

"The Value of Diversity: Leadership and Internationalization in American Higher Education"

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TO THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB**

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I. GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION

Arigato gozimus. Thank you for the kind words of introduction, Mr. Herman, and for your warm welcome. I also wish to thank the members for the privilege of speaking to you today.

I am delighted to be in Tokyo, where my itinerary includes a meeting with Ambassador Thomas Foley and the chief executives of a number of Japanese corporations, as well as talk with alumni and friends of Duke.

I relish this opportunity to make new friends, both for my myself and for Duke. Although our university is young even by American standards, Duke has long and deep ties to Asia.

II. STATING THE THEMES

My main subject today is the value of diversity in American higher education and by extension, the value of what business leaders call "global diversity." Both domestic diversity and global diversity are essential to America's continued success in higher education and in the interconnected world-wide marketplace. It is sometimes hard for other nations to understand this intentional pluralism, this deliberate focus on diversity. One of my purposes today is to provide a context for the American emphasis on multi-culturalism, as it is sometimes called.

Perhaps what we have learned (and continue to learn) about diversity and internationalization, as we shed our own parochialism, may be of interest to you.

I will stress two themes today:

A. First, the crucial role that diversity plays in a good education.

B. Second, the growing importance of the concept of "global diversity" in education for leadership in a world economy.

III. DIVERSITY IN THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

America is distinctive for welcoming wave after wave of immigrants -- from Europe, Latin America, Asia. Our best known and best loved symbol -- even more than Mickey Mouse -- is the Statue of Liberty. That symbol promises to everyone who comes to America the opportunity to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Our ideals are noble, clearly: to welcome all to our shores, and to create a society in which all dwell together in harmony.

As with most peoples, we have not always lived up to our ideals. You may have noticed that in my list of the continents of immigrants a moment ago I did not include Africa. Most people of African descent in our country have ancestors who came unwillingly, as slaves. America is known for a preoccupation with color and race partly because of the deep scars we bear from our national experience -- constitutionally-sanctioned slavery, civil war, emancipation of the slaves, and, just 35 years ago, congressional action to ensure the civil rights of all citizens. And our work is clearly not finished if we wish to have a truly just and harmonious society.

One of the most prescient observers of our society, Alexis de Tocqueville, noted 150 years ago that "the most formidable of all the ills" that threatened the nascent republic of the United States of America was the presence of a black population mostly enslaved, the growing tensions between the North and the South around this issue, and the stubborn obstacles that appeared to lie in the way of treating blacks and Native Americans, the original inhabitants we sometimes called "Indians," with simple humanity.

This history helps explain why those of us on American campuses today are especially firmly committed to equal opportunity and to inclusion. We are a country of many different peoples, races and ethnic backgrounds, but we have not achieved the harmony of living together and respecting one another that is required for a successful multi-racial, multi-cultural society. We believe that education is one of the major forces that will move us towards this goal, and that to achieve it, it is imperative that we bring highly talented young people of all backgrounds together to be educated.

The law of the land today permits consideration of race as one factor in employment and in admissions decisions at universities. This inclusionary policy has brought into the workforce, and into better jobs, many members of historically underrepresented groups. Today in America, there is a political and social backlash against affirmative action. In several states there are popular referenda or legal judgments that stipulate that race cannot be taken into account in university admissions. Fortunately, such a stipulation was just firmly rejected by our national House of Representatives.

The basic thrust of our decades-long progress towards more inclusiveness in what used to be exclusive preserves for upper-class, white Protestant males -- our nation's colleges and universities -- has contributed enormously to the economic successes, the entrepreneurial spirit, and whatever social peace and harmony we have been able to achieve. To reverse that thrust in our times, as some of our citizens would wish, seems to us not only unjust but profoundly misguided and dangerous.

Historically, education in America has been the ladder to success for every immigrant group. It has also been the main ladder to success for young women, who now attend university in equal numbers with young men, and are increasingly achieving equal success in various careers and professions later in their lives. We believe that this emphasis on opportunity for women, like the emphasis on opportunity for all ethnic groups, enriches our society and allows us to draw on the talents of all our people, not just half. The well-known saying in Chinese, that women hold up half the sky, is very popular in the United States as a way of capturing this goal.

