



# Washington University in St. Louis

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## BROWN SCHOOL

### Global Teaching and Scholarship

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## Background

The Brown School has long been a leader in global social work research and education. The additions of public health and social policy have expanded the scope of global engagements in teaching and scholarship. Faculty lead research on a wide variety of research topics including asset building, poverty reduction, child and adolescent mental health, gender, disability, nutrition, physical activity, HIV/AIDS, health and the environment, among others. They partner with institutions and communities around the world to apply research results in impactful ways. Students study global social development, health, and policy through the International SED concentration and Global Health specialization, the MSP program and at the doctoral level. Student learning is enhanced through international practica and field-based courses.

Global teaching and scholarship offer significant opportunities to synergize across our disciplines, expand bi-directional learning between global south and north, and forge connections between St. Louis and the world. In this concept note we propose strategies for developing a robust model for global engagements at the Brown School.

The Brown School Vision for Global Programs is to:

*Improve the social well-being and health of the most vulnerable populations by conducting groundbreaking research, educating scholar-practitioners, building enduring partnerships, deploying emerging technologies, and influencing policy makers, in order to promote just, equitable, and healthy societies around the world.*

More specifically, the school aims to achieve the following goals:

- Investigate and address the social and environmental conditions underlying development and public health around the world;
- Integrate social and economic development and public health;
- Focus on community engagement and capacity development—recognizing the inherent strengths and resilience that exist also in poor communities;
- Achieve sustained positive impacts through programming and policy.

## Current Areas of Focus

Since the establishment of Global Programs in 2014, the school has made progress on achieving many of these objectives in the areas of research, teaching and learning:

Research:

- Supporting faculty research through small grants program (10 grants awarded by 2019)
- Managing a robust visiting scholars program with mentor matching, networking events, visiting scholar panels and access to scholarly resources (49 visiting scholars by 2019)
- Cultivating relationships with global partner universities for research, teaching and mentorship (15 partnerships over last five years)
- Enabling collaborations within the Brown School, across Washington University, and externally with other institutions

Teaching and Learning:

- Re-designing and implementing the Brown School international practicum program with over 25 partner organizations and supporting a growing number of students to participate in international practica.
- Establishing the Khinduka Scholars Program in 2018 to provide financial and programmatic support to students in international practica.
- Developing, organizing and supporting field-based courses where students travel abroad with faculty for an applied learning experience in collaboration with local partners. These courses offer excellent

learning opportunities for students and unique teaching opportunities for faculty and partners. The school provides significant subsidies enabling greater participation by students regardless of ability to pay. These courses provide opportunities for faculty to teach abroad and develop curriculum. Since 2014, 247 students have participated in 14 courses. Faculty compete for the opportunity to teach the courses, which have been held in Australia, Costa Rica, Germany, Haiti, India, Tanzania, Uganda and Washington, D.C.. Students apply to participate and are selected based on the merit of their application.

- Expanding programming to support international students and scholars, including hiring a Global Programs Manager with responsibilities for international student support.
- Through a collaborative, faculty-led process, designed and implemented the Master of Social Policy dual degree program with seven Chinese partner universities.
- Since 2015, two Brown School faculty members have been selected annually to teach MSP short courses at our partner universities in China.
- Through collaborations with Chinese partner universities, designed and provided research seminars on cutting-edge research methods to China's educators and practitioners working in the social work and social policy field.
- Annual Global Conference held collaboratively with International Area Studies (IAS) and the Career Center.

### **Lessons Learned**

- There is great interest in global teaching, learning and scholarship among Brown School faculty, students and staff reflected in the growing interest in international practica and global research and teaching opportunities.
- The school faces continuing challenges in meeting needs of international students (academic, social, emotional, financial, etc.), integrating global content in the curriculum across all three degree programs, and building stronger cross-cultural understanding among members of the Brown School community.
- Continued efforts are needed to support faculty research, global collaborations and to raise visibility of findings and applications of their work among and beyond academic audiences.

