

The AASCU Global Engagement Initiative:
Educating Globally Competent Citizens

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Abstract

The Global Engagement Initiative (formerly Seven Revolutions Project), part of the American Democracy Project at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), focuses on educating globally competent citizens at colleges and universities. AASCU partnered originally with The New York Times Company, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and 10 AASCU member campuses to create a faculty toolkit, a national online blended-learning course, an eBook, faculty development workshops, and a student guide. All of these products focus on the promise and peril inherent in the global challenges of population, resources, technology, information, economies, conflict, and governance. The evolution of the partnerships, the products produced, and the distinctive aspects of the initiative are explained in this article.

Keywords: Seven Revolutions, Global Engagement, citizens

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities' (AASCU) Global Engagement Initiative has worked to educate globally competent citizens in colleges and universities for the past eight years through a variety of activities. Initially known as the Seven Revolutions Project, this initiative involved 12 AASCU campuses collaborating with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and The New York Times Company (The Times) to develop curricular materials for both faculty and students, to conduct professional development workshops for educators, and to design the first national blended-learning course within AASCU. This article explains the evolution of unique partnerships in this initiative, describes the outcomes achieved to date, and examines the unique aspects of this endeavor.

The Evolution of the Initiative

The genesis of the Global Engagement Initiative occurred when George Mehaffy, AASCU Vice President for Academic Leadership and Change, heard Eric Peterson, then Senior Vice President at CSIS, make a presentation in 2005 on "Seven Revolutions." Peterson identified population, resources, technology, information, economic integration, conflict, and governance as the key forces that would shape our world in the next 20 years. His research-based presentation was ultimately received by more than 80,000 people in 24 countries and 48 states.

Mehaffy recognized that the Seven Revolutions content could be incorporated into activities related to the American Democracy Project (ADP), an initiative within AASCU that focuses on promoting citizenship knowledge, skills, and engagement among students at more than 400 member institutions. In the spring of 2006, Mehaffy issued a call to chief academic officers at AASCU member institutions for campuses to become involved in a Seven Revolutions project. Previous ADP activities focused on only domestic topics, and the call to campuses was intended to focus on global issues.

Ten AASCU institutions initially became involved in this project in a meeting at CSIS in September 2006. This meeting included the chief academic officer and two faculty members from each of the 10 campuses, George Mehaffy and Cecelia Orphan from AASCU, Erik Peterson and Rachel Posner from CSIS, and Felice Nudelman from the Education Division of The Times. After seeing and hearing Peterson's presentation, those assembled discussed how AASCU and its member institutions, CSIS, and The Times could work together to foster citizenship

more globally. Initial ideas were discussed, and the group decided to meet again in February 2007.

Initial steps involved clarifying the purpose of the project and identifying the characteristics of globally competent citizens. The identified purpose of the Seven Revolutions Project was to educate globally competent citizens at AASCU institutions. A globally competent citizen was defined as a person who possessed the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to interact effectively in a globally interdependent society. Twenty-two specific knowledge, skill, and attitudinal characteristics were identified as the learning objectives of the project (Falk, Moss, & Shapiro, 2010). These characteristics are listed below:

Knowledge. Upon graduation, students will be *able* to:

1. Describe important current events and global issues (e.g., environmental, economic, political, health, population).
2. Understand and analyze issues and events in the context of world geography.
3. Explain how historical forces impact current events and issues.
4. Describe the nation/state system with its strengths and limitations.
5. Describe cultures from around the world, including religions, languages, customs, and traditions.
6. Identify transnational organizations (e.g., NGOs, multinational corporations) and their impact on current issues.
7. Explain the interdependence of events and systems.
8. Describe how one's own culture and history affect one's worldview and expectations.

Skills. Upon graduation, students will be *able* to:

1. Obtain relevant information related to the knowledge competencies listed above.
2. Analyze and evaluate the quality of information obtained.
3. Think critically about problems and issues.
4. Communicate effectively verbally and in writing.

5. Communicate and interact effectively across cultures.
6. Speak a second language.
7. Take action to effect change, both individually and with a team.

