the goals, objectives, and organizational dynamics of the IHEC change. Ultimately, it is important to recognize the overarching need for flexibility and ongoing attention to the requirements of IHEC members, particularly as partner institutions strive to remain responsive to shifting opportunities and realities both at home and abroad. As professor Dean Forbes, deputy vice-chancellor

(international) at Flinders University (an INU member university) noted, "Consortia will become more important, because international education will require more effective links between universities...consortia will be reasonably fluid, forming and reforming according to particular needs." ¹⁷

Among other attributes of IHEC representatives, patience and perspective appear to be especially salient. That is because the planning and implementation of IHEC projects can be painstakingly slow, particularly at the outset, when institutional agreement is being

sought for a particular initiative. As Clarke notes, "It is much easier to talk about engaging in collaborative activities than doing them. Collaboration works best when a small number take the lead; someone must take leadership or ownership."18 Perhaps because of these realities, many IHEC projects appear to involve a subset of member institutions. Indeed, relatively easy access to a rich array of possible partners for collaboration may be one of the greatest benefits to consortium membership. However, given the amount of time and resources—and the legal and financial complexities of operating joint projects and programs—collaborative activities work best when there is a clear benefit to participating universities as well as personal benefit to those who will implement projects. Again, for a particular project, participating members must articulate and understand each other's goals and objectives for home campus constituents as well as the larger IHEC and have a clearly articulated timeframe for project management.

As noted earlier, perhaps one of the most successful examples of the benefits of working with an IHEC is the range of opportunities for student exchange. There are challenges even at this level, however. For universities in the United States, exchange programs must achieve parity. That is because under most exchange agreements, students pay tuition at their home university and room and board at their host university. Thus, when an exchange student attends a university in the United States, he or she brings no tuition dollars to that institution. The U.S. university, in turn, balances that loss of tuition dollars with those received by its exchange student paying tuition at home but studying at a partner institution. Consequently, most universities in the United States—particularly public colleges and universities—must maintain a careful if not exact balance between the number of students sent and received through an exchange program. This situation presents challenges and benefits. On the one hand, exchange programs are one of hundreds of opportunities for United States students to study abroad. Moreover, given that students in the United States pay tuition (and most universities in other countries charge much less if any), students understand that they must pay something for a study abroad experience. 19 Thus, exchange programs compete with other study abroad opportunities.

However, the advantage to IHEC exchange programs is that the balance can be maintained across the entire range of schools. Within

IHECs such as INU and TASSEP, member institutions receive and send students across all member institutions, thus maintaining balance across all institutions (e.g., a university in the United States sends a student to an Australian partner university which then sends a student to a Swedish partner who, in turn, sends the U.S. university a student, thus balancing the gain/loss ratio). Moreover, for many universities, IHEC exchange programs provide opportunities for students that would otherwise not exist. For example, the MAUI and Utrecht Network relationship provides participating universities in the United States with a rich variety of opportunities. Joel Glassman, associate vice provost at the University of Missouri in St. Louis (a MAUI member) notes, "The Utrecht Network provides a wider range of countries that we can't sustain with bilateral agreements. As a commuter campus, we can't sustain relationships with any one place...it's not productive to try to maintain bilateral agreements."

In addition to robust student exchange relationships, IHECs have engaged in a wide array of other projects. Joint short courses and student symposia have proven particularly successful. For example, the Utrecht Network is hosting a number of summer-school programs this year that bring together students and faculty from members institutions, and courses will include such topics as environmental and resource management and human rights in the context of cultural pluralism versus racism and xenophobia. Simi-

larly, the University of Virginia recently hosted a U21 undergraduate research conference, which brought together students and faculty advisers from across the network, presenting on such topics as visual impairment in the United Kingdom, Aboriginal mental health, the relationship between attitudes and physical attraction.

A number of IHECs have engaged in efforts to bring together administrators and staff members with similar roles. For example, INU has held meetings that bring together exchange officers to share the policies and procedures at each campus to better facilitate mobility. At other meetings, member institutions were asked to present on particular topics within higher education—for the example the assessment of international learning processes and outcomes—to better understand the culture of each institution and share expertise. Similarly, in September 2005, U21 is hosting a conference for member university art museum directors with a follow-up symposium to explore possible areas for collaboration.