## **External Environment**

### **The Reality of Global Interconnection**

- We live in an increasingly interconnected global society. This provides opportunities for bidirectional learning between the global north and the global south. We can contribute knowledge, skills and analysis to partners and communities we engage with in various parts of the world and we have much to learn from them. Our students must be prepared to live and work in a diverse, global society.
- The focus of our three disciplines is to identify challenges and to offer solutions to improve lives globally, especially for the most vulnerable populations. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) align with many of our areas of research such as eradicating extreme poverty, ending hunger, improving health, attaining gender equality and improving life in cities, to name a few.
- Funding for global research in our disciplines is challenging to obtain due to limited funding sources and high competition.
- The current US administration is de-emphasizing global development work.
- Current US government immigration policies and geo-political relations may negatively affect recruitment of international students, faculty and staff and/or make it more difficult for them to join the Brown School.

## Strategic Themes

### The Imperative of Global Engagement

Our engagement with the rest of the world is more important now than ever, particularly given our disciplines' emphasis on social equity, justice and improving lives of those in greatest need. Our global teaching and scholarship is closely connected to our commitment to the St. Louis region and we can do more to promote bidirectional learning between local and global. Learning from around the world enriches our approaches to improving lives locally. It is our ambition to seek synergies not only across our disciplines but also across geographies.

Our students will benefit from exposure to people, information, ideas, and experiences relevant to their field of learning from around the globe, equipping them to contribute knowledgeably wherever they end up working. This requires us to find ways to enhance student learning by providing global perspectives through curricular and extra-curricular means.

### Ramping up our Global Impact

Brown School faculty, students and staff are involved in a tremendous amount of global research, scholarship and teaching/learning. There is high student demand for credentials and experience in global social work, public health, and social policy. Further, our international student population continues to increase and request exposure to knowledge and experience from both the global north and global south. As a school, we can and should do more to enhance the opportunities for and visibility and impact of this work.

## Options

### Global Professionals in Social Work, Public Health and Social Policy

All Brown School students should gain basic understanding of how the global context influences and impacts their work. Learning may be enhanced and deepened through comparative global analyses. Cross-cultural sensitivity as a critical element of professional practice should be inculcated and reinforced. This knowledge can come through a range of initiatives integrated into the curriculum, learning experiences and through school wide events and activities.

### Global Impact for Improving Lives

Through the research, education and scholarship of Brown School faculty, students and staff we strive to make a significant impact to improve lives around the world, especially among the most vulnerable. Building on the initiatives of Global Programs, the Brown School should develop a model for supporting, scaling up and disseminating global work in selected focal areas with potential to bring together members of the community to achieve greater impact.

## Short- and Long-term Plans

### Global Professionals

Develop strategies, plans and content for exposing all Brown School students to relevant knowledge of the global context in order to prepare them for professional practice in a global society. Consider ways to integrate this content in the masters' curricula, particularly at the foundation level. Such a strategy requires enabling and assisting faculty to integrate global content and allow more space for global perspectives in their courses and assignments. Review current global learning and research opportunities with a view to developing one or more extended learning programs. More specifically, we recommend the following measures for consideration:

1. Create a *Global Competency* in the MSW, MPH and MSP programs that ensures that selected global content areas are covered during students' time at the Brown School.
  - a. Action required: Convene Associate/Assistant Deans for three degree programs together with Associate Dean for Global Programs to develop the Global Competency, consistent with

- competencies for respective accrediting bodies. Accountability to be ensured through annual reporting to the Global Programs office.
2. Continue strengthening global learning opportunities including practica, field-based courses and research assistantships. Develop extended learning opportunities for students to enable more meaningful coursework, practica and/or research experiences abroad.
    - a. Action required: Work with field education and degree program managers to create opportunities for longer global experiences. Identify and support through small stipends language learning opportunities for students.
  3. Expand current options for flexibility in teaching schedules and formats including online courses to enable global research and teaching by faculty and students. In addition to time support, faculty and students should be supported financially to travel to international conferences and other dissemination events.
    - a. Action required: Work with degree programs to restructure and build new courses that allow for international travel. Additional funds are necessary to support travel of faculty, staff, and students to international conferences and other dissemination events.
  4. Leverage the visiting scholar program to contribute needed expertise, provide innovative curricular content and spark research collaborations.
    - a. Action required: Establish regular speaking opportunities for visiting scholars and facilitate meetings at the Brown School and across WashU to foster research collaborations.

