STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY’S GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Prof. Kurt Dirks, Vice Chancellor of International Affairs

Key Contributors:
Laura Benoist - Associate Director, McDonnell International Scholars Academy
Roumy Theunissen – Director of Global Conversations
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global engagement is integral to advancing WashU’s research, teaching, and reputation today. With economic and societal trends, it also lays the groundwork for future returns. This report provides an overview of current activity and proposed strategic directions.

1. WashU has a number of areas of strength related to global engagement. Numerous faculty across the university are engaged in meaningful work in international settings, most schools have strategies and operations which include a significant international component, several unique programs for students exist, and we have a growing alumni base outside the US. The McDonnell International Scholars Academy is a distinctive program that helps recruit top graduate students, provides a unique educational experience for those students, and is a means of creating financial support.

2. While we have a great deal of international activity, a key challenge is that efforts frequently occur in isolation, and there is a lack of knowledge and coordination, which creates inefficiencies and limits the potential for impact. As one stakeholder summed it up, “There are many rays of light; the challenge is to transform them into a coherent beam. We need a lens to do that.” The office of the VCIA will seek to create synergies by:
   - **Focusing energy and resources on advancing areas of current and emerging strengths.** Several units have significant international research activity and reputational standing that can be further developed. Some examples include art and design programs, biodiversity and conservation, business education, energy and environment, global health, informatics, international law, and social work. In terms of education, the McDonnell Scholars program can be further strengthened and grown to have an even greater impact.
   - **Creating mechanisms that facilitate collaboration across campus** to recruit students, build unique educational opportunities, and assist faculty research, while allowing for academic units to pursue their individual goals. Identifying a set of priority areas on which the VCIA office should focus its efforts is a means to achieve this.
   - **Identifying resources to achieve these goals.** For new resources, we look toward leveraging our growing international alumni base and relationships with local and foreign corporations and partner institutions. Many of these alumni are in regions of economic growth and new wealth creation, which hold long-term promise for WashU.

3. To provide clarity and focus, we propose three strategic goals: 1) **give every student an international perspective through their educational experience**, 2) **advance research that has impact and recognition internationally**, and 3) **enrich the talent and diversity of WashU by recruiting premier students from across the globe**. The report identifies several promising opportunities for each goal. Short-term and long-term metrics can be established and tracked for each of these areas.
STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR WASHU’S GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

CURRENT STATE OF GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Global engagement has become an integral part of advancing WashU’s research, preparing our students for success, and enhancing the institution’s standing. Just as globalization “flattened” the world economy, it also transformed higher education over the last decade. In many areas, research increasingly relies on global efforts to make big advances. Our faculty seek to draw on expertise beyond our borders, collect unique data and run clinical trials internationally, expand their access to funding sources and increase the scope of their research impact. Other countries have experienced major economic growth and new wealth creation, which has resulted in strong educational systems and investments in research and people. Washington University academic units have increasingly reached out to international sources to ensure they recruit top faculty and students, instead of limiting the pool to domestic sources. Students actively seek international experiences, recognizing that their career success requires developing cross-cultural skills, a global mindset and competencies. As a result, international engagement has become a necessary and integral part of today’s premier universities, both to generate immediate returns, as well as to make an investment in the future. The entrepreneurial efforts of faculty and schools, along with a focus from the Chancellor, led to a dramatic expansion of international activity. Thus, there is a great amount and diversity of international activity, and we have many assets in place.

At the university level, we have pursued a strategy to internationalize by forging strategic relationships with select research institutions around the globe, particularly focused in Asia. Founded in 2005, the McDonnell International Scholars Academy serves as the lead initiative for WashU’s global engagement. Through its network of 34 partner institutions around the world, the Academy has expanded opportunities to recruit talented international graduate students, to pursue collaborative research to address some of humanity’s most vexing challenges, and strengthen the university’s reputation as a world-class institution. A recent assessment indicates that although more work is needed to fulfill its promise the McDonnell Academy, and particularly the Scholars program, is a unique model that distinguishes us from peer institutions.

