

By Elaina Loveland

Embracing Global Education

An interview with J. Michael Adams,
president of Fairleigh Dickinson University

JMICHAEL ADAMS HAS BEEN PRESIDENT OF FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY (FDU) since 1999. Under his leadership, Fairleigh Dickinson developed the first Web-based university requirement in the world with a groundbreaking distance-learning program; established a new category of Global Virtual Faculty™—scholars and professionals from around the world who contribute to the online-learning environment; created the United Nations Pathways program, which brings members of the diplomatic corps to campus for interaction with students; launched The PublicMind™, a survey research center; and gained NGO status at the United Nations, among other accomplishments.

Prior to joining FDU, President Adams served 15 years as academic Dean of the Nesbitt College of Design Arts at Drexel University, in Philadelphia. There, he led the transformation of the college into one of the premier design schools in the United States. He came to Drexel University from the State University of New York at Oswego, where he moved through the academic ranks to full professor.

The author of nine books, Adams' publications and research cover a wide variety of topics including print, publishing, communication and career development, as well as topics specific to the field of higher education. His most recent book, *Coming of Age in a Globalized World: The Next Generation*, was published in 2006 by Kumarian Press. Co-authored with FDU's Director of Communications Angelo Carfagna, this book explores the impact of globalization and examines the case for world citizenship through global education.

In 2006, Adams was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Kyungnam University, Korea, in recognition of his international leadership in higher education.

Adams holds a B.S. from Illinois State University, Normal; an M.S. from University of Illinois, Urbana; and a Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

IE: In the past, you've said that "global education is much more than having international campuses or exchange programs." How so?

ADAMS: It's an understanding of context, people, and differences. It's about making clear connections within a complex world. It's going in an environment where the assumption is made that there are different ideas welcomed, and they simply become part of the landscape.

How do we create a physical and mental environment that says we want you to make connections and understand it's a bigger world than you imagined? We do it in both large and small ways. For example, at our Metropolitan Campus you'll find signage in seven to nine languages. It's not that you have to read Korean or you have to read Chinese or German, it's that the global is always there. It's part of the everyday environment.

It's things like recognizing that we can't make students read about what's happening in the world, but if we don't give them the opportunity they definitely won't. So, every weekday we distribute free a copy of the *New York Times* to undergraduate students. All together, it comes down to a process of creating the right environment, both physical and intellectual, that helps students connect and understand what's happening around the world—or at least be aware there is a world out there.



J. Michael Adams

Of course it includes having international campuses, international students and U.S. students studying abroad. These are all parts of the mosaic that we've worked to create.

IE: How does each academic discipline include global issues in the curriculum at Fairleigh Dickinson?

ADAMS: That's the great challenge of leadership in any institution because [each faculty member] indeed defines what happens in his or her classroom. What we have tried to do is inspire support around this mission.

It starts with a basic understanding of what we're trying to do here.

We've got political science majors and faculty connecting on an ongoing basis with the United Nations (U.N.). We have theater majors who study abroad on our Wroxtton, England, campus, which is just 16 miles from Stratford-Upon-Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace and home of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. There are

criminal justice majors who are taking online courses with a Global Virtual Faculty member who's a former investigator from Scotland Yard, and the list continues.

An interesting outgrowth is the incorporation of educational technology and the Internet: right now every general purpose classroom in the university and all campuses are wired with video projectors. Two-thirds of all our undergraduate classes are Web enhanced. The faculty use the Web as one of the tools in a learning environment. They can bring things from around the world into the classroom on a daily basis depending on what the lecture is and what the issue is.

IE: What are the key elements and purpose of your required freshman course, "The Global Challenge"?

ADAMS: "The Global Challenge" was part of a groundbreaking requirement. The faculty agreed that each undergraduate should take one Web-based distance-learning course per year during his or her undergraduate career. Some people said, "Adams, what are you doing?"

Are you saying that the Web is better than the classroom in terms of learning?" And my response was, "That's the wrong question."

A great teacher in the classroom is magical. A bad teacher in the classroom is a tragedy. It is all about the use of the appropriate environment, the media and the situation you're in, to connect faculty to students. So we went in with this as part of the global mission.

