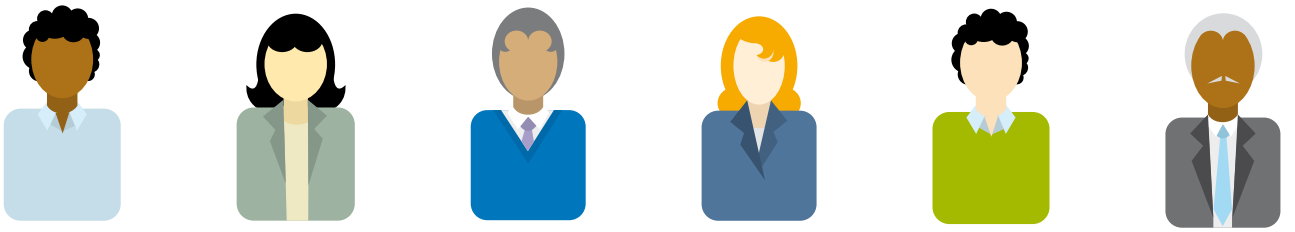
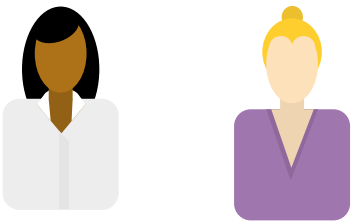
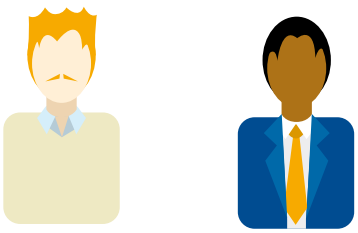
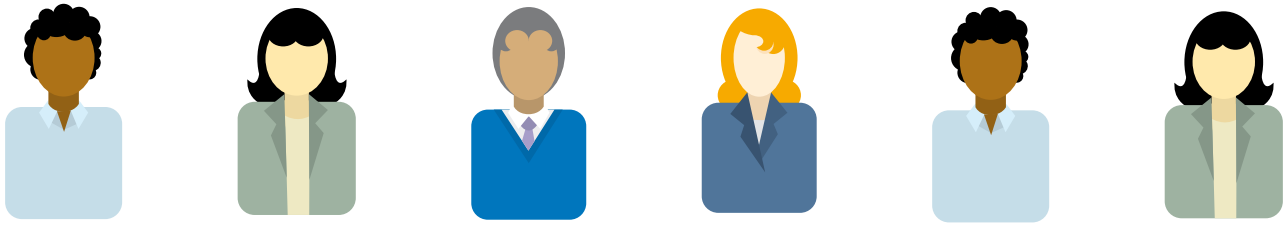


