The Bologna Process: The Expected Impact on U.S. and Canadian Graduate Education—Thinking Outside the Transcript

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Transcript Issues: Don’t Worry, Be Happy

- Bologna is still a work in progress
- All graduate admissions are individualized decisions now—both domestic and international
- We have evaluated 3-year degrees from India, Australia, the UK in the past
- U.S. transcripts and undergraduate programs are not uniform
- EU undergraduates have more subject matter depth
Impact on Graduate Education

- More courses in English
- Promotion of double degrees
- Emphasis on mobility—8000 Erasmus scholarships
- More interdisciplinarity at doctoral level
Beyond the Transcript

Bologna has required Grad Deans to become more aware of international education issues

- Conferences now cover Bologna and other EU issues
- CGS study that Daniel reported
- International experts in admissions offices are becoming more important
Beyond the Transcript

- EU students are likely to pursue master’s degrees and will look to the U.S.
- Graduate Deans Can Be Allies in Promoting Internationalization of Graduate Education
  - Double degrees
  - Exchanges
  - Research collaborations
There is a lot of focus in Europe right now on what they are calling the “external dimensions” of the Bologna Process. Not only how the new degrees and degree structures – especially the “three year” second cycle degrees - would be received in the US and Canada – but also how other countries and regions with 3-year degrees might be impacted – either positively or negatively – by graduate school policies and graduate admissions practices. I like the phrase “external dimensions” as an umbrella for this topic – because I think that we, collectively, also need to be thinking about the external dimensions of our policies and practices – with respect to regional and national “competitiveness” (a hot topic now among our legislators and economists right now) as well as international collaboration. And I also think that there are temporal dimensions to consider that the Bologna Process is bringing into focus – about the long-term impact of admissions policies. I’m going to talk about part of what Europeans are referring to as the “external dimension” of the Bologna Process – North American graduate admissions – in the context of the various “external dimensions” of our own graduate enterprise, the flow and sources of global talent more generally.

The Council of Graduate Schools is an organization – serving the US and Canada - whose members comprise about 90% of US doctoral universities and over 70% of US master’s universities. Three core areas of CGS are Research (about which I will speak today), Best Practice initiatives or grants to member universities, and Federal and Government Relations. We also, like our host NAFSA, convene our members twice annually to discuss issues of importance and to exchange information about graduate education.

Somebody recently introduced our president, Debra Stewart, as representing the Council of Graduate Surveys. Our mission is broader than that, of course, but it is for our survey research that we have been increasingly cited in the press lately – and particularly our research on international student trends. I am going to try to synthesize information from four CGS surveys in this talk:

1) Annual enrollment survey, which we have been conducted (in conjunction with ETS) now for twenty-years.
2) A multiyear International Graduate Admissions Trends survey – three parts each year: applications, admissions, and enrollment.
3) An internal “pressing issues” surveys, top 5 issues on the desk of our member graduate deans, and
4) A Supplement to the 2005 admissions survey – in which we asked embers to describe: a) their awareness and perception of the importance of European graduate education reforms (spec. the Bologna Process) to their university; and b) their current admissions practices with respect to three-year degrees (including, but not exclusive to, Europe).

I should clarify here that although we asked about current practices regarding three-year degrees – respondents were not describing future stances or strategies, specifically, for accepting “Bologna degrees” (about 80% of the degrees from the 45 countries who are signatories to the Bologna Process will be characterized by a “three year bachelor’s” degree (the other 20%, a 4-year bachelor + a 1-year master’s degree – the 3-year bachelor’s is not a requirement of the Bologna Process).
I. The International Student Presence in U.S. Graduate Programs

Before I get to CGS data, I want to show you recent data that provides a Big Picture of global graduate degree production – in this case, from NSf data on doctoral degrees awarded globally in science and engineering.
As you know, there has been tremendous growth in Europe – Heath Brown – our Director of Research – informs me that the dramatic climb in 88-89 is the result of adding France to the database –

Now Asia is closing in at an accelerated rate –

The US peaked in terms of S&E doctoral production about 97-98 and has been steadily declining in the number of degrees conferred

But what is most striking is the percentage share of US citizens – this shows tremendous importance of international students to the US S&E graduate enterprise.
Now this was the pattern of international applications for 03-04 – 90% reported a decline – overall average = 28% decline in applications for the 03-04 academic year