Moreover, several IHECs have implemented faculty exchange programs specifically for member institutions. For example, the University of Missouri at St. Louis has dedicated one full-time faculty position for visiting scholars from exchange partners. Thus, one semester per year, a Utrecht Network member institution sends a faculty member to the University of Missouri; the position rotates among Utrecht Network institutions and academic departments at



the University of Missouri. The obvious benefits of faculty exchange include the presentation of new perspectives on a particular discipline, different pedagogical and advising styles, and the chance for scholars and students to learn about another culture.

Additionally, similar to faculty exchange, a number of IHECs have implemented professional staff shadowing programs in which profession staff members visit partner institutions for one to two weeks. Again, the shadowing programs offer the chance to experience the processes of another institution—and a particular role within an institution—and then make comparisons regarding one's own role, processes, and procedures at home.

At a practical level, management of IHECs—particularly financial aspects—can be quite complex. Resources are needed for large-scale projects, travel money, annual meetings, and other activities, yet member institutions will vary in the degree to which they can contribute.

IHEC Management

Clear, established, and ongoing communication is crucial for the success of any IHEC. Even in the age of instant messaging, communication with partners—across time zones and with different levels of technological support—can be challenging and slow. Moreover, communication of IHEC activities with home campus constituents can also be problematic. Among other variables, the relationship of the institution to its IHEC—and its participation in various initiatives and activities—can be greatly impacted by the relative degree of support from senior administrators. At this level, it is important to understand that many IHECs are president's organizations, with the president serving as the chief representative from the institution. The implication here may be clear. Unless faculty and other administrators (e.g., deans and international programs officers) from the institution are directly involved in IHEC projects, such individuals may possess little information about or understanding of the IHEC to which their institution belongs. For students, this situation may be particularly problematic, as the institution's IHEC may appear to be simply one of a number of study abroad or exchange possibilities that are available to them. Thus, the greater the degree to which administrators, faculty, and students at the institutional level are informed of IHEC activities and avenues for participation, the greater the impact will be of the institution's IHEC as an agent for internationalization of the campus.

At a practical level, management of IHECs—particularly financial aspects—can be quite complex. Resources are needed for large-scale projects, travel money, annual meetings, and other activities,

yet member institutions will vary in the degree to which they can contribute. Depending on the activities and financial resources of member institutions, dues can range from a few hundred dollars to as much as \$35,000 per year. Of course, the greater the contributions are, the more resources with which to work. Moreover dues can help engender (quite tangibly) a sense of buy-in and commitment. Yet even member institutions that make considerable financial contributions to their IHEC will still find they must bear a significant proportion of the cost of consortium activities. The cost of funding a small number of staff members, designing and maintaining a Web site, designing and printing publications, funding student and fac-

ulty travel, and hosting an annual meeting can quickly exhaust member dues. Moreover, while many IHECs have at least one staff member who serves to organize and manage communication, Web sites, publications, and handle daily operations, the implementation of projects is often left to faculty and administrators at member institutions as an "add-on" to other responsibilities. As Clarke noted, "All the time, when people engage in activities of the consortium, they do so at the margins of their day job." Thus, it can be difficult to utilize IHEC

relationships as effectively and efficiently as desired. To remedy the need for staff support, a number of IHECs have created project managers for the entire IHEC. For example, INU has recently hired a project manager (a former international programs officer from a member institution) to develop and manage INU projects. Indeed, one of her first tasks is to visit each member institution with the goal of identifying areas of strength for possible collaboration. Similarly, the University of Birmingham created a part-time project officer position last year, simply to manage Birmingham's Universitas 21 Global activities. Currently, university administrators are considering the possibility of expanding that role to a full-time position. In essence, IHEC leaders have discovered that at the individual university level and for the consortia as a whole, resources—money, time, and staff—must be dedicated to maintain a wide range of complex activities.