In the last decade, there has been a proliferation of international activity at WashU. Today, international students come from more than 90 different countries and represent 19 percent of total student enrollment. Including faculty, staff, students and scholars there are more than 130 nationalities represented on campus. 1 in 3 undergraduate students study abroad for credit. Our global community also includes a network of more than 10,000 alumni living outside the United States. We take pride in being a community that is driven and committed to making an impact on the quality of life around the world. Taken together, our various international activities and programs help position WashU as a global leader in teaching, research, patient care, and service to society.

We have a sound foundation on which we can build to advance our international profile. However, due to a siloed approach, we are not currently positioned to take full advantage of the many disparate efforts spread across different units and programs. Too often our work in the global space is underappreciated, both within and beyond campus. Internally, there is a lack of awareness about the extent and impact of our international work. Externally, due in part to our geographic focus on Asia, we struggle with recruitment and name recognition in many other parts of the globe and perform inconsistently in global rankings.

We have gathered input from more than 75 stakeholders through a listening tour, collected archival data on current international activity at WashU and with our university partners, and conducted an initial competitive landscape analysis. This report summarizes some of the key insights and potential future directions for our global engagement. One of the key takeaways was summed up by this stakeholder quote, “There are many rays of light; the challenge is to transform them into a coherent beam. We need a lens to do that.” Our main challenge moving forward is to create greater coordination and focus around our work in the international space.
CURRENT STRENGTHS

- Accomplished faculty: Numerous faculty at all levels across the university are already engaged in meaningful work in international settings while many more are interested in pursuing international projects in the future. In STEM disciplines, health, and some aspects of humanities, art, architecture, and social sciences, international research is integral.

- High-impact research: An area of particular strength is global health, with influential research in developing countries on malnutrition, the microbiome, and infectious diseases. Other areas with high concentration of international activity include: social work, anthropology, biodiversity and conservation, art and architecture, environment, energy and sustainability, and international law.

- Internationally-engaged schools and units: Most schools have strategies and operations which include a significant international component, including the Brown School, Olin Business School, McKelvey School of Engineering, Sam Fox School, School of Law, and multiple departments within Arts & Sciences.

In the area of medicine, there are multiple units which are highly internationally engaged, such as the Institute for Public Health and the Institute for Informatics. Other globally engaged units include: International Center for Environment, Energy and Sustainability (InCEES), McDonnell Academy Global Energy and Environment Partnership (MAGEEP), Harris World Law Institute, and the more recently established Living Earth Collaborative, Africa Initiative, and Social Policy Institute.

- Committed alumni: We have more than 10,000 alumni living around the world. International alumni and parents in Asia hold a special pride in their association with WashU. The alumni community in Greater China is particularly large, growing, and eager to be engaged. It includes an impressive network of successful alumni of our highly-ranked EMBA program with Fudan University and many in the health care industry.

- Talented students: The McDonnell International Scholars Academy provides a unique model for cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural graduate education, and it has both financial and individual support within WashU. There are also a number of international student groups active across campus, organizing signature cultural events such as the Lunar New Year Festival and Diwali celebration.

- Existing infrastructure: The McDonnell International Scholars Academy has established relationships that bridge faculty and departments at WashU and university partners across the globe. Its partnership network has the potential to expand collaboration and exchange.

- Local support: Many corporations and cultural institutions in St. Louis have significant international ties and interests and seek to recruit top global talent from WashU. Examples of organizations that currently support WashU and have global interests include Boeing, Bayer, Centene, Emerson, Mallinckrodt, and Nestlé Purina, among others. St. Louis also has other groups which may be interested in being engaged for business or cultural reasons.
CURRENT CHALLENGES

- **Organizational silos**: Current international activity associated with faculty and students occurs in silos. This has several implications:
  - Inefficient use of University resources;
  - Missed opportunities for greater impact in research and in student recruitment and education;
  - Underappreciation of the scope and impact of our efforts, both internally and externally;
  - Lack of focus on areas where we can make the most difference.

- **Dependence on Asia**: About 75 percent of our international students come from Asia, 60 percent from China alone. Overinvestment in Asia poses significant risks for recruitment, contributes to underperformance in global rankings, and carries risks to our future fundraising capacity from international alumni, given the lack of diversity in our portfolio. The McDonnell Academy partner network is mainly concentrated within Asia and China. Thus, opportunities for research and recruiting in other parts of the globe are more limited.