Attitudes. Upon graduation, students will be predisposed to:

1. Be open to new ideas and perspectives.
2. Value differences among people and cultures.
3. Be intellectually curious about the world.
4. Be humble, recognizing the limitations of one's knowledge and skills.
5. Reflect on one's place in the world and connection with humanity.
6. Engage in an ethical analysis of issues and have empathy for one's fellow human beings.
7. Feel a sense of responsibility and efficacy to take action based on ethical analysis and empathy. (Falk, Moss, & Shapiro, 2010, pp. 3-4)

For the 2007-2008 academic year, many of the participating member institutions used the Seven Revolutions framework and resources from The New York Times, CSIS, and other sources to teach courses with Seven Revolutions content on their home campuses. In so doing, faculty members, called Seven Revolutions Scholars, created courses, found relevant resources, developed and adapted appropriate teaching and learning materials, and collected initial data regarding what worked well and what could be improved in these course offerings.

Beginning at the ADP annual meeting in 2008, scholars offered specific workshops and concurrent sessions. Early sessions focused on the Seven Revolutions framework and the resources, as well as teaching and learning activities, to learn about this content. From 2008 through 2014, approximately 30 annual meeting sessions have been conducted on the use of the Seven Revolutions framework or materials.

The scholars developed a faculty toolkit for educating globally competent citizens during the 2008-2009 academic year. The scholars recognized that they and colleagues on their home campuses had learned a great deal about teaching and

learning related to Seven Revolutions and wanted to collect and share this information with other faculty members. The initial toolkit was completed in the summer of 2010, with a partial update occurring in fall 2011 and a second edition completed in spring 2012. The first two editions were offered in hardcopy format, with PDF versions available; the third edition, scheduled for completion in early 2015, will be online. A more complete description of the toolkit contents and other initiative outputs appears below.

As the first edition of the toolkit became available, the scholars began to offer workshops and institutes that summarized and highlighted the key information in the toolkit and that facilitated the process of applying this information to participants' local campuses. One-day pre-conference workshops were offered at the ADP annual meeting in June; a two-day fall institute was offered in Washington, D.C., or at a scholar's home campus; a two-day spring institute was sometimes held in Washington, D.C., in association with CSIS; and individual scholars or small groups offered workshops at various sites upon request. To date, scholars in the Global Engagement Initiative have offered 18 workshops and institutes to approximately 500 faculty members from across the country.

Beginning in October 2010, the scholars created an online blended-learning course on "Global Challenges: Promise and Peril in the 21st Century." AASCU's George Mehaffy suggested developing this course based on a "Red Balloon" concept that curriculum development can best be accomplished through the coordinated effort of diverse faculty members (Mehaffy, 2012). The course was created in the Epsilen learning management system using courses previously developed by individual scholars as a foundation. Based on current research on the efficacy of blended learning, this interdisciplinary course utilized the Seven Revolutions framework and content from *The New York Times*, CSIS, and other sources. Ten scholars participated in developing the Global Challenges course.

Soon after, the Global Challenges blended-learning course was incorporated by Sourcebooks into an eBook of the same name, and two scholars added additional content to round out the book format. This eBook became available in January 2012.

Throughout the last seven years, a student guide briefly summarizing the Seven Revolutions/Global Challenges content has been available. Originally, CSIS representatives drafted the student guide in 2007 and then updated this version in

2010. During 2013 several scholars created the “AASCU Global Challenges Student Guide,” with updated global challenges content within the broad Seven Revolutions framework.

The Outputs of the Project

Five primary outputs resulted from the Seven Revolutions project, now the Global Engagement Initiative. The most recent version of each of these outputs is described below. Information about each of these resources and how to obtain them can be found at: <http://www.aascuglobalchallenges.org/products.htm>.

The current **faculty toolkit** (Elliott-Gower, Falk, & Shapiro, 2012) consists of hardcopy and PDF versions of 175 pages of resources and information that can be used by college and university faculty members to educate globally competent citizens. This second edition includes (1) an introduction to the toolkit and related global engagement initiatives, (2) an overview of the seven global challenges, (3) case studies of how partner institutions have used the global challenges framework in its curriculum and co-curriculum, (4) sample syllabi and other teaching and learning materials, and (5) a compendium of the best print, audio, video, and interactive resources for educating globally competent citizens. This toolkit has allowed faculty members to select the materials and resources that best meet their teaching and learning needs.

