

ACADEMIC GLOBALIZATION: A CONVERSATIONAL WORKSHOP

Stuart A. Umpleby
George Washington University
Washington, DC

Technical trends

- The spread of personal computers
- The growth of the internet and e-commerce
- The invention of social media
- Big data and data analytics
- E-books and access to journals on-line

Institutional trends

- Monitoring of consumer behavior by advertisers
- Monitoring of email traffic by national intelligence agencies
- The importance of patents in e-commerce
- New degree programs in data analytics
- New degree programs in cybersecurity

Trends in ideas

- In the 1950s and 1960s a split between philosophical and biological cybernetics on the one hand and computer and electronic cybernetics on the other hand
- Centers and institutes in systems and cybernetics were established on campuses in the 50s, 60s, and 70s but were closed in the 80s and 90s
- More narrow fields like computer science, operations research, systems engineering and artificial intelligence thrived
- Cybernetics, once thought to offer a common language for social, biological and engineering disciplines, is almost unknown today
- New conceptions of cybernetics and science are being developed

Global trends

- Increasing concern with climate change, e.g., weather, loss of species
- Difficulty in coping with a rise in immigration
- Concern with the stability of financial markets
- Worries about the stability of technical infrastructure, e.g., banks and pipelines
- Worries about resource scarcity – water, agricultural land, energy
- Early incidents in cyber warfare – theft of intellectual property, identity theft
- Terrorism by state and non-state actors

The global university system

- Low cost air travel makes possible frequent meetings among academics
- The internet enables co-authoring of academic papers and cooperation on research projects
- The Bologna Process, by standardizing curricula, facilitates the movement of students and faculty members among universities
- The collapse of the USSR reduced constraints on academic cooperation
- Desire to rise in university rankings is increasing competition among universities, particularly in producing research articles

Global brain or global university system

- A global university system has multiple, autonomous actors
- Cooperation among the parts is voluntary
- University values emphasize honesty; openness to criticism; testing claims against experience; development of consensus over time
- Universities have shared goals – understanding how the world works and passing on previous learning
- Entry, promotion and authority is (ideally) based on talent, hard work and elections
- The metaphor of a “global university system” is compatible with democracy

The current situation

- Unprecedented challenges
- Unprecedented technical and managerial capabilities
- Multiple systems problems at a time of fewer academic programs in systems thinking, design, and problem-solving

What is working now?

Why is it working?
What makes it work?

What is our vision of the future?

What actions would be helpful?

Contact Information

Prof. Stuart Umpleby
Department of Management
School of Business
George Washington University
Washington, DC 20052 USA

www.gwu.edu/~umpleby
umpleby@gwu.edu

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The global university system, 2

- Interest in applied, multi-disciplinary research, which was strong the years after WW II (50s, 60s, 70s) declined in the 80s and 90s due to:
 - The actions of accrediting organizations
 - The emphasis on publishing in one's field by ratings organizations
 - Concern by conservative political leaders that “global problems” will lead to more government
 - The desire by most academics to focus their attention narrowly