Motivated by social and moral ideals, we have sought more diverse student bodies and faculties for several decades, with increasing success. Despite recurrent tensions among different groups, our campuses today are America's most successful multicultural communities. Duke, for example, has been co-educational for more than a century, so it is not surprising that roughly half our undergraduate students are women. But today nearly 30 percent of our students are members of minority groups -- an amazing advance over just a generation ago. And by every measure, the quality of our student body is the highest in the university's history.

Thus universities like Duke today are more representative of the larger society than ever before, and at no diminution in quality -- quite the reverse. In fact, over this period of rapid increase in the diversity of our student body and faculty, American higher education continues to rank as the best in the world in many fields, and students from many other societies eagerly flock to our shores. We cannot make this claim for all American enterprises, to be sure, but we can do this in higher education. Thus truly, we can document that diversity can be linked to the sustained and increasing quality of the education we provide.

B. Why we care about diversity in higher education

Why is this so? Why are we convinced that diversity and inclusiveness in higher education are just on principle, that they are socially prudent, and even more boldly, that they are actually essential to a good education?

First, there are compelling moral and societal reasons for us to be committed to equal opportunity for all. This includes diversity in both gender and race in our social institutions, including colleges and universities. Aside from the requirements of our Constitution and our fundamental values, it is important in our democracy that our citizens and employees have the opportunity to develop fully their potentials and skills. We need leaders from, and leaders for, every part of our society, in a rapidly changing world. They must have some experience with and be comfortable with diversity at a formative stage of development. That has always meant education.

Second, we have learned, as our universities admit more and more women and members of minority groups, that diversity is more than a pledge to be accessible to all able students: It is in itself a potent force for educating all students. Our undergraduates in particular are transformed by exposure to difference -- including social, cultural, and racial backgrounds and experiences -- as well as different ideologies, perspectives and ideas.

No one learns much by being exposed only to people just like themselves, even if that may feel

comfortable. Having classmates and friends who have very different backgrounds -- geographically, politically, racially, religiously, ethnically, linguistically, economically -- at a formative stage of one's development opens the mind to new possibilities, to new ways of being human in the world. It allows a person to form a strong character by testing beliefs you have always taken for granted against other equally held, but very different assumptions about the world.

C. Putting the alternative on the table

I am aware that in making this claim, I am embracing an ideal which is different from that which is fundamental in many traditional societies. Many societies across history have flourished by promoting fidelity to a single coherent set of well-tested traditions, beliefs and assumptions about the world, promulgated by sages and transmitted faithfully to each generation. This indeed is the western stereotype about the teaching of Confucius, and the society organized around the Confucian ideal, although I am sure that the stereotype overstates the rigidity of Confucian teachings.

Under such assumptions, exposing young people to many different ways of being in the world is foolish, since it undermines certainty and risks raising relativistic young people with no values and no mooring in the world.

This concern is surely not without merit. American society today is indeed threatened in many ways by a loss of moorings, by lack of clarity about moral values, and it is understandable that many would seek to return to a simpler, more rigid age.

But I would contend that we have no choice. We cannot simply impose the values of a simpler, sturdier age on an increasingly interconnected, diverse world. We have to learn to live together, to come out on the other side of this powerful transition.

To cite Tocqueville again, from another transitional era just after the French Revolution: we are embarked on a craft in a rapidly moving stream, and some would fix their eyes on the ruins of the ancien regime on the shore we are leaving behind, but if we do that rather than looking ahead and navigating these swift and dangerous currents carefully, we shall surely be lost in the rapids.

We believe that this commitment to learning from diversity, to preparing leaders for a rapidly changing world, is not just imposed upon us by fate, but truly offers opportunities for bold new ways of learning from one another, for crafting new ways of living together for a new era. This is true not only in American domestic life, but also in the immensely more complicated world we sometimes call, misleadingly, the "global village."