The third, online-only edition of the toolkit is currently being developed and will be available in early 2015. It will include information about instructional design, in addition to updates and expansion of materials described above. The toolkit remains an integral publication to the Global Engagement Initiative because it helps to address faculty concerns about interdisciplinary course development. Faculty members are typically more comfortable developing discipline-specific courses that are within their areas of expertise than interdisciplinary courses that may expand beyond their usual bounds. The toolkit continues to be designed by faculty for faculty to promote interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

A two-day **Global Engagement Institute** was held recently in Washington, D.C. The agenda for this meeting was similar to other workshops and institutes, and included the following items: (1) why educating globally competent citizens matters, (2) an overview of the global challenges, (3) course models that use the framework successfully, (4) assessing interdisciplinary learning, (5) teaching and learning activities, (6) resources related to global challenges, and (7) a sample

lesson on a global challenge topic. The institute also included a presentation on the *Global Trends 2030* report by Mike Jeffries of the National Intelligence Council (NIC, 2012) and a discussion by a panel of four students who had taken a Global Challenges course on three of the AASCU Global Engagement campuses. The one-day workshops held at the ADP meetings in June 2014 and on various campuses include abbreviated versions of the first seven items above. Participants typically leave these institutes enthusiastic about global learning and with a wealth of resources to help integrate their courses and curriculum with global content. The institutes also allow for an educational exchange of ideas, experiences, concerns, and questions, making them professional development opportunities for both scholars and attendees.

The **Global Challenges national blended-learning course** includes 10 lessons in an online format that can be purchased by individual students. The first lesson provides an introduction to the course and lessons 2-8 each cover one of the global challenges: population, resources, technology, information, economies, conflict, and governance, respectively. The ninth lesson focuses on global citizenship and thinking locally and acting locally. The tenth and final lesson comprises a summary and conclusion.

Each course lesson includes a carefully selected collection of print, audio, video, and interactive resources designed to achieve specific learning objectives. The course also includes a global village blog, critical thinking forum questions, lesson quizzes, and mid-term and final exams. The course was originally created in the Epsilen learning management system and is currently available in Blackboard, Desire2Learn, and Moodle Rooms. The blended learning course, which students can purchase in lieu of a textbook, is designed to give students up-to-date materials while reducing the cost of those materials. To date, the Global Challenges course has been used by an estimated 1,400 students at 15 different institutions. A more complete description of the course, its development process, and learning outcomes is included in a separate article in this issue of the *eJournal of Public Affairs*.

The **Global Challenges eBook** was adapted from the national blended-learning course and includes 10 chapters corresponding to the course lessons described above. In adapting the book from the course, the two faculty members who authored the original material realized that additional content was necessary to replace and enhance the CSIS material then included in the student guide. The eBook is available through iBooks and the Vitalsource bookshelf. To date,

approximately 500 eBooks have been sold. Faculty and students report that the eBook is a very cost-effective and efficient way to introduce students to core global challenge content.

The current version of the **student guide** was created in the spring and summer of 2013. Titled “Global Challenges: Promise and Peril in the 21st Century Student Guide,” the 22-page guide (in PDF format) includes three pages of introductory material, two pages of content for each of the seven global challenges, and five pages that explain the interconnectedness of the challenges and provide relevant references. The student guide is available through the AASCU Publications Bookstore and is bundled with the national blended-learning course. The student guide can be integrated into many courses where a quick overview of the key challenges facing the world can provide context for other content covered in the course.

Unique Aspects of this Project

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Global Engagement Initiative is the **collaboration of three very different organizations**: the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and The New York Times Company. Seldom have a professional organization, a bipartisan think tank, and a major news organization worked together on an educational initiative. While the nature of the relationship changed over the years, each organization has made unique contributions to the initiative.

AASCU has been the consistent lead organization throughout the project. George Mehaffy proposed the idea of working with CSIS to use their Seven Revolutions framework to develop citizenship knowledge and skills in an effort to address global issues. Through the years, AASCU has (1) assembled and supported member campuses, (2) provided opportunities to share information at the ADP annual meeting, and (3) provided a broader context and ideas for moving the project forward.

CSIS provided a provocative framework for understanding global issues and a variety of other support during the initiative. The Seven Revolutions conceptual framework has been at the core of the Global Engagement Initiative. CSIS provided important content at the beginning of the project; at the end of 2011, CSIS became less involved, and what had been known as the Seven Revolutions

Project was renamed the Global Engagement Initiative. The Seven Revolutions, the major forces shaping the world, became known as the Global Challenges and were modified to relate better to an education audience. CSIS has maintained an informal relationship with the initiative during the past three years.