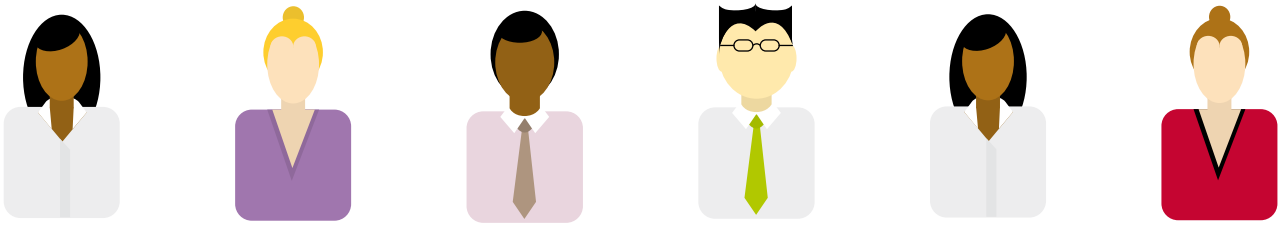


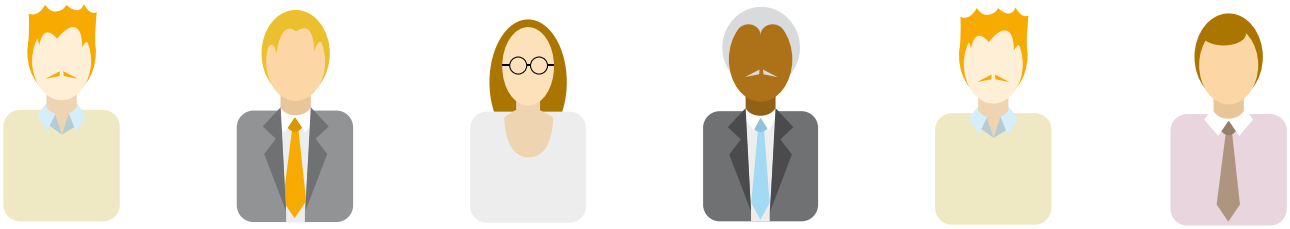
GLOBALISING STUDENTS



Paul Danos describes some simple initiatives business schools can take to advance the globalisation of their students







Globalisation is one of those era-defining phenomena that demands the attention of anyone who wants to understand the world. Conveying that understanding is what business schools try to do day-in and day-out and thus there is no need to explain the importance of globalisation to business school deans. Anyone who has visited China, India or Brazil in the last several years, for instance, can feel the transformation that globalisation is bringing to these massive economies. The internal growth of these countries and the unprecedented expansion of cross-border trade in general will be integral to the welfare of all societies for the foreseeable future.

For several decades, business school officials have been concerned about ensuring that their programmes keep pace with the explosive business developments around the globe. They determined early on that simply offering a few courses that concentrated on "doing business in..." or having a course on international trade would not be sufficient.

Many schools have experimented with different offerings and even requirements but I have found that the three most effective globalisation tools a business school has are: the students themselves; a faculty of active researchers and great teachers; and a centre that offers an array of global experiences such as visitors, exchanges and projects.

A student body made up of experienced students who have worked in all parts of the world brings richness to the learning process and changes mindsets in unique ways. Learning from peers is a priceless feature of the great full-time programmes where students live and learn together.

In such programmes, globalisation is advanced by paying attention to the diversity of students and selecting those who bring the most relevant experiences with them. Once on campus, helping students share their global experiences and cultural differences is another very important role for a business school. Teamwork, study groups, residential arrangements and the way students work together in class are all important in fostering the sharing of experiences and expertise.

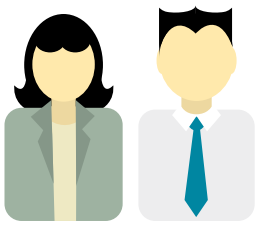
Every school has a personality that is to some extent imprinted on students during their time on campus. Students absorb and reflect elements of the institution's dominant culture, such as openness, friendliness, sharing, healthy competition, ethical behaviour, helping peers and participation in classes. Together, those qualities improve the experience for everyone. In a similar way, students transmit their personalities and knowledge laterally to fellow students.

In the top American schools, 30% to 40% of students come from other countries and during the nearly two-year period for a full-time MBA, there are innumerable opportunities for sharing business and cultural experiences. In non-US schools the percentage of non-citizens varies greatly, with high percentages in some schools and a predominance of local citizens in others. In all cases, it is safe to say that non-citizen students want to learn as much as possible about the local culture and business practices.

The keys to optimal peer-to-peer learning are selecting the most interesting people from the start and bringing them close enough to facilitate sharing. At Tuck, our buildings incorporate both study and social space to encourage as much interaction as possible. Students build life-long relationships, which serve them well during their time on our campus and as they navigate a complex and rapidly changing global economy after graduation.

The second major catalyst for globalisation of the learning experience is a faculty of active researchers and great teachers. Although often overlooked when describing globalisation, faculty research – digging deeply into unanswered questions while seeking and testing generalities across companies, industries and economies – makes business schools a prime source of global business practices. I know of no better activity to keep the faculty in tune with globalisation than their pursuit of cutting-edge knowledge in their fields.

