

Perspective on how HACU members institutions, particularly HSIs could enhance collaboration with institutions of higher learning in Latin America

Remarks by Ing. Rodrigo Guerra Botello, General Secretary of the Federation of Mexican Private Universities (FIMPES) during HACU's 27th Annual Conference, October 26-28, 2013 at the Hilton Chicago Hotel in Chicago, Illinois

Thank you Dr. Henderson.

Good morning every one; i am glad to be here today.

I want to thank Dr. Antonio Flores, HACU president and CEO, for his kind invitation to participate in this panel as part of the international plenary session of HACU.

The plenary, as we know, is focusing on successful international education partnerships in Latin America and....

I am glad HACU is looking south of the border exploring opportunities to develop partnerships for its institutions, specially the HSI universities.

Let me tell you first couple of things about higher education in México today and in the next five years. Right now, higher education enrollment is around 3.3 million students with close to 3000 universities (65% privates) operating across the country; president Peña Nieto administration is looking to increase this level of higher education coverage by 50% to reach by 2018, 5 million students enrolled; 1/3 of this student population is not and will be in the future attending private universities.

The main issues we face today and most probably will continue to face for some time are, on one hand, education quality and, on the other, education pertinence; just, too, many of our graduates are not obtaining well paid and relevant jobs.

The reasons behind this problem could be blamed to the Mexican economy slow performance, but more important, is the actual disconnection between education and labor market skills requirements; some of those very important requirements for our graduates are related with the need to have international exposure and experience; to develop abilities to perform in multicultural environments, and to obtain skills to participate in multinational work teams.

So, Mexican universities are eager to find ways to participate in international partnerships that could provide them, exposure and mobility for their students and faculty, especially to English language speaking countries.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about FIMPES, federation of Mexican private higher education institutions. We are a 30 years old, nonprofit, voluntary membership organization, with the best 112 affiliated private universities in México and half a million of students enrolled.

We have two main tasks: we credit higher education institutions quality, and we represent our affiliated needs and interests; if necessary we lobby on behalf of the Mexican private higher education. We just finished a large and successful lobby effort to avoid the government to apply a 16% value added tax to education.

Regarding the subject of this panel: “successful international education partnership in la”; i will mention a number of elements and critical factors for successful collaborations, that in my opinion are about the more or less the same everywhere, beginning with the:

- Selection of the right international partner with the necessary commitment, strengths, experience and talent for the goals to be achieved.
- Then there is the need to build a good and strong bilateral relation, with personal involvement, at the very beginning of the project.

- It is also required the creation of a positive synergy between partners, based in their strengths and experience.
- The development of a well and clear defined scope of the collaboration fields of mutual interest is also important.
- It is necessary the definition of a common set of a goals and mutual commitments that full fill the expectations and needs in both sides, including budget considerations.
- The development of a mutual trust and openness communication in both directions is also needed, as it is
- The involvement of top management of both partners to support the collaboration; this would be very useful.
- Finally, the development of an effective execution strategies and progress reviews schemes, are very necessary.

All these considerations are critical success factors to build good collaboration projects, and as i mentioned before, are about the same for most of partnerships, whether we talk about local business ventures or education alliances, or research collaborations.

However, when we define these partnerships to be international, we will have to add a very important and different dimension to the relation, which is the cultural & values differences between partners, including among others: countries a symmetry's, geography, time zones, society traditions, religions, business customs, government regulations, ways to understand and run a business or an education institutions, and the language barriers, of course; all these considerations translate into the need to have a realistic and sufficient level of cultural acceptance and understanding between partners; at the end of the day cultural values, becomes the most critical success factor in an international partnership for academic, research or business projects.

The acculturation process that should support the international partnerships will not come easy for neither of the partners, and will take some time. It is not only a question of reading a book, attending a seminar or make a couple of look and see trips to the other country; all those things will surely help, but project leaders with international backgrounds and experience as well as teams with an open mind attitudes, willing to do things differently, and do different things, would be the best way to develop on the job, a set of soft and interpersonal skills to manage each other needs and differences, giving the

Partnership a much better chances to succeed.

Before i finish, let me mention two very important opportunities of partners partnerships with la, i believe will come up from the immigration reform that us government will put in place sometime in the future. Some of you may think it is too soon for this, but i believe today is the right moment to start.

As we see it from México, as a result of this reform, and i know this is a complicated subject:

First: an important number of Hispanic youngsters living here, will be legalized and will start looking for better job opportunities; this will require from them, an education level or an education degree, mostly from HACU universities and colleges; however a large number of those kids will require first to start or complete their high school, to later obtain an university education, most probably delivered in Spanish or bilingual, here, or from abroad; all this before they could join the professional labor market in us.....and

Second: with the legal status secured, a large number of Hispanic teenagers will temporarily return to their home countries, let's say for 3 to 5 years, to be reconnected with their roots and close families. Those kids will require an appropriated education in México to return later to us and enroll in one of the HACU's universities and colleges, and start or complete their higher education, to later begin looking for good jobs here in us.

In both cases, Hispanics mobility will represent a large and important opportunity for universities and colleges in both, us and México, to collaborate; of course, an adequate academic offer, at the right cost, will be necessary on both sides of the border.

It is clear to me, that HACU and FIMPES could and should play a key role identifying opportunities, supporting the necessary market research and analysis, the development of a studies validation system, as well as helping to build education collaboration partnerships in both of our countries; these partnerships would include mobility programs, but also formal dual and joint degrees, research, knowledge exchange, quality crediting, and other fields of mutual interest.

The possible and positive economic and social implications, and the opportunities created by a much larger and much better educated Hispanic community, living in us, México and other Latin American countries, will receive governments support in both sides of our border.

So, today is the right time to look ahead and plan ahead for these possible scenarios.

So, let me conclude by saying that as us government focus more on the Hispanic community here, and on the Latin American countries, through initiatives like "dream acts" in different states and the federal "one hundred

thousand strong in the Americas”, it becomes clear that well planned, structured and run education partnerships, between us universities with large Hispanic populations and higher education institutions in Latin America, will help to bring to our societies important economic and social development opportunities in the future.

While international alliances and the related cross border education are complicated subjects, never the less the potential benefits for our countries and communities behind them, make the effort worth trying.

Thank you again for having me here this morning.

Have a good day