



The Gateway to Expanding International Partnerships

William I. Brustein, Vice Provost for Global Strategies and International Affairs
Maureen E. Miller, Director of Communications, Office of International Affairs

When E. Gordon Gee, President of The Ohio State University, stepped off the plane in Shanghai, China in June 2010, he knew that a significant transformation was about to take place. A change so bold for a university with roots deeply grounded in the state of Ohio that it would need the support of the entire institution to take advantage of the opportunity. For Ohio State, having a physical presence – opening a Global Gateway office, first in Shanghai – would expand Ohio State’s collaborations internationally and forge new partnerships with a multitude of audiences that would enhance the university’s research, teaching and engagement mission.

We have entered an era in which internationalizing universities is fast becoming the norm. Universities are fully engaged in the internationalization of their campuses, broadening opportunities for students, faculty teaching and research and connecting with institutions of higher education and businesses whose strengths complement their own. In order to enhance their relationships across the oceans, American universities have begun opening their doors in other parts of the world, which have included small liaison offices that focus on recruiting international students while others have invested on a larger scale by developing branch campuses.

As Ohio State methodically planned to expand its global reach, the development of Global Gateways, or smaller, multifunctional offices, proved the best approach, providing the

university more flexibility and offering new and unique ways in which to build partnerships with a wide variety of constituencies. The Gateway concept was born out of the need to be more strategic in the university's international engagement. The idea of establishing a physical presence in key locations around the world would enable Ohio State to develop broader and deeper ties. Ohio State looked at a variety of Gateway models including building "brick and mortar" campuses, but this concept, in reality, was not a good fit for the mission of a public land grant university. Building a campus would take a significant capital investment and would limit Ohio State's ability to expand to more than one international location. Opening Global Gateway offices proved the most viable and accessible way for Ohio State to build its presence across the globe.

To determine specific locations for the Gateways, Ohio State reviewed its existing international connections including Memoranda of Agreements and institutional partnerships, its international student populations, locations of study abroad programs and Ohio State alumni, and the presence of Ohio corporations in other countries. It was important to identify locations that already mapped well with the university in terms of existing collaborations, whether it was students, faculty, alumni or businesses. The final analysis deemed that the Global Gateways concept would advance Ohio State's engagement in a wide variety of international settings and fulfill its strategic partnership goals at many different levels.

This article will provide the blueprint of how Ohio State increased its international partnerships through its Global Gateways, the strategies of how alliances were built, the importance of engaging faculty, students and alumni, and the ways to connect a university's international partnerships with businesses in order to benefit the local economy. As with all new

initiatives, there are some growing pains along the way, and lessons learned from the experience will be shared.

The Gateway is designed to strengthen several priorities of any given university including faculty teaching and research collaborations, international institutional partnerships, international education experiences for students, recruitment of international students and scholars, international alumni networking, cultivation of donor prospects, and in Ohio State's instance, the global competitiveness of Ohio-based businesses. Ohio State is seizing the Gateway as a catalyst to enrich its international partnerships on many different levels.

The Gateway as a tool to widen the circle of international partnerships must be undertaken with careful thought, knowledge and understanding of a university's current collaborations and future opportunities. Ohio State's Gateway site locations emerged from a systematic examination of those activities, as well as taking into consideration which countries Ohio-based companies had expanded to globally. Ohio State has opened its China Gateway, and is scouting opportunities in India, Brazil, Turkey, Europe and sub-Saharan Africa in order to match student and faculty interests.

Building Partnerships through the Gateways

As with any major institutional goal, there must be buy-in from senior leadership as well as faculty, administrators and staff. Opening Gateway offices in key regions of the world requires that they perceive the Gateway as adding value to what they do as well as viewing it as one of the foundations of the internationalization process. To help pave the way, Ohio State set up faculty advisory committees for each of the regions in which it plans to open Gateway offices. Additionally, leadership from the colleges as well as senior administrators in the special interest

areas of development and communications, are working together to build bridges that will attract potential new contacts for the university. Without everyone helping to facilitate the success of the Gateways as a component of the internationalization process, they will eventually wither on the vine if forced to depend solely on altruistic motivations or top-down enforced compliance.

The role of the university president cannot be overlooked when it comes to opening doors and building relationships in other countries. With the opening of Ohio State's China Gateway, President Gee, along with other senior level faculty and university administrators, took advantage of the visit to China to establish new relationships. Meetings took place with leadership at universities and key government administrators and community leaders. And, a reception was held in Shanghai for students enrolled at Ohio State – and their parents – as a way to welcome them to the university and provide them with an opportunity to talk one-on-one with President Gee and other university officials. Meetings with community and government leaders helped introduce Ohio State and its Gateway presence to the Shanghai community and paved the way for future partnerships, while the reception held for incoming international students built a level of trust with their parents who were sending their son or daughter thousands of miles away to a country in which they have no connection. As a result, Ohio State's recruitment efforts coupled with the opening of the Gateway office in Shanghai, resulted in a 52 percent increase in the number of Chinese students attending Ohio State.