Our purpose was to bring the world to our campus through the use of the Internet. The first step in that was to create an online course called "The Global Challenge" that all freshmen take, and it's part of our four-course nationally recognized core curriculum. In this course, we have done things like create connections to every major English language newspaper in the world. Each week, depending upon what the topic is, students can read about it from widely different vantage points. We introduced ethics issues in discussions that are critical to what's happening in the world. Many of the greatest global challenges are multi-national, so we discuss in the course things like global conflict, population growth, immigration, health, environmental degradation, infectious diseases—the whole notion of understanding that the major challenges facing humanity over the next 20 or 30 years are completely independent of borders.

The Instructional Technology Council recognized that course as one of the top online courses in the United States recently. One of the chief faculty architects received the Sloan Consortium Award for Excellence in Online Teaching and Learning.

This course has been evaluated more than any other course of my entire career, because accountability in online learning is especially important to faculty, parents, and administrators. One of the things that we have seen is a gradual increase in positive reaction to that course. Students tell us it's the hardest course they take. Three years later they tell us it's the best course they ever took. They tell us in the exit survey that they knew the students in the class better than if it was in a physical environment. They may not have recognized them on the street, but they knew their classmates better online than in a physical room.

Also, they said you can't go to sleep in this course. You can't go to a lecture and sleep through it, or have somebody take notes for you. So that's increasingly powerful, increasingly positive. But the idea that developing powerful online courses is an inexpensive proposition is not true. We have heavily invested in this course and our online learning program. We have significantly updated our digital infrastructure and carefully designed the courses. For "The Global Challenge" alone, we hired faculty to work almost a year and a half in its development and it's continually upgraded.

IE: Can you tell us more about the Global Issues Gateway that is currently underway and Global Virtual Faculty program?

ADAMS: They're interrelated. Let's talk about the Global Virtual Faculty. We have 40 or 50 individuals from around the world, experts in their field, and they're not all from academia. One of my favorites is the former political editor for the *Times of India*. We have an economics professor from Malaysia, an Arabic language instructor from Egypt—

A Recent Radical Shift in Mission at Fairleigh Dickinson University

WHEN I BECAME PRESIDENT of Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1999, we were a financially stable institution, but as the board said, we had no sense of vision or direction. Our mission at the time was to be the regional leader in life-long learning. The mission put me to sleep when I read it. So I said we've really got to look at our history, where we are geographically, and assess our strengths and capabilities. I then interviewed hundreds of alumni, visited 73 corporate leaders, visited with 54 departments in the university, and came back and suggested that we return to the vision of our founder, Peter Sammartino, who emphasized international studies and who believed that we should be of and for the world. And so I suggested within six months a dramatic new vision and mission for the university, and we were the first university in the world, as far as I know, to make global education a centerpiece of the mission of the institution. Our mission is to build world citizens through a global education.

We then developed a series of strategic drivers that guided everything we were doing. And so over the last eight years, this has been a race between translating a mission statement into a sense of mission across the entire university. The results of that include the development of innovative programs, significant increase in enrollment and new connections around the world.

—J. Michael Adams
president of Fairleigh Dickinson University

people from all over the world, and they're under contract. We provide a laptop and give them instructions and pay for connections.

What these Global Virtual Faculty do is link up with the campus-based professor online in chat rooms 24/7. Imagine I'm 18 years old and online with Kumar Ketkar, the political editor from the *Times of India*, the largest circulation newspaper in the world. The point of this is we want an 18-year-old to understand that where you sit in the world influences how you see the problem and, therefore, how you see the solution. Students need to understand that there are different views. If you want to find a solution, you've got to understand how to see the problem from others' eyes.

A favorite proverb for me right now right now is from China, which I changed a little bit, but the sense is the same, that "if the only tool you have is a hammer, the only target you see is a nail." We've got to give our faculty and students different tools so they can see different solutions.