In addition, the professors' approach to encouraging participation and fostering discussion in the classroom, which can often be informed by their own cultural background or cross-cultural experiences, is crucial in ensuring an authentic global learning experience. Here it is not the case that "one size fits all."



> *I know of no better activity to keep the faculty in tune with globalisation than their pursuit of cutting-edge knowledge in their fields*

Professors must be sensitive to the experiences that people from different countries have over classroom participation. Some countries' primary education systems emphasise aggressive discussion and even open disagreements in the classroom. In other countries, that behaviour might not be acceptable. Thus, professors must find ways to prompt more reticent students with great experiences and perspectives to participate in the learning experience, share what they know and question assumptions.

Also, in a multicultural classroom, special attention must be paid to the rules of the road. There must be a common understanding of the institution's norms concerning joint work, team efforts, and intellectual property, especially when digital information is involved.

The third catalyst is a centre or concentration of people and resources dedicated to globalising the learning experience. People in these types of centres or offices work with faculty, practitioners and students to understand the knowledge, skills and experiences required to lead in the global economy and help set educational goals and priorities accordingly.

They build and nurture relationships with alumni, practitioners, companies, NGOs and equivalent MBA programmes worldwide and bring these parties together to deliver rich educational experiences for students.

Global education programmes that we offer at Tuck include courses taught by our faculty or partner school faculty overseas, projects for companies and NGOs around the world, term exchanges, speaker series featuring distinguished global leaders, and conferences focusing on specific countries, regions, or global themes.

40%

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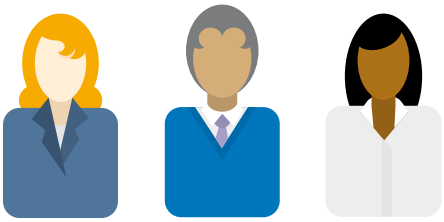
At Tuck, we also encourage students from the moment they arrive on campus to create global education plans to ensure that they accomplish their goals. To help them craft their plans, we provide the opportunity for individual counselling on this aspect of their MBA experience.

These counselling sessions often begin with a discussion of students' career goals and the types of global experiences that might be helpful given the sectors in which they are interested. Students' own backgrounds and prior overseas experiences also factor into these conversations. We then discuss the characteristics of the programmes that Tuck offers, and identify those that are the best fit.

We also help students design "tailor-made" global education programmes such as independent studies, "mini" internships and the like. In addition to advising students about educational programmes, we also help them think about how to leverage their summer internship experience to build their global knowledge.

Lifelong learning is critical to business professionals, especially given the rapid pace of globalisation. In recognition of this, Tuck offers educational programmes on the global economy to alumni and other business people. Such programmes create opportunities for rich dialogue among business people and academics, broadening the perspectives of both parties. Lessons from these types of interactions can be cycled back into the MBA programme, ensuring that it remains as current and relevant as possible.

In summary, two of the most effective tools that can be used to globalise the learning experience relate to the most fundamental building blocks of a business school: its students and faculty.



> *Two of the most effective tools that can be used to globalise the learning experience relate to the most fundamental building blocks of a business school: its students and faculty*

With students, the key is to not only assemble a diverse class but also to provide ample opportunity for the members of the class to share and learn from one another. With faculty, it is important to identify and hire individuals who are not only at the forefront of their respective fields, but also effective at eliciting and incorporating disparate viewpoints in the classroom.

Finally, dedicating resources and expertise to global education programmes helps to ensure a constant and relentless focus on this crucial aspect of the MBA experience. If a business school can do all three of these things well, it will help ensure a rich and dynamic global learning environment that will indeed keep pace with a complex, ever-changing world. **gf**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Paul Danos is Laurence F Whittemore Professor of Business Administration and Dean of the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, a position he has held since 1995, one of the longest tenures as dean of a top-tier business school.