The New York Times Company, and particularly its former Education Director Felice Nudelman, had partnered with AASCU on previous ADP initiatives. As a worldwide newsgathering organization, The Times had extensive information and content on Seven Revolutions topics dating back to 1851. In addition to the well-known print resources that are now all archived online, The Times also generates video, audio, and interactive content that could be integrated into the project. Nudelman introduced project leaders to the Epsilon learning management system, and The Times provided extensive resources for the emerging Global Challenges course. She also provided a connection to Sourcebooks to develop the Global Challenges eBook. When Nudelman left her position in 2012 to become president of Antioch University, The Times became less actively involved in the initiative. A digital subscription to *The New York Times* is currently bundled with the Global Challenges course.

A second unique feature of the Global Engagement Initiative involves the **partnership of college and university campuses** over the last eight years. Nine campuses and the University System of Georgia (then comprising 35 campuses) were initially involved in the project. One campus left the partnership early after a change in academic leadership, and the Georgia system withdrew because of budgetary challenges, but three Georgia campuses have subsequently rejoined the initiative. Three other campuses have recently joined as well. The current campus partners are (1) California State University at Fresno, (2) Dalton State College (GA), (3) Fort Hays State University (KS), (4) Fort Lewis College (CO), (5) Georgia College, (6) Kennesaw State University (GA), (7) Northern Arizona University, (8) the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, (9) Southeast Missouri State University, (10) the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, (11) the University of Minnesota Duluth, and (12) Western Kentucky University.

While several partner campuses have come and gone, their roles have been consistent throughout the initiative. One or two Global Engagement Scholars have represented each campus, often being selected and financially supported by the provost or chief academic officer. These scholars have typically met three times per year. The fall meeting usually includes offering a professional development

institute; the spring meeting sometimes includes an institute; and a pre-conference workshop occurs prior to the ADP annual meeting. At each of the three yearly gatherings, a “business” meeting occurs during which the scholars (1) decide on goals and activities of the initiative, (2) review progress since the previous meeting, (3) complete work on the various projects, (4) and organize the work activities until the scholars meet again. These same tasks are also addressed in phone conferences, which occur about every six weeks between face-to-face meetings.

A third distinctive characteristic of the initiative involves the **interdisciplinary perspectives** of the participating Global Engagement Scholars. The current scholars group includes faculty members from political science, social work, international relations, theater, justice studies, history, first-year studies, economics, communications, psychology, and leadership studies. These varied disciplines provide not only content knowledge related to the seven global challenges but also very different perspectives and worldviews. In an academic world where faculty members are still often sorted into disciplinary silos, this initiative has integrated faculty from a variety of backgrounds.

The initiative is enhanced because **each scholar contributes unique knowledge and skills** to the activities. Because of the varied backgrounds of the scholars, each one has been able to bring unique resources to the table. Seven different scholars take the lead in providing content on each of the global challenges, and other scholars provide guidance in process areas such as instructional design, project management, and assessment. As projects require different knowledge and skills, scholars whose abilities match those needs step up and take the lead.

A key element of the initiative is **collaborative product development**. Each product involves a number of scholars agreeing on a common goal, deciding on a plan to achieve that goal, allocating the work, completing tasks, integrating their separate products, reviewing and revising the final product, and collecting information on effectiveness. For example, in creating the Global Challenges course, 10 scholars contributed to the initial version, and several different scholars have worked on the revisions.

Key individuals have stepped up to support and enhance the initiative throughout its brief history. George Mehaffy, Erik Peterson, and Felice Nudelman have already been identified as making key contributions, but Rachel Posner and

Scott Aughenbaugh from CSIS, Cecilia Orphan and Jen Domagal-Goldman from AASCU's American Democracy Project, and Lynn Hall of The Times have supported those individuals and made significant contributions of their own. Denny Falk (University of Minnesota Duluth) and Keisha Hoerrner (Kennesaw State University) have provided leadership to the Global Scholars group; Shala Mills (Fort Hays State University) has provided leadership in revising and disseminating the Global Challenges course in her role as the National Coordinator for the Global Challenges project; Martin Shapiro (California State University Fresno) adapted and enhanced the Global Challenges course to create the eBook; and Ken Hill (Kennesaw State University) and Tina Zappile (Richard Stockton College of New Jersey) worked with others to author the Global Challenges student guide. At each professional development institute and workshop, each scholar contributes to the quality of the activities. Space here does not permit listing each of the scholars and the unique and extensive contributions that they have made.