The Global Issues Gateway Web site (www.gig.org) is one avenue through which faculty members gain access to resources, ideas, and materials—tools. Among them is an archive of global events held at FDU. For example, we've had more than 70 plus ambassadors or heads of state to campus to speak since we started the U.N. Pathways Program in 2002. We have their lectures on video and we put them online. So, for example, two weeks ago I was here on campus for the ambassador from Sudan. As a faculty member I can go back and access the ambassador's talk in the archive, and download to a CD certain elements of his presentation for class discussion. All of this is on our Gig.org site, as is an online scholarly journal focusing on globalization and teaching global issues. We also have a forum to connect classrooms virtually across the world. Gig.org is accessible to everyone—not just the Fairleigh Dickinson community. We see an obligation to share this as a resource because we believe fundamentally that higher education has to change.

IE: Fairleigh Dickinson has become involved with the United Nations by becoming an NGO affiliated with the U.N.'s Department of Public Information and has created the "U.N. Pathways Lecture Series." How did FDU become involved with the U.N. and creating this initiative and how does it benefit the university?

ADAMS: FDU has had a long-time historic relationship with the U.N. We just forgot it for a while. When the U.N. building was built in 1950, our founder, Peter Sammartino, started bringing ambassadors to campus. In fact, he would assign the students as drivers for the diplomats. I've talked to an alumnus who said, "The president sent me over to pick up the ambassador from France, and we talked all the way over."

Sammartino also hired retired diplomats as part of internationalizing the faculty community. So there used to be a path between FDU and the U.N., but it got weak, and it was time to reopen it. That's why it's called the U.N. Pathways. We applied for NGO status by demonstrating our international commitment and our commitment to the United Nations in what we were prepared to do with them.

We were among the first universities in the United States to apply for that distinction, and we have advocated for other institutions to apply. In spite of all the criticisms of the United Nations, it's still perhaps the best place to come together to talk about global problems and seek potential solutions. And, quite frankly, we've learned that weapons don't solve these problems but education and dialogue may have a better chance.

In the U.N. Pathways program, we have two ambassadors visit each of our two New Jersey campuses every semester. We've had the ambassador from France, from Great Britain, from Israel, from

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South Africa, from Brazil—an entire range. In fall 2007, we had ambassadors from Costa Rica, Sudan, and Syria on campus. The key is to have students and faculty hear different voices. But the entire community is invited.

And then we have a private dinner, which, by my direction, must be half students. What typically happens after the lecture is that we'll go into the dining room with students clustered to one side and the faculty and the ambassador on the other side. And I, or one of my colleagues, will walk over to the students and ask, "Have you talked to the ambassador?" And they'll say, "Oh no, no, no, I'm too nervous."

And we'll tell them to walk up to the ambassador and say, "Mr. or Ms. Ambassador, I really enjoyed your presentation," and then shut up. The ambassador will take over. We tell the students, if you don't do that, we're going to take you by the arm and take you over to the ambassador. So every one of those students in that room has to go over to the ambassador and speak with him. And what do we want out of that? We want them to go back home and call mom and say, "Mom,

I was just with the ambassador from Costa Rica tonight. I talked with him. I held my own talking to somebody who plays on the world stage. Maybe I could, too." At 18, that's a pretty powerful idea.

IE: Fairleigh Dickinson University has campuses in two foreign countries: England and Canada. How do these campuses operate in conjunction with the main campus in New Jersey?

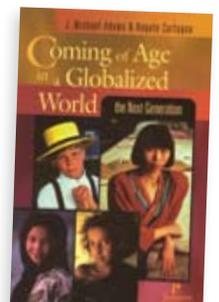
ADAMS: We were the first university, as far as we know, in the United States to purchase our own overseas campus. We brought Wroxtton Abbey, a fully modernized Jacobean mansion, parts of which date back to the thirteenth century, from Trinity College-Oxford in 1963 and the campus opened in 1965. It's a 56-acre estate, the former ancestral home of Lord North, who was the prime minister of England during the American Revolution. It has an exquisite residential facility, for 70 to 100 students.

We have a full-time British faculty, some of whom are associated with the Royal Shakespearean Company in nearby Stratford-Upon-Avon. It's an incredible overseas study experience for our students. Since its foundation more than 7,000 of our students have taken part in that experience. It's life-transforming.

