

Report on “Student Recruitment” Discussion

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The participants at this discussion represented virtually every type of institution present at this conference:

We had representatives from colleges or universities from Canada, the U.S. and Germany. We had both public and private, large and small schools represented. As well, we had representatives of at least one of the funding agencies present.

The discussion was wide-ranging and fruitful.

The issue of student recruitment was quickly identified as being one difficult to speak about until one knows who is being recruited and for what.

That is, were we speaking of undergraduate or graduate students and for study abroad/semester exchange type programs, joint or dual type degrees or simply a “foreign degree”

I believe we all agreed that the problems associated with recruitment for each of these would be quite different.

And, of course, all of us at each of our institutions are having to become more sophisticated in recruitment – we talked some about techniques like electronic opportunities,

blogging etc....
and I think as nations
we must be getting better at this
as some of the statistics we have seen today have shown.

So, then since we have some idea of “recruitment” in general
and because this is a conference about joint degrees
and those earned between institutions across the Atlantic –
our discussion did seem to settle there
though we did not consciously limit the discussion to this question.

We did discuss the need for definitions
and consistency of terms.
It seems that as for North America,
we are being quite generous
in permitting schools to use the terms loosely and individualistically.

That is fine,
except that if we are going to try to enter the world of Bologna,
and if we’re talking RECRUITMENT
we better know what it is we are offering.

Specifically, what is it that we are recruiting for?

Secondly, we discussed
the need to know better
what it is
the students will do
with
what it is
we are recruiting them for.

Will a joint degree contribute to their knowledge base?
Their happiness? Their employability.
There is certainly anecdotal data
and employer interests which we can point to,
but in order to be more systematic about this,
we need data we can rely on.
And, data that reaches across disciplines and into the humanities.

On the North American side –
it is not as though we are competing for students
who already know they WANT a joint degree
and they are just trying to figure out which of us offers the one they **want**.

We are ACTUALLY working
to be one of the first to have a true/genuine joint degree program.
And, our first recruitment effort
will likely be the recruitment of key stake holders on our campuses
so that we can construct one.

THEN we will need to recruit students to make it go.

On the German/European side:
it seems that the institutions need to recruit a partner and,
there was an interesting discussion about recruiting a partner
who in fact may not look at all like you in terms of strengths.

That, partnerships should be developed
on the theory that “opposites attract” –
not that they attract each other , but that together
the combination may attract more students than otherwise.

As we all know,
these partnerships usually begin with a personal/academic interest
between a couple of people on either side of the Atlantic,
which means that the **next step**
is for the North American institution
to recruit the key stakeholders
who can and are willing to address
the likely tuition imbalance, the credit issue and the language issue –
all very important and potentially divisive issues.

And **then** recruitment of students on either side of the Atlantic can begin.
So – it seems that perhaps the recruitment of students is somewhere down
the road.

It will be critical to develop 1) definitions; 2) a strategy for development of
these degrees with concrete steps to implementation and 3) evidence of what
the achievement of these joint degrees can do for students.