IHECs Are Here To Stay

As IHECs continue to develop and expand in the years to come, it is crucial to strive for balance between vision and strategy, as both are necessary and neither is sufficient by itself. The most visionary mission statement and far-reaching strategic plan will founder without clear, specific, and ongoing attention to organizational and systemic processes and the practical realities of project design, implementation, and evaluation. Therefore, it may be helpful for the leadership and membership of any current or future IHECs to keep the following summary recommendations in mind:

ensure buy in and support from senior administration

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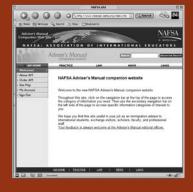
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cultivate trust and commitment among members

select strong leadership and establish a system of officers and/or committees as well as clear leadership structures

establish and maintain clear and effective communication processes, and dialogue frequently and openly

meet on a regular and routine basis

develop clear mission statements, strategic plans, specific short and long-term goals/objectives, and timelines, and establish methods to monitor progress over time

be explicit about institutional needs and motives establish membership goals and criteria identify "champions" of specific projects create a portfolio of ongoing and short term projects communicate various activities and initiatives to the home institution, encourage participation by administrators, faculty, students, and staff secure the resources that are necessary and sufficient (financial, time, and staff) to accomplish the mission, objectives, and activities

In the final analysis, by all accounts IHECs are here to stay. The fact that these systems have emerged was logical and probably inevitable, given the need for internationalized universities, which provide a range of experiences and interconnections for students and faculty. And although a truism, and certainly clichéd, our "global interdependence" is very real and likely only to become more so in

the decades ahead. As such, international higher education consortia are timely, integrative, and innovative organizations that are responsive to these trends and can help fulfill the potential and demand for international education around the world. As professor Douglas Brown, provost of James Madison University and INU member, notes: the future of these consortia is bright, and "limited only by the scope of our imagination."

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Endnotes

- Information presented in this article is based on responses to surveys, phone interviews, e-mail correspondence, and a review of the available literature.
- Anecdotally, it would appear that there are dozens of such consortia around the world, although they appear to exist in various stages of development. This article does not represent an exhaustive description of all extant IHECS, but is rather intended to highlight the diversity and current status of several established IHECs.
- This paragraph was excerpted and adapted from Sternberger, Lee and Liz Carey, 2004. "The International Network of Universities: Leadership Strategies for a Global Partnership." IIE Network, www.iienetwork.org/ page/48372/



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- See the Global Engineering Education Exchange (Global E3) at www.iie. org/pgms/global-e3
- See the Transatlantic Science Student Exchange Program (TASSEP) at www.chem.unc.edu/undergrads/tassep_SA/
- See the Universitas 21 (U21) 2003/2004 annual report available at www. universitas21.com.
- 8. E-mail communication, March 20, 2004.
- This paragraph was excerpted and adapted from Sternberger, Lee and Liz Carey, 2004. "The International Network of Universities: Leadership Strategies for a Global Partnership." IIE Network, www.iienetwork.org/ page/48372/
- 10. See the Utrecht Network at www.utrecht-network.org/
- 11. See the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN) at www.wun.ac.uk/
- 12. Telephone communication May 2, 2005.
- 13 Ibid
- 14. Telephone communication, April 22, 2005.
- 15. Fax communication, April 15, 2005.
- 16. See the WUN 2005 annual report available at www.wun.ac.uk/
- 17. E-mail communication, April 11, 2005.
- 18. Clarke, ibid.
- 19. This is not to imply that they can afford to do so, just that the notion of paying for an educational experience is widely held.
- 20. Telephone communication March 31, 2005.
- 21. Clarke, ibid.
- 22. E-mail communication, May 3, 2005.

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Teichler, Ulrich, 1999. "Internationalisation as a Challenge for Higher Education in Europe," *Tertiary Education and Management, 5*, the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Press.

Web Resources

Consortium of American Schools, Colleges and Universities (CASCU) at www.cascu.us/

Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONA-HEC) at www.conahec.org/

Global Engineering Education Exchange (Global E3) at www.iie.org/pgms/qlobal-e3

International Network of Universities (INU) at www.inunis.net/

International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) at www.isep.org/

Mid-American Universities International (MAUI) at www.ksu.edu/oip/maui.

Santander Group at www.sgroup.be/common/index.php

Sternberger, Lee and Liz Carey, 2004. "The International Network of Universities: Leadership Strategies for a Global Partnership." IIE Network, www. iienetwork.org/page/48372/

TransAtlantic Science Student Exchange Program (TASSEP) at www.chem.unc.edu/undergrads/tassep_SA/

Universitas 21 (U21) at www.u21global.com

Utrecht Network at www.utrecht-network.org/

Worldwide Network of Universities (WUN) at www.wun.ac.uk/

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