

The International Campus as Prototype for International Collaboration: South Korea's Incheon Global Campus

Anne Schiller and Minkyung Park

George Mason University, USA

Abstract

Institutional leaders drawn to the idea of opening new campuses overseas are often hindered by expense and concerns including that faculty there will be unable to remain engaged in research. This article focuses on how one international development project, the establishment of Incheon Global Campus (IGC) in Incheon, South Korea, has been based upon a novel partnership model with potential to reduce expenses incurred by any single higher education institution and promote research. The objective of the Incheon Global Campus project is the creation of a dynamic, multi-institutional, truly international campus. In this consortium model, an alliance of foreign institutions cooperates in various dimensions of academic, research, and extracurricular activity on a shared campus site. Participants leverage and combine respective strengths, experiences and expertise, among themselves and with a local foundation that manages campus operations. The IGC case suggests that a consortia approach to the operation of overseas campuses may better the odds for the mutual success of foreign universities and local managers, as well as enhance an overall international development initiative in important ways.

Introduction

The American Council for Education's 2012 report, *Mapping Internationalization*, suggested that comprehensive internationalization involves six key activities including "Collaboration and Partnerships." An internationalization effort that particularly requires collaboration is establishing an offshore or branch campus (Lane & Kinser 2012). Depending upon circumstances, establishing an offshore campus can involve partnerships with foreign governments, businesses, or other universities.

Without start-up funds or the authority to spend state monies abroad, many institutions are unable to consider offshore campuses as part of their global portfolio. Some institutions seek to overcome this obstacle by taking a fresh approach. This article focuses on the establishment of Incheon Global Campus (IGC) in Incheon, South Korea, which is based upon a novel multi-partner model. The partnerships will potentially reduce expenses incurred by any single institution and developers while contributing to the creation of a dynamic international campus experience that supports students, faculty, and the community in which it is located. In this consortium model, an alliance of foreign institutions cooperates in various dimensions of academic and extracurricular activity on a shared campus site. Participants leverage and combine respective strengths, experiences and expertise among themselves and with a local foundation that manages

campus operations. The IGC case suggests that a consortia approach to the operation of overseas campuses may better the odds for the mutual success of foreign universities and local managers, as well as enhance an overall international development initiative in important ways.

The Incheon Higher Education Hub Development Project

One of the world's newest cities, Songdo is built on 1,500 acres of reclaimed land near the Incheon Metropolitan area. Korea's ambitious plans for a higher education hub began with the designation of the Incheon Free Economic Zone (IFEZ), one of Korea's six free economic zones (KFEZ). IFEZ was designated as Korea's first free economic zone in 2003 and has been working on infrastructure development ever since. This mega construction project is considered "the largest private real-estate development in history" (Lindsay, 2010), and called the "city of the future" because of the smart and green technologies integrated throughout the city (Day, 2012).

The Songdo City project is motivated by the Korean national government's partnerships with localities to drive regional economic development. New Songdo City, located within the IFEZ, already includes a business district, research complex, residential area, commercial and shopping areas, schools, cultural amenities, and green spaces. Songdo's higher education hub is a key part of the city's plans for self-sustainability. This ambitious project was motivated by the rapid changes and growth of Korea's economy over the last half-century. Yet the success of the Korean economy has been based largely on applied technologies rather than original and innovative technologies (SGU Foundation, 2012). Korea is now challenged by other rapidly growing countries in Asia, and has yet to obtain a significant competitive platform alongside the most advanced countries in the world. Its circumstances are often referred to as the "dangerous nutcracker situation" (SGU Foundation 2012). Increasing globalized competition has impelled Korea to explore new growth engines for their economy with both knowledge-based and culture-based creative industries. New Songdo City is attempting to become a regional hub by bringing in knowledge-based industries (e.g., Bio-industry, IT industry, and Creative Technology industries), research centers, and educational institutions. Eventually, Korea hopes to take the lead in these industries to serve growing demand from the emerging Asia market, also creating a necessary fundamental shift in the Korean economy. In this context, Incheon Global Campus will play a central role in fostering future leaders and a modernized workforce in those areas by collaborating with respected universities from around the world.