In addition to Nanjing and Shanghai Jiao Tong universities, President Gee also met with university presidents at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and East China Normal University. These visits helped solidify Ohio State's commitment to China and its willingness to collaborate on a number of academic projects, which will prove beneficial for Ohio State in the long term.

All of these relationship building opportunities came as a result of Ohio State's China Gateway.

Signing on the Dotted Line

There is no question that global institutional partnerships constitute a major building block of the global university. However, there must be strategic, mutually beneficial reasons to establish a partnership with a foreign institution and they must be agreed upon in advance. For the partnership to have a realistic chance of succeeding it requires that each side sees it as adding value to their institution.

The Ohio State Gateway has facilitated several Memoranda of Agreements that will support collaborative research in food safety, research in the area of age-related diseases such as Parkinson's, as well as solidify study abroad programs and student exchanges. Additionally, Ohio State has made progress in developing dual or joint degree programs with our close partner universities which include internships with Ohio-based multinational companies.

Whether building partnerships with institutions in developed or developing countries, the reality is that viable and sustainable partnerships typically evolve from collaborations where both partners believe that they are benefiting from the relationship.

Engaging Faculty

The Gateway office has the ability to engage faculty in partnering with international institutions to further research projects and provide new experiences for students to experience another culture. To accomplish this tactic several Ohio State colleges and departments partnered

to provide funding for grants and scholarships in the Gateway regions that Ohio State had identified. Grants were made available for faculty to:

1. Develop course content that could be adapted into collaborative activities between an Ohio State class and one or more international partner institutions
2. Develop discipline-specific study abroad programs at an international institution
3. Engage in research collaboration with international partners that explore global issues in a regional context that are aligned with Ohio State's five Centers of Excellence: Climate, Energy and the Environment; Health and Well-Being, Human Behavior and Bioinformatics; State, Regional and Urban Development; Food Production, Supply; and Safety Materials, Manufacturing Technologies and Nanotechnology

Incentivizing faculty who have interests in the Gateway countries can have a positive effect on deepening the university's international relationships, which benefits both the faculty member as an individual and the institution as a whole.

Reconnecting with International Alumni

Ohio State has more than 500,000 living alumni around the world and the university prides itself on ensuring that their connection to Ohio State remains strong. Having a physical presence in regions around the world can impact the university's ability to reconnect and strengthen relationships with international alumni. Ohio State's China Gateway has recharged our alumni living in Shanghai and the surrounding area. They have formed an Ohio State China Alumni Club, which doubled its membership in 12 months. The group meets monthly for social gatherings, but also helps the university locate additional alumni and connect with businesses in the area with which partnerships may develop.

Opening Doors to the Corporate Community

Companies around the world are especially looking for future employees and internships can serve as an excellent means for both the student and company to evaluate each other for future employment opportunities. The Gateways provide another avenue to help universities build rapport with U.S. corporations doing business overseas. A university's international alumni can open doors and help facilitate meetings between university officials and corporate executives to determine mutual interests. Furthermore, a university's faculty provides one of the richest resources for international student internships through their collegial networks and contacts with the private and public sectors. Since many of our international and domestic alumni work in multinational corporations and NGOs, they are well positioned to locate and organize international internships opportunities. Our institutions need to take advantage of these rich resources.

Ohio State seeks to connect with Ohio-based businesses operating globally as a way to contribute to the growing local economy. The university plans to offer executive training programs to corporate groups and Ohio State faculty have begun developing programs based on their expertise in the areas of food safety, supply chain management, intellectual property, and others. This effort will undoubtedly build stronger ties to the business community globally while generating revenue to offset operational costs of the Gateway office.

Lessons Learned

Expanding Ohio State's partnerships through the Global Gateways has been an exciting initiative, and it is important to take a look at some important lessons learned throughout the process.

1. **Patience.** Know that opening an office in another country is a long-term investment in both time and funding. For example, in China there is much involved in obtaining government permissions and appropriate licenses for the type of work a university plans to conduct in the country. Relationship building is key. Face to face contact with Chinese officials takes time, but in the long run, a university can reap the benefits of the trust gained and the time invested.
2. **Institutional Commitment.** A university must have the commitment from leadership to move international initiatives forward. The support needs to be far more than “talking the talk,” it needs to be backed by a financial commitment.
3. **Engage Faculty and Students.** Faculty and students must be included in the planning process. Without their support and belief in the initiative, it is much more difficult to achieve the goal. Tangible examples of the benefits of the Gateways and partnerships abroad must resonate with faculty and students so they can see how these initiatives can have a positive influence on their research and learning.
4. **Be True to Your University.** Know your university’s comparative advantages and capitalize on them. Examine the academic expertise at your particular university and identify fields of excellence. Emphasize your strengths and find a niche that sets your university apart from the rest.

Foreseeing the Future

The building blocks (students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, surrounding community, foreign universities, private and public sectors) all participate in the making of sound international partnerships. The successful universities of tomorrow will not be confined by four walls. The Gateways enable us to develop multi-faceted, meaningful partnerships that link

back to the central campus. This type of collaboration will allow us to achieve true global competence by comprehensively internationalizing the teaching, discovery and engagement missions of higher education through effective partnerships.