IV. THE CONCEPT OF GLOBAL DIVERSITY

We are all familiar with the underpinnings of what I would call "global diversity," the increasing interconnectedness of our world that has been such a salient feature of the past few decades.

Technology: it is often easier to reach a friend or colleague over e-mail or by FAX through cyberspace many continents away than it is to arrange to have tea with a colleague in the office next door, and the world wide web is changing the way we all think about communication.

The media: the shared perspectives on the world that come from increasing access to the same news reports, instantaneously transmitted, and from the fact that we all watch many of the same movies, even some of the same tv shows.

Business: the amazing interconnectedness of our business world, with multinational enterprises burgeoning, more and more corporations locating their R&D and manufacturing plants around the world, thinking of their markets increasingly in global terms.

All these factors and many more specific ones have combined to shrink our geographies and breach our borders, at least in the metaphorical sense. How do we educate our students effectively to be leaders in such a global world?

Those who thrive in the new international environment will be those who see clearly that they are no longer merely citizens of an individual nation. They will be sensitive to the fact that they live in a complex, interdependent world. This realization, along with a knowledge of other languages, is critical to students' personal and professional development and to their capacity to fulfill their responsibilities. Students graduating now and in the future will spend much more of their working lives among people from very different backgrounds.

Our graduates need to be supple in dealing with international colleagues and a global workforce in order to succeed in more direct terms as well. Competition in the global economy is increasingly fierce, and to compete effectively, you have to know your competition and assess your strategic chances shrewdly.

A colleague of mine tells a story about two men out hiking in the woods when, suddenly, they realize that an angry and very large grizzly bear is about to attack them.

One man takes off his back pack and tightens his shoelaces.

"What are you doing?" says the other guy. "You can't outrun a bear."

"I don't have to outrun the bear," replies the first man. "I just have to outrun you."

In other words, most of us would agree, we need to be out in front of the competition, whether in commerce or in education.

V. DUKE IS SEIZING THE INTELLECTUAL POSSIBILITIES OF OUR INCREASINGLY GLOBAL SENSE OF DIVERSITY

What are we doing at Duke to prepare our graduates in every school for an increasingly diverse

world economy? We are capitalizing upon the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of our faculty. We are responding to what our students tell us they need to know, particularly when they come to us for professional or mid-career education. We intend to be a world leader in higher education in the new millennium.

Like many American universities, we are building upon a history of past relationships, including relationships with Asia. About 10 percent of our 11,000 students are from Asian countries. Some 250, or 30 percent, of our graduate students are Asian. Sixty four of our students, including 11 undergraduates, are from Japan.

That level of representation is growing, but its origins extend back before Trinity College was renamed Duke University.

In 1880 Trinity College, which in 1924 eventually became Duke, admitted its first international student, Yao-ju Soong (Yow-Jew Soong) from China, who studied for a year on campus. After returning to his home country, first as a missionary and then as a businessman, he achieved many distinctions: among them was fathering two extraordinary daughters who, through their marriages to Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, became firsthand players in dramatic events in modern Chinese history.

You can see that Duke, from its very beginnings, has been tied to Asia.

Beyond the stimulus of competition, we are excited by the intellectual possibilities of new and promising relationships with others around the globe. Duke University is reaching out to institutions and companies, and even governments abroad.

Internationalization is, in fact, one of our five strategic themes as we plan for the future and make daily decisions. In 1994, we created the position of Vice Provost for Academic and International Affairs, underscoring our commitment. The office is responsible for promoting international developments on campus and cooperative arrangements off-campus with institutions, corporations, and governments. The office brings together the efforts of the Duke University Medical Center and Health System and our various schools, especially the Duke law school and our Fuqua School of Business, which are important parts of our global initiative.

Let me give you just a few examples of the steps we have taken to build a more international curriculum and provide support for faculty research in international concerns.

One example is the "Oceans Connect" project, which studies the ways that ocean basins connect people rather than on the ways national borders divide them. Funded by the Ford Foundation, the project is formally titled "Oceans Connect: Culture, Capital, and Commodity Flows Across Basins."