Incheon Global Campus

Songdo City's focal point is a truly international university designed to be comprehensive and academically competitive. Cutting-edge campus facilities, including an auditorium, gym, lab facilities, academic buildings and faculty housing are under construction on 75 acres, and will be completed by 2020 (SGUC). Over one-third of the facilities are now completed and operational. Degree programs from up to ten foreign universities will be offered at the IGC. The programs are non-duplicative by design and are operated independently; yet at the same time, the universities will share campus resources,

including libraries, classrooms, cafeteria, dormitories, faculty housing, and fitness facilities, as well as some aspects of administrative and student services. The campus is managed by the Incheon Global Campus Foundation (IGCF), comprised of civic officials, business leaders, and university representatives.

The collaboration between the foreign institutions and the Foundation is one of the unique features of this development model. The Foundation itself was established by the Incheon Metropolitan City government, and its Board is chaired by the Mayor of Incheon City. The Foundation consists of three primary divisions: Facility Operation, Support, and Marketing, with twenty-one staff and three executives as of March 2014. The Foundation manages both academic and residential facilities, including student and faculty housing, the health clinic, a guesthouse, parking structures, auditoriums, recreational facilities, the central library and the book store. The Foundation also runs student activities that involve multiple foreign universities as well as activities and support programs provided by individual institutions. Freshmen orientation for housing and campus life is being jointly held by the Foundation and the institutions. Student Affairs Managers from each institution work with a Foundation counterpart to enrich student experiences on campus. As the overall student population grows, administrators also anticipate the organization of athletic and other tournaments between IGC students and other university teams.

Other exemplars of the collaboration between the Foundation and foreign universities are found in the technological classroom support and marketing teams. Smart boards and smart platforms in classrooms have all been provided by the Foundation, and the classroom and instructional technologies are serviced by a distinct IT staff for each institution. The Foundation's own IT team plans to work closely with those of the participant institution to build the IT infrastructure for the library. Regional information sessions have been hosted by marketing teams from the Foundation collaborating with recruiting teams from the participant institutions. The Foundation promotes both the Incheon Global Campus as well as each individual institution, building the collective image of Incheon Global Campus while providing each participant institution the ability to promote its own brand.

Finally, at the executive level, the Songdo Campus Presidents Group is a newly established policy-making body that has been founded to collaborate with the Foundation President. Various working committees comprised of representatives from each entity will plan and implement agreed upon policies after approval from the home campus or other entity in charge of operations.

As of this writing, four foreign universities are part of the Songdo Alliance Universities group: George Mason University, State University of New York (SUNY), University of Utah, and Ghent University (Belgium). These four institutions have formed a consortium that collaborates in many aspects of operations for the IGC, and each university has taken voluntary leadership for specific initiatives such as language programs, library management, information technologies (IT), and classroom technologies. Alliance partners meet regularly at one another's home institutions, in Korea, and via teleconferencing. As the Songdo project moves forward, the frequency of contact has

increased, as has the number of inter-institutional subcommittees reporting to the Alliance senior leadership at each university.

Two universities are already in operation: Mason Korea and SUNY Korea, with the other two, Ghent University and Utah's Asia Campus, slated to open in Songdo in late 2014 (Eun-ji, 2014). Internationalization is deeply embedded in their individual campus missions. More than a collection of different foreign universities operating independently in the same space, IGC is a true convergence of multiple institutions implementing an innovative model of educational collaboration. Other foreign institutions have been approached by the IGC Foundation as potential campus co-residents, and their presence would increase the internationality of the Songdo experience even further. Songdo will not be an "American" university abroad; rather, it is a resolutely and demonstrably global higher education hub.

Leveraging Benefits and Addressing Challenges

IGU's status as the centerpiece of a new Korean research and business hub development initiative models a path toward including branch campuses more intentionally as part of international development projects. Successful offshore campuses provide universities with a "strong promotion opportunity" and enhanced visibility (MacDonald, 2006, p. 207). Sharing services dramatically reduces the financial and human resources necessary to launch and maintain a second campus for all parties. The consortium course-sharing agreement broadens the range of courses available to students and helps them remain on track for timely graduation. As at Songdo, consortia share recruitment initiatives, as differences between their degree programs preclude direct competition. When consortium partners join forces, opportunities to foster a vibrant intellectual life increase exponentially. While only a handful of faculty may be sent from the home campus of any one institution, the presence of consortium colleagues fosters the establishment of communities of practice and other professional development opportunities (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Consortium members can collaborate in joint research activities and the organization of conferences and lecture series as institutional partners reinforce one another's efforts. Another potential advantage is the enhanced internationalization of the branch campus itself. At Songdo, for example, negotiations are currently underway with Russian and Dutch institutions that appear likely to join the US and Belgian universities already in place. Furthermore, because each foreign institution in Songdo must pass a rigorous accreditation review by Korea's Ministry of Education (MOE) prior to opening, the universities are considered accredited institutions in Korea and eligible to compete for government research funds.