- **Academy’s limited scope**: During its early stage, the McDonnell Academy has focused its efforts on solidifying the graduate Scholars program and now has 85 scholars in residence. In terms of serving as a platform for academic commerce, there is significant variability the collaboration across partners. It has helped to promote research collaboration for some areas and faculty, but that scope remains relatively narrow. To realize its promise, that scope needs to be broadened.

- **Gap in study abroad**: Only 35 percent of WashU undergraduates study abroad for credit, compared to more than 50 percent reported by peer institutions. Curriculum requirements in some disciplines also limit opportunities to engage in study abroad. Increasing participation also requires an institutional commitment to make study abroad more accessible and inclusive of students of different socioeconomic backgrounds by lowering the financial impediments.

- **International risk**: Universities face greater risk of international engagement in multiple ways, such as loss of intellectual property, international travel risks, dependence on particular countries, among other factors. The risk is increased by silos of activity and information.

- **Limited resources**: Funding is needed to advance international efforts. To enhance undergraduate education, institutional investments are required to support study abroad experiences. Additional funds are also needed to nurture high-impact research, particularly on the Danforth campus.

- **Competition from peers**: Institutional peers such as Cornell, Emory and Vanderbilt have articulated robust and ambitious global strategies, backed by substantial institutional investments. To remain visible and globally competitive relative to the efforts of peers, must continue to think forward.

- **Poor name recognition internationally**: WashU does not have a strong reputation in many parts of the world, particularly in Europe, which hurts our performance in global reputational rankings, and limits recruitment and research.
Envisioning the Future: Opportunities for Advancing WashU’s Global Impact

GOALS

Intentional global engagement can help advance the University’s mission of discovering and disseminating knowledge through research as well as teaching and learning in several key ways. WashU graduates will be prepared to be citizens and leaders in their communities by truly understanding other cultures and perspectives. Many WashU faculty work with colleagues across the globe to create important discoveries that they hope will benefit mankind. Washington University will be a richer experience for everyone, with a student body that brings great intellectual ability and can share perspectives from around the world. These ideas are captured by three strategic goals.

- **Teaching & learning:** Give every student an international perspective through their educational experience.
- **Research & service to society:** Advance research that has impact and recognition internationally.
- **Talent & diversity:** Enrich the talent and diversity of WashU by recruiting premier students from across the globe.

Below are examples of potential opportunities that can be pursued by building on existing strengths. Each of these items was identified by one or more stakeholders. In addition, for several of these ideas, there are existing models within WashU that can be extended or adapted. The second section highlights the structural factors that will best help achieve these objectives. The exact form that each of the ideas outlined below would take would be defined through a process involving key stakeholders.

**Opportunities**

**Teaching & learning:** Give every student an international perspective through their educational experience.

1. **Distinctive educational programs.** For professional success, as well as to be productive citizens, it is important that students are exposed to and are able to constructively engage with ideas, values and perspectives different from their own. As part of a WashU education, we should create meaningful experiences, both on campus and around the world, that instill cross-cultural awareness and broaden our students’ intellectual and cultural horizons. Distinctive programs in this area will provide an educational benefit as well as attract students to Washington University and create name recognition.

- Expand existing distinctive programs. For example, the McDonnell Academy Scholars program is a multidisciplinary, multicultural program designed for graduate students that is unique and with potential to achieve significant success. For undergraduate students, the Israel Summer Business Academy and the Sam Fox program in Florence, Italy are examples of impactful programs that serve students from across campus. Do we need to create additional unique and distinguishable programs?

- Explore how we might create a unique undergraduate experience that brings together students from different cultures (and potentially countries) to develop global competencies and
leadership skills. This would help students to further develop their ability to understand and work with others who come from different backgrounds and hold different views.

2. **Study abroad experiences.** Expand access by creating a portfolio of study abroad experiences of different durations and types (including internships, thesis research travel, service learning, and intensive language training) that make it possible for the majority of undergraduates to have a substantive international experience. Make study abroad opportunities accessible to students of different socioeconomic backgrounds. This requires an institutional commitment to provide resources and lower the financial barriers that prevent many students from pursuing international experiences.

3. **Cross-campus programming on world affairs.** To foster a global mindset for every student, we envision enhancing the on-campus experience with a couple of signature events annually that engage our community and increase global awareness, particularly among our undergraduates. For example, week-long experiences in a “Festival of Ideas” format could be leveraged to highlight major global trends and our faculty experts who are making an impact around the world. International affairs should be part of the conversation on the WashU campus. It may also engage the St. Louis community.