### **Global Impact for Improving Lives**

The 2013 Task Force on International Programs report included a recommendation to “Enable positive program and policy impacts from international research and practice” with two main strategies:

Strategy 4.1 Initiate dialogue and debate through the Policy Forum and other international policy arenas on strategies to translate international research to improved programming and policy.

Strategy 4.2 Support dissemination activities at community, regional, national, and international levels.

In pursuit of these strategies, we suggest the following actions:

1. Articulate a model of global scholarship and research for the Brown School built around high impact priority areas where faculty, staff and students can collaborate to achieve impact. This global model will embody One School objectives as already embraced in current international research collaborations at the Brown School.
  - a. Action required: Small working group formed with representation across degree programs to develop model.
2. Establish necessary infrastructure (research support, grant management capacity, student assistantships, etc.) to achieve the model. Intentional relationships with government agencies and foundations supporting international research are needed.
  - a. Action required: Hire two new staff members with the necessary expertise for grants development and management in the international arena.
3. Partner with the Living Earth Collaborative, Global Health Center/Institute for Public Health, InCEES Africa Initiative, IAS, and McDonnell Scholars Academy, to sponsor events highlighting significant global challenges and to disseminate Brown School research findings.
  - a. Action required: Create a student RA position to regularly work on communications with these entities across campus and support planning of events. Allocate budget line item for periodic and annual global events.
4. Establish clear mechanisms and necessary supports for sustaining current partnerships with universities and other organizations around the world. This requires both human and financial resources to build and sustain partnerships essential for both international scholarship and teaching.

- a. Action required: Support additional staff time dedicated to supporting and sustaining these partnerships and collaborations with universities and organizations. Allocate budgetary resources for teaching, travel, and student practicum support for working with global partners.
5. Ensure that at least one member of the Brown School National Council be a person with global interests and expertise.
  - a. Action required: Select an alumni working globally to be part of the Brown School National Council.

## Estimated Costs

### Global Professionals

The effort to expose all Brown School students to global knowledge and skills for professional practice requires time from faculty, students and staff to devise appropriate and effective means for imparting this knowledge and to frame these in terms of a required global competency. Some of this information can be integrated into existing coursework, but there is need to support other initiatives that are outside the classroom, requiring investment of funds. Professional Development may be another avenue for learning, for example, cross-cultural practice skills. For global learning and research opportunities for students, time and financial support is needed to develop new programs that are longer in duration than current field-based courses. As our student population grows and in order to stay competitive with other schools and programs in public health, social work, and social policy, we need to increase the level of support for international practica – from the current average of \$1,500 to \$5,000 per student. A longer duration field experience (e.g., a semester) requires funding to support faculty and student expenses and in-country partner costs, perhaps up to \$100,000-\$150,000 for a course.

### Global Impact for Improving Lives

Similarly, faculty, staff and student time are required to consider innovative and effective means to ramp up the impact of ongoing activities and to work toward synergizing around focal areas and designing a new model for global work at the school. Identification of financial support including but not limited to research grants is necessary if research efforts are to be extended to broader implementation. Meaningful pilot research grants should aim to reach \$20,000-\$30,000 per grant (as opposed to the current \$3,500). Cultivation of selected organizations with interest and capacity to partner on these initiatives is another critical ingredient and many partners in developing countries require financial support to enable them to partner with us effectively.