There are clear advantages for the host partners as well. IGCF has created an advanced and unique educational system using this consortium model. The consortium can import high quality faculty and instruction to the IGC. Korea can therefore recruit more international students to their country and reduce the educational cost for citizens and residents who want to study at foreign institutions. According to Yonhap News Agency, Koreans spent 3.9 billion US dollars studying abroad in 2013 ("Students' Overseas Spending," 2014). Education in foreign countries is a large contributor to Korea's service sector trade deficit. Providing a world-class education and employment opportunities with

the many international companies located in Songdo, such as Samsung and Cisco, will “help Korea retain its own students and stem the brain drain that happens when they send their own high-quality students to foreign institutions abroad” (Dessoff, 2012). SGUF can eventually go beyond “brain drain to brain circulation” to what Wildavsky (2012) called “brain growth” through the successful management of this consortium and global university in Korea.

Of course, an operation of this scale is not without challenges. For the developers, the lengthy deliberations of foreign partners concerning whether and when to launch at Songdo has meant under-utilization of purpose-built facilities, occasioning some local controversy. Also, in some quarters, the project is considered unstable because enrollment quotas have not been met. In fact these quotas are five- to ten-year goals, so that particular criticism reflects a misunderstanding of recruitment plans rather than a failure of the project. For foreign university partners, a pressing concern is their desire to be afforded greater involvement in the selection of future university partners. Involvement would allow them to assist in the development of a comprehensive plan that facilitates general education course-sharing and the creation of research centers in areas of related interests. Another challenge has been maintaining commitment to the non-duplication of programs within the alliance. Shifting priorities and changing leadership at home institutions could potentially put this fundamental principle in jeopardy, with consequences for whether, and how, collaboration can be sustained.

Beyond the obvious challenge of a language barrier, misunderstanding and miscommunication stemmed from cultural difference adds another layer of complexity. Different styles of negotiation sometimes generate misunderstandings about the intent of partners and jeopardize the trusting relationships between partners. For example, a Korean partner may politely defer questions to avoid putting problematic issues on the table. Western partners may perceive that strategy as avoidance or concealment. Particularly when contentious issues or conflicts arise in the course of negotiation, differences in negotiation styles hinder the solution and progress of the negotiation, which inefficiently delays overall progress of the project. Lack of official communication channels among the participant institutions is another challenge in obtaining updates and sharing information. Coordination of facilitating the multi-lateral communication between entities will be crucial to successful collaboration

Another challenge is the fundamental difference in conceptualization and definition of “contract.” The Korean perspective prioritizes verbal communication, while the Western perspective prioritizes written communication. In this situation, cross-cultural understanding and interpersonal diplomacy are required. Finally, there are different expectations about college students. What is acceptable and even encouraged in the United States is beyond the pale in South Korea. For example, mixed-gender housing, with men and women living in adjacent rooms, is commonplace in the United States. On Incheon Global Campus, male and female student dormitories are separated by wings, floors, or even into separate buildings.

Concluding Note

Among the most pressing questions faced by international education leaders is how to educate students to be global citizens (Stearns, 2008). In crafting internationalization plans for US institutions of higher education, we must hold in mind the expectations of what John Zogby has termed the “First Globals” generation to spend significant time abroad (Loveland, 2010). The establishment of overseas campuses is a visible commitment to internationalization that creates new opportunities for student learning and for direct international experience. While some institutions have decided not to invest in overseas campuses (Redden, 2014), others are devoting much time and talent to these local-global initiatives. It has been noted that “there can be many benefits to partnering with a local institution” in realizing a branch campus (Harding & Lammey, 2011, p.77). To that point, this article has highlighted a case where the “local institution” is, in fact, a group of fellow foreign universities co-partnering with a local organization in an innovative international development experiment with many mutually-reinforcing goals.