We also have a series of global partnerships around the world, dual-degree programs, but we recently decided that we wanted to explore the possibility of having another international campus and to provide students another opportunity to learn in another country. So we began a five-year study and an intensive application process to launch a new campus and we selected Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Eventually, we would like to build a series of small, stand-alone international campuses, but we want to proceed carefully and we don't want to go into an environment where we're perceived as a competitive threat or where the fit for our programs and our students isn't ideal.

The Vancouver campus is designed for international students who want to earn a U.S. degree. We offer two majors, business and information technology, which are essentially the same programs offered on our New Jersey campuses. Our students in the first semester hail from 10 countries and our faculty and staff are equally diverse. It's an exciting community and we hope to attract more and more students from throughout the world.

IE: Your recent book, *Coming of Age in a Globalized World: The Next Generation*, co-authored with Angelo Carfagna, is aimed at college students who may not be familiar with the many facets of globalization, global education, and world citizenship. Can you tell us a little about that?



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ADAMS: It's an easily read book. It begins with a basic story. You recall going to a restaurant with a child, the waiter puts down a paper placemat, and hands the child a pencil or a crayon. On that placemat are games to entertain the child while the adults have a good conversation. One of those games is invariably a series of dots with numbers on it. The child takes this crayon and goes from one to two to three to four. It's called a connect-the-dots game. Eventually, the child sees an image emerge, and they say gleefully, a house, a horse, a flower.

The premise of the book is the importance of connecting the dots of the globalized world and acquiring the fundamental skills and the essential mindset of world citizens. How do you find meaning? How do you find patterns of understanding? What are areas in which you should consistently look? How do you understand our world?

We use the metaphor of connecting the dots. We wanted to speak to issues that are dear to us and essential to the institution's mission. Frankly, as we tried to translate the mission into reality, there were lots of questions. What do you mean by globalization? What is global education? What is world citizenship? We thought it would be useful not just for colleagues and peers, but for students to examine these questions.

We explored some of the interconnections and helped draw parallels to students' personal lives. From that, Angelo and I developed a course we've co-taught called "Globalization and World Citizenship," in which we seek to inspire and stimulate a sense of world citizenship.

One of the thrilling things about the book is that it has been increasingly accepted and it is required freshman reading now at a number of institutions including Missouri Southern State University.

IE: How can other colleges and universities better integrate global issues into their curricula? Why is it important?

ADAMS: Why is it important? It's imperative. By and large, students choose colleges because they want to develop good careers, and we know that the corporate community tells us that you've got to think globally. For instance, 70 percent of Coca-Cola's revenues come from profits overseas. In a global economy and in an increasingly interconnected age, whether you work in a large multinational corporation or a national company, or even a small local company, events around the world are going to affect your life. We must prepare students to be aware of what's happening. Although you may not be able to change what's happening in Lebanon, you'd better be aware of it because it will have a potentially major influence on your life.

How can other colleges and universities do this? It's up to the local environment and the particular institution's resources and strengths. The things you can do in New Jersey where we're seven miles from Manhattan are different from the things that you can do in Topeka, Kansas. It really depends upon the vision of the local leadership and the commitment of the individuals at any given institution.

IE: If you were to give one piece of advice each to students, faculty, and campus leaders today about the importance of understanding global issues, what would you tell them?

ADAMS: One of the things we educators like is to have checklists. We have degree checklists and we have checklists in the course of assignments. But what it seems we'd really like is to have global education checklists. You do those things, and we're done. But my advice is it's not about what you do, it's *how you view what you're doing*.

You need to realize that you're creating world citizens. You need to see that you're creating people who are connecting the dots of a globalized world. You need to be aware that you're preparing the next generation of leaders who need to know how to play on the world stage. How you do it varies from institutions and locations. It's not what you do, but how you view what you're doing. From that mindset, particular activities will emerge.

Growing up on the plains of central Illinois, I knew where my world ended. I could see it at the horizon seven miles away. Growing up in that world, I thought I knew what my role was, and then I went to college, and my world got bigger. Frankly, the opportunities for my role in that world also grew. It's got to be one of the main functions of a college education today, to help students become aware of and understand the larger world. It's a complex world, a challenging world. It's a wonderful world. Growing up you only see a small part of it. The function of education should be to make your world bigger. **IE**

ELAINA LOVELAND is managing editor of *IE*.



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