**Research & service to society:** Advance research that has impact and recognition internationally.

1. **Mechanisms to foster research with global partners.** A number of areas of research require international collaboration, because the problem is better studied in another country, or because the expertise exists in other countries. In other cases, learning across national borders can help find solutions to local problems. An area of need identified from discussions with faculty is to create more opportunities for WashU faculty to connect with researchers from other countries and to help incubate collaborative projects. As a first step toward this goal, we can re-envision the bi-annual McDonnell Academy symposium. Specifically, working with WashU faculty, we could identify an anchor theme of global significance that would be inclusive of a range of disciplines and engage researchers across campus. The core of the symposium would consist of research-based workshops led by faculty across WashU. As a capstone, the symposium would have a few broad plenary sessions in which scholars from across multiple disciplines and countries convene to discuss, debate, and tackle the full scope of the issue. Following the symposium, a small seed grants scheme aligned with the same thematic anchor, could serve as a launch pad for new research projects. Such a scheme would give preference but not be limited solely to projects involving McDonnell Academy partners, and would be designed to expand opportunities more broadly across the University. A goal of this approach is to better promote faculty collaboration and to increase the breadth of WashU faculty who would be engaged.

Over time, we can work to support small, focused faculty-driven international conferences and workshops and facilitate faculty exchanges that can produce tangible projects.

2. **Mechanisms for internal collaboration.** Although there are many faculty with interests and expertise in international areas, most do not know others on campus who are working on similar problems in different geographies, or related problems in the same geography. As a result, researchers often struggle to identify potential collaborators at WashU who are already engaged in a specific country or region. At a recent visit of U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, Stuart Symington, numerous Africa experts met for the first time and were surprised to discover so many other colleagues with research projects in the region. To increase knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and a dynamic intellectual culture, we need to create mechanisms that connect WashU faculty with shared international interests.
and expertise. This could involve developing a clearinghouse for resources and information on global work (a frequently mentioned idea) and revising the WashU global website to be more informative and service oriented. It would also be helpful to bring together more regularly faculty with related interests to facilitate the exchange of information about ongoing and new projects, potential funding sources and partners, alumni and other useful contacts in a specific country (similar to what is done by the Global Health Center). These efforts would be led by faculty with expertise in specific areas, with a small amount of support from the VCIA office.

3. **International research visibility.** We need a more deliberate effort to enhance the visibility of our research to a global audience, both for recruiting graduate students as well as managing international rankings. By identifying thematic anchors and relevant faculty expertise, we can have a more targeted and focused approach to promoting our research impact. With support from the Office of Public Affairs and Alumni & Development, we can work to develop an outreach strategy to increase engagement of international alumni, organizations and media outlets.

**Talent & diversity:** *Enrich the talent, knowledge, and diversity of Washington University by recruiting first class students from across the globe.*

1. **Create synergies around recruitment.** All of the graduate academic units share the same goal, which is to recruit talented students from across the globe. Because of differences in programs, structural factors and funding, they operate independently. While preserving this autonomy, we can create some coordinating mechanisms in recruiting processes across graduate programs. This can create some synergies by sharing knowledge and coordinating or pooling efforts to recruit from geographies that they could not pursue alone. For example, convening of graduate admissions staffs from across schools can help identify areas where it makes sense to collaborate. An additional step is to develop a toolkit of materials that can be used across schools to recruit international graduate students.

2. **Diversify recruitment.** Given the risks posed by dependence upon China, we need to explore strategies to diversify recruitment. This could involve a strategic approach in which we identify promising regions of interest to several schools and focusing resources. In addition, we plan to review and revise the composition of the McDonnell Academy partners to retire some of the inactive partners, further engage strong partners, and identify new partners that provide a focal point for international work and recruitment. The partners would be academic anchors in countries where we seek to recruit top graduate students (all graduate students, not limited to McDonnell Scholars).

At the undergraduate level, efforts to explore other parts of the globe are limited by the financial aid budget and challenging goals for domestic recruitment, which require balancing resources to align with institutional priorities. To diversify international undergraduate recruitment, we need an institutional commitment to increase access for international students with financial need.