References

- American Council on Education (ACE), Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE). (2012). *Mapping internationalization on U.S. campuses*. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Mapping-Internationalization-on-US-Campuses-2012-full.pdf>
- Day, J. (2012, January 9). Songdo in South Korea leading charge to become city of the future. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://metro.co.uk/2012/01/09/songdo-in-south-korea-leading-charge-to-become-city-of-the-future-279407/>
- Dessoff, A. (2012, July-Aug). Asia’s burgeoning higher education hubs. *The International Educator*. Retrieved from http://www.nafsa.org/file/ie_julaug12_asia.pdf
- Eun-ji, B. (2014, March 12). Global learning experience: George Mason University celebrates opening of Songdo campus. Retrieved from www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2014/03/181_153256.html
- Harding, L. M., & Lammey, R. W. (2011). Operational considerations for opening a branch campus abroad. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 155, 65-78.
- Incheon Free Economic Zone (IFEZ) (Korean-language). Retrieved from www.ifez.go.kr
- Korean Free Economic Zones (KFEZ) (English-language). Retrieved from www.fez.go.kr
- Lane, J., & Kinsler, K. (2012, January 18). International branch campuses: One definition to rule them all? [Blog post]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/blogs/worldwise/international-branch-campuses-one-definition-to-rule-them-all/29051>
- Lindsay, G. (2010, February 1). Cisco’s big bet on new Songdo: Creating cities from scratch. Retrieved from <http://www.fastcompany.com/1514547/ciscos-big-bet-new-songdo-creating-cities-scratch>
- MacDonald, I. (2006, July). Offshore university campuses: Bonus or Baggage? *Critical Visions, Proceedings of the 29th Higher Education Research and Development*

- Society of Australia*, Western Australia, 207-215. Retrieved from <http://www.herdsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/conference/2006/papers/Macdonald.pdf>
- Loveland, E. (2010, May-June). The first global generation: An interview with pollster and commentator John Zogby. *The International Educator*. Retrieved from http://www.nafsa.org/File/_/mayjun10_voices.pdf
- Redden, E. (2014, March 12). Bucking the branch campus. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/03/12/amid-branch-campus-building-boom-some-universities-reject-model>
- Songdo Global University Campus (SGUC) (English-language version). Retrieved from <http://www.sgu.or.kr/sgu/eng/main.htm>
- Songdo Global University Foundation. (2012). *Focus on Songdo Global University*. Unpublished document.
- Stearns, P. (2008). *Educating global citizens in colleges and universities: Challenges and opportunities*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Students' overseas spending slides as their numbers drop. (2014, February 2). *Yonhap News Agency*. Retrieved from <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/business/2014/02/02/8/0503000000AEN201402001600320F.html>
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Wildavsky, B. (2010). *The great brain race: How global universities are reshaping the world*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
-

About the Authors

Dr. Anne Schiller is Vice President for Global Strategies and Professor of Anthropology at George Mason University. She earned her B.A. in Anthropology at the University of Virginia and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Anthropology at Cornell University. Her research among indigenous peoples in the rainforests of Indonesian Borneo has been supported by fellowships and grants from the Fulbright Foundation, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the National Geographic Society, and others. Her current studies concern identity and social change in Florence, Italy. She has authored books and numerous scholarly articles and chapters based on her findings. Before coming to Mason, Dr. Schiller served as Director of International Programs and Director of the International Studies in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at North Carolina State University. Dr. Schiller can be reached at schiller@gmu.edu.

Dr. Minkyung Park is Assistant Vice President for International Campus Operations in the Office of Global and International Strategies at George Mason University, where she coordinates university-wide planning and management for Mason's international campus in Songdo, South Korea. As an Associate Professor of Tourism and Events Management

at the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), Dr. Park's research specializes in the social impact of tourism and visitor management in tourism and recreation settings. Partnering with various agencies nationally and internationally, she is involved with diverse research projects and has produced over 60 publications in a combination of journal articles, book chapters, professional conference proceedings, and technical reports. Dr. Park can be reached at mparka@gmu.edu.