A key factor in the success of this venture is that **the initiative has been able to adapt and change** over the years. As a Seven Revolutions Project, the initial plan was to create not a course but, rather, a toolkit that would provide resources for faculty to educate globally competent citizens in courses they had designed or were preparing to teach. Workshops and institutes made use of the resources in the toolkit. When George Mehaffy conceptualized the "Red Balloon Project," all of the partner and scholar resources were then devoted to creating a course for almost a year. When CSIS withdrew from the partnership, the Seven Revolutions Project became the AASCU Global Engagement Initiative, and the course revolved around Global Challenges rather than Seven Revolutions. The eBook evolved from the course, and the Global Challenges student guide became necessary when CSIS-provided materials became outdated. Through changes in organizational and campus partners, along with evolving projects, the initiative has maintained its focus on its ultimate goal—to educate globally competent citizens at colleges and universities.

The initiative was shaped by the participating organizations and individuals, resulting in particular strengths and weaknesses. The strengths, including solid instructional design, products that meet student and faculty needs, and efficient and effective use of emerging technologies, came about because the people in the project had knowledge and skills in this area. Early evaluation results from the Global Challenges course indicate that students generally believed that

they knew more about key global challenges, indicated that they did indeed know more about specific global issues, and changed attitudes related to impacting global problems (see Mills & Sun article in this issue for further information). The weaknesses, including lack of a coherent marketing strategy and limited comprehensive assessment to date, occurred because the partners and scholars did not have the resources or abilities and motivation to focus attention on these areas. To succeed into the future, the initiative will need to build on these strengths while generating resources and integrating individuals with the knowledge, skills, and motivations to address the weaknesses.

Conclusion

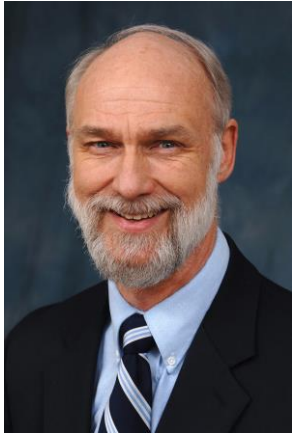
The Global Engagement Initiative represents a unique effort to meet an increasingly salient goal for colleges and universities, that is, to provide graduates with the knowledge, skills, and predispositions to interact effectively in a globally interdependent society. Every day the need for these graduates is apparent as our country and world struggle to address challenges such as population, resources, climate change, technology, inequality, and conflict.

This initiative has created products and opportunities to enhance the teaching and learning process related to global engagement. The faculty toolkit and ongoing professional development institutes and workshops are aimed at providing instructors with the knowledge, skills, and tools to effectively teach about global challenges and what we can do to address these challenges. The Global Challenges course and eBook, including the student guide, provide students with a rich set of learning resources and activities that will enable them to become more globally competent. The efforts of this initiative, along with complementary activities from organizations such as the American Association of Colleges and Universities and the American Council on Education, represent higher education's best hopes of educating globally competent citizens who will address the most critical challenges facing our world and of creating a future of promise rather than peril for us all.

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Author Biographies



Dennis R. Falk is Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Department of Social Work at the University of Minnesota Duluth. He taught a course on Global Issues in a variety of formats over the past twenty-five years. Denny's research interests include defining and promoting globally competent citizenship. He served as the lead AASCU Global Engagement (formerly Seven Revolutions) Scholar for six years, co-editing *Educating Globally Competent Citizens: A Toolkit* and helping to lead twelve workshops that use this toolkit as a foundation. Denny was a major contributor in developing the *Global Challenges* online national blended course.



Jennifer Domagal-Goldman is the National Manager of the American Democracy Project at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. She earned her doctorate in higher education from the Pennsylvania State University, her master's degree in higher education and student affairs administration from the University of Vermont, and her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Rochester. Jennifer's dissertation research focused on how faculty participation in a multidisciplinary community of practice focused on civic learning and engagement affected undergraduate teaching practices in their disciplinary courses. Jennifer is a member of the editorial board of the *eJournal of Public Affairs*.



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