3. **Summer programs at WashU.** When individuals spend time on our campus and with our faculty and students, we dramatically increase the odds of attracting them, or their friends, as students. We propose to develop additional summer programs to help attract international students to WashU. There are several existing models for this on campus, such as the research internship program run by the McKelvey School of Engineering and the program run by University College. To create streams of revenue, and of potential graduate students, WashU could create a set of summer programs that include pre-masters and pre-PhD programs that include substantive
content areas, intensive English programs, professional skills development, and test preparation, similar to the USC International Academy. The Law School recently opened an Intensive Legal English Program that is an interesting example at WashU.

**STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES**

A part of the strategy requires the structure that will allow us to efficiently and effectively realize these opportunities.

1. **Strategic focus.** In order to make more significant progress as an institution, we need to sharpen the focus for our international engagement. One dimension of focus involves geographies. This entails looking at the alignment between opportunities to recruit talent, foster high-impact research, and leverage alumni strength, and the emphasis on each of these in different geographies (e.g., China, East Asia, Israel/Middle East, Africa, South America, Europe). A second dimension involves broad thematic areas in which we have strength. The University has identified several thematic areas but it may be appropriate to review their framing and identify ways in which faculty from multiple disciplines can contribute. Finally, the strategic focus for how we engage internationally needs to be aligned with the broader WashU strategic plan.

2. **Coordinating infrastructure.** Research and teaching necessarily occur within the academic units. Faculty are the engine for this activity and succeed based on having the freedom to utilize their expertise and energy. This model will continue to be the driving force for international activity. There are, however, synergies and efficiencies that can be achieved by an infrastructure to facilitate collaboration and provide resources that are commonly needed. The willingness to collaborate across campus exists, but often does not get traction due to the dispersion of knowledge and lack of easy mechanisms. Peer institutions tend to have stronger global offices to help overcome some of these barriers to doing international work. Following other peer institutions, the VCIA office’s mission can be defined in a way that helps spur collaborative activity across campus, serves as a central resource for faculty related to international engagement, and works with stakeholders to create and implement policies and practices related to international engagement. The McDonnell Academy provides an existing structure for engaging with other institutional partners. This network can be re-aligned and optimized by reducing the number of partnerships, diversifying their locations to fit the goals, and creating stronger institutional bonds with some of the partners. Where needed, the VCIA office can also serve as a central point for connecting with external parties such as other universities, governmental bodies, St. Louis international organizations.

3. **Resources.** Resources for achieving this plan can be generated through several means:
   - Create efficiencies and re-align resources with the strategic plan.
   - Provide new institutional resources that align with the broader WashU strategy.
   - Leverage the growing international alumni base for financial support. The alumni are interested in helping to create connections between their home and WashU, and supporting the success of WashU, as it is aligned with their own ‘brand’. This allows the university to be less dependent upon resources from the U.S.
   - Identify new funding streams from domestic and foreign corporations and foundations that support global work.
   - Many of our partner institutions and their governments have resources available to support global engagement, particularly related to their faculty’s research.
**FURTHER ASSESSMENT**

The ideas in this document are intended to spur thinking and conversation about possible future directions. More input is needed to define an overarching, long-term strategic vision for WashU’s global engagement, in alignment with the University’s broader strategic plan and institutional priorities. Below are a set of questions that can serve as a basis to further conversations. These questions capture the essence of the key issues identified.

- How can we better leverage existing activities and expertise through collaboration – across campus and disciplines, with St. Louis institutions/corporations, with international partners?

- How can we build on current areas of strength to develop distinctive research and educational programs? How can we incubate and support our faculty who are developing emerging areas of strength?

- How can we create meaningful and distinctive experiences so that each student graduates from WashU able to understand and constructively engage with individuals from different backgrounds and cultures?

- How can the office of the Vice Chancellor for International Affairs create synergies that allow for greater impact for WashU and generate economies of scale and scope?

- What steps can we take to increase the cultural diversity of the WashU student population? How can we best leverage that diversity in the educational experiences? What resources do we need to ensure top talent from across the globe has the access to a WashU education?
ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OVERVIEW

“There are many rays of light; the challenge is to transform them into a coherent beam. We need a lens to do that.”