The oceans have been a powerful force in transplanting and interchanging diverse cultures. This was true from the time the Mediterranean Sea was the center of the civilized world and all transport and trade focused upon it, through the Atlantic ties of Europe and the east coast of the Americas. In contemporary American scholarship, the focus has been largely on the Pacific rim, because of the

area's burgeoning growth into global prominence. We at Duke are ready for a focused, comparative look at ocean-centered communities. This will supplement the ongoing work of faculty and students who specialize in area studies. It also will better enable our students to understand the connections between areas of the world.

The most publicized example of Duke's leadership in a new global curriculum -- applauded in leading publications around the world -- is the Global Executive MBA (GEMBA), launched in the Fuqua School of Business in 1996. GEMBA combines distance learning via Internet-based technologies with classroom sessions on four continents and, at regular intervals, on our campus. Fuqua is the first business school to offer an MBA program in this fashion. This year GEMBA graduated its first class -- 80 plus students from 23 countries. Our Fuqua School of Business aims to strengthen the global emphasis throughout its programs. Other international initiatives already in place include: Global Academic Travel Experience (GATE), a program of overseas study tours in the full-time MBA program; and customized executive education programs delivered worldwide for companies such as Deutsche Bank, Glaxo Wellcome Inc., Ford Motor Co. and Siemens Corp.

* The Asian/Pacific Studies Institute at Duke supports and coordinates academic work in Pacific rim Asian cultures and societies by scholars and students at Duke and in the American Southeast Region. It brings visiting scholars and speakers to campus, oversees acquisition of resources about the area, and offers program and support for faculty and student work abroad. Duke students participate in the Institute's six-month program in Beijing and Nanjing. There also is a summer program at Japan's Hosei University and an exchange program with International Christian University in Tokyo. One of the great resources is the 15-year-old Institute's library for East Asian language resources. Chinese, Japanese and Korean works are computer catalogued in their original languages.

VI. A METAPHOR FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION: THE PETERS PROJECTION

[omit if time is pressing]

All this talk about internationalization at Duke reminds me of a marvelous map published in Harper's magazine about ten years ago. It's called the Peters Projection, and it represents the world's continents and countries in proportion to their actual relative sizes, not as if flattened out from a globe. When I first saw that map, I thought that everything looked distorted, as if it were refracted through a fun house mirror. The longer I looked, however, the more I saw how it called into question hitherto accepted distinctions among land masses, and hence among populations.

The traditional map we use was devised by Mercator in Germany in 1569. It shows Europe as larger than South America, though the latter continent is actually double the size of Europe. It places Germany in the center of the earth, even though that country is in the northernmost corner on the Peters Projection. The world is distorted by Mercator to the advantage of the European colonial powers, and to the advantage of the Northern Hemisphere: Alaska appears three times as large as Mexico, although in reality, Mexico is larger. Russia appears much larger than Africa, although in reality, Africa is much larger than Russia.

To me, the Peters Projection is a metaphor and a call for action. It is a metaphor for the need to expand and refine our cultural maps and a warning that ethnocentrism is a limiting point of view. Indeed, if we allow ethnocentrism to be our guide, then we navigate at our own intellectual and cultural peril. At Duke in this late twentieth century, as we are diversifying our community and our curriculum, we are redefining our "maps" -- that is, our intellectual constructs, our ways of looking at the world -- in order to gain new and fruitful perspectives.

VII. Close

Even as our world continues to shrink, the role of the modern university is expanding. As a national university with global aspirations, we at Duke reach out to students and faculty the world over as we seek to create a cosmopolitan intellectual center enriched by many creeds and cultures. In addition to enhancing the international flavor of our own campus, and partaking in the dynamic diversity of our region, we seek new and creative ways to expand the Duke learning community worldwide.

In short, a modern and more international Duke is emerging -- one that in time will be at home on all parts of the new projection. We envision Duke as a global institution where a world-wide perspective informs everything that we do.

Thank you for listening and thank you for inviting me here today. I'm already looking forward to my next visit to Tokyo.

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