

Business Schools Break Tradition in Global Education

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J. Emilio Flores for The New York Times

Judy Olian is dean of UCLA's Anderson School of Management, which has linked up with the National University of Singapore to award Executive MBA degrees after study in Los Angeles, Singapore, Shanghai and Bangalore, India.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA universities have long led the nation in the number of students enrolled from other countries. Now the universities' business programs are taking the globalization of education to a different level, offering courses that go beyond dry corporate case studies and broadening their collaboration with universities and businesses abroad, particularly in Asia.

The Anderson School of Management at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the National University of Singapore have programs allowing students in the executive master of business administration program to be awarded degrees from both universities after 15 months of taking classes in Singapore and Los Angeles, and also in Shanghai and Bangalore, India.

The Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California in collaboration with Jiao Tong University in Shanghai has a global M.B.A. program involving executives from 10 countries studying in China and Los Angeles. The Paul Merage School of Business at the University of California, Irvine, collaborates with the Indian Institute of Technology, Peking University in Beijing, City University of Hong Kong and others in teaching business courses around the world.

The programs are not simply overseas duplications of standard courses in accounting and finance. "In our global access courses, we challenge teams, in a language that is not that of the United States, to drop an egg from two stories without breaking it," said Andrew Policano, dean of the Merage School. "One must learn to innovate with other cultures."

Judy Olian, dean of the Anderson School at U.C.L.A., agreed. "It is critical to learn other cultures," she said. "We are taking entrepreneurial leaders to operate in Palestine and Israel, in India and China"

She added: "That has not been thought of as the mission of business schools, but it is in the emerging world of today. If we did not do this, we could be accused of staring at our own navel."

C. L. Nikias, provost and head of academic affairs at the University of Southern California, wants the university to become a place where "students and faculty can cross academic and geographic boundaries to innovate, an institution with a public service mission that spans continents." About 21 percent of the students at the university's Marshall School are

international. The university is "receiving requests to put branches of the school in many countries," said Adam Clayton Powell III, vice provost for globalization.

The Global Access Program at the Anderson School provides a good illustration of the new types of offerings. The program enrolls 175 M.B.A. candidates who are working at other jobs during the three years it takes to earn their degrees. Their average age is about 33. Students consult for six months at a time for international companies that want to get into the American market or simply "operate beyond their current borders," explained Robert Foster, dean of the program. The students, who work in teams of five or six, average 500 hours of work on a typical project.

Payem Tehrani, who graduated last year, counseled ICAR Vision Systems, a developer of identification cards and equipment in Barcelona, Spain. ICAR wanted to break into the American market. But after the students surveyed that market and worked in Spain, Italy and other countries, "we found that its equipment was not advanced enough to make it in the U.S. market, but that ICAR had opportunities for expansion in Italy," said Mr. Tehrani, a 35-year old electrical engineer who now works for Yahoo. The Spanish company, like all other corporate customers of the program, contributed \$15,000 to the Anderson School to cover part of the program's expenses.

Gerald Gutierrez, 33, who also graduated from the program last year, worked with an Italian company that wanted to sell thermoplastics to Boeing and Airbus. But the company's products were less advanced than the thermoplastics the companies already used to build aircraft. "We advised the company that it needed to do more research and development," Mr. Gutierrez said.

In another case, a team of students studied markets in Russia for the Technology Agency of Finland, a government office, on behalf of software, communications and construction service firms. Why would Finland hire American students to study a market in Russia? The answer, Mr. Foster said, is that the Americans "know how to commercialize technology, to map out the complex of distribution channels, marketing and finance that any product needs to be successful."

The global access program is expanding in 2008 to 240 students and 48 projects, reaching out to India and China, Mexico, Spain and Austria for new companies and opportunities.

Global study brings perspective. Ronald Lewis, 21, a student at the Marshall School, studied for four months at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and visited the bustling port city of Shenzhen, China. It was, he said, "my first time immersed in another culture," an experience that he will bring to a management consultant job at Bain & Company after graduation this year.

Alda Mostofi, 28, found that his fellow students of many nationalities, had differing views about Western culture when they visited the General Motors plant in Shanghai as part of their studies for the dual business degree from U.C.L.A. and the National University of Singapore.

Ronson Wong, an executive at Reach.com, a Hong Kong-based provider of cable and satellite communications, said, "A degree from an American university, from U.C.L.A., is highly valued in Asia." He received a dual degree from U.C.L.A. and Singapore last year.

American universities are so prized abroad because "we have a different kind of pedagogy," said James Ellis, dean of the Marshall School. "We are much more inclusive of students, allowing their participation on many levels, in contrast to the classic Oxford lecture model. The students learn from one another, particularly in the global classes where individuals from different cultures work together."

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