This ultimately translated into an 10% decline in first-time enrollments – and a 1% overall decline for that year
As you can see, the biggest drops were in applications from China and India – from Korea and the Middle East – the biggest sender countries and regions to US graduate programs.
### Fall 2004 Graduate Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Field</th>
<th>U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents</th>
<th>Non-U.S. Citizens and Temporary Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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And predictably the fields hardest hit were those most reliant on international students, especially Engineering where they comprise almost half. (these are the most recent 2004 numbers)
The most recent #'s – as you can see – are much better. The majority of institutions are experiencing increases – in the aggregate this year there is an 11% increase in applications.
As a result of this newfound vulnerability to larger global issues – our recognition of the “External dimension” to US graduate admissions – international students have been persistently recognized as among the top 5 most pressing issues on the desks of graduate deans over the past 5 years. International students broke into the top 5 in 2003 – and last year, over 50% of our membership identified this as one of their top 5 issues.
Graduate Deans Respond

- 75% of U.S. graduate schools enhanced outreach to international students since 9/11
- Outreach activities: call centers, enhanced use of electronic applications, international student academic counselors
- 58% of U.S. graduate schools report international exchange partnerships


In response to these declines, graduate schools have taken a number of actions to enhance outreach to international students, many recognizing for the first time that we could no longer simply rely on a steady stream of international students without active recruiting and enhanced services.

These were not only in response to the declines from Asia, India, and the middle east, but also responses to reforms in Europe – recognizing that although framers may have originally focused on the goals of intra-European mobility, that there was also a threat that Bologna Process reforms may also make Europe a more attractive destination to students from these traditional sender countries, and fundamentally alter the long-term global flow of talent.
II. The Bologna Process and Three-Year Degrees

It is in this context that we have been looking at graduate school perceptions, policies, and practices concerning three-year degrees as indicative of both possible future trends and future areas where more dialogue and information is needed about European degrees as well as three-year degrees from around the world.
Current U.S. Graduate Admissions Practices in Evaluating Three-year Undergraduate Degrees

1. Acceptance of four-year bachelor's degree only.
2. Provisional acceptance of three-year bachelor's with requirement for additional "remedial" courses.
4. Determination of competency to succeed in U.S. graduate program rather than strict equivalency.

In 2002, John Yopp – a former graduate dean and, at the time, on loan from ETS to CGS as Senior Scholar in Residence – conducted in-depth interviews of about a dozen graduate deans and graduate admissions professionals to survey the landscape of admissions stances toward the degree.

An important point of context, a NAGAP survey has found that about 50% of universities nationwide in the US have highly centralized admissions processes, evaluating applications for minimum threshold criteria, while the other half have much more decentralized processes where departments have much more central role in all aspects of the admissions process, working with graduate schools.

Among those with centralized admissions, this taxonomy emerged as a basic structure for describing the range of stances to students with three-year degrees.

1) – rarely a deal breaker, often with petition processes for students faculty feel strongly about
3) if not quantitative = “16” total - (12+4 or 13+3) – then often country by country
4) case-by-case – individualized/nuanced –

Policies DO NOT EQUAL practices – but institutional differences in volume of applications received and university resources to fund in-house staff and expertise may determine the level and degree of a university’s ability to make case-by-case decisions. That said, there are a number of important resources – both from Europe (diploma supplements and Dublin descriptors) – as well as North American associations who specialize in provided services to graduate admissions professionals for international credential evaluation.
2005 Survey Results

- Four-year only policies (22%)
- Accept three-year degrees (64%)
  - Equivalency (37%)
  - Competence (18%)
  - Provisional (9% of total)
- Establishing or modifying university-wide policies (20% of total)

So as an addendum to the CGS 2005 international student admissions survey, we took this model and surveyed more systematically our members. The 128 Respondents included 80% of the top 25 universities with respect to the largest international enrollments – and here is what we found:

Less than a ¼ of those report having a policy that would “reject” applications with a three-year bachelor’s – and even these often have “petition” processes in place

The vast majority have mechanism for accepting the degrees for admission in to graduate programs

The remaining percentage, not represented here, reported not having specific university-wide policies in place with respect to three-year degrees.

And 1/5th report conducting or embarking upon either serious policy revaluations or are considering establishing new university-wide admissions policies with respect to three-year degrees. [Obviously, many of these universities already have policies reflected in the percentages above.] Many of these include major research universities with significant international student enrollments.
In conclusion, here are some issues that we may be increasingly called upon to address – as we work out the details of how to deal with three-year degrees.

Moving beyond quantity to quality, while recognizing the importance of “fairness.”

Unintended consequences when graduate education reaches out to meet the needs – or “game” the global talent market – the very “open door” policies that could emerge in an effort to attract international students in the short term may have the long term effect of discouraging students from considering these programs as the best and most selective in the world.

This quality issue may be our version of debates in Europe about whether and how the Bologna reforms can coexist with fundamental research – and to what extent workforce needs and long term R&D needs are the same – and which will ensure international competitiveness in the long run. These may be some of the unanswered questions behind the current policy trends.