

CIBER and NAFSA: Two Missions Begin to Meet

By Sarah M. Singer

Executive Briefing: Students today will live and work in a global world and workplace upon graduation. Many will work overseas; more will work with colleagues from abroad. To prepare students for this reality, universities must provide an internationalized education. Working together, NAFSA and the CIBER network can serve as a powerful impetus to this goal.



Business programs today are increasingly looking to internationalize their students and curricula.

Simultaneously, NAFSA: Association of International Educators is bringing its mission of advancing international education and exchange and global workforce development to professional programs and faculty, especially business schools.

Students today are more likely than ever to work abroad or work with someone from abroad at some point in their careers. The ability to navigate cultural differences and communicate effectively across cultures has never been more important. The challenge for educators, then, is to embrace internationalization, incorporate it into their teachings, and prepare students for the globalized, multicultural future that awaits them.

NAFSA and CIBERs

NAFSA has long been a leader in the push to internationalize students and campuses. Founded in 1948, NAFSA developed the concept of offering professional services for exchange students at colleges and universities. Academic institutions, government agencies, and private organizations with an interest in international education came together to share the specialized knowledge necessary to meet the needs of students from myriad educational and cultural backgrounds. Originally named the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors, NAFSA later became the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs before changing its name in 1990 to NAFSA: Association of International Educators to better reflect its members' breadth of work in the field of international education.

NAFSA's members share a belief that international education advances learning and scholarship, builds understanding and respect among different peoples, and enhances constructive leadership in the global community.

NAFSA is the leading association in international education and exchange, and a major advocate of international education. Traditionally, NAFSA has focused on international student services offices and overseas programs. However, this focus is beginning to shift as NAFSA now is seizing the opportunity to

influence research agendas and curricular offerings, especially in the professional schools. The Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship Knowledge Community which serves members interested in research trends and opportunities as well as internationalizing faculty development is one of the pillars of NAFSA today.

By reaching out to faculty and becoming increasingly involved in research and workforce development, NAFSA's goals are beginning to dovetail with those of the nation's Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBERs). CIBERs were created by the U.S. Congress under the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 to increase and promote the United States' capacity for international understanding and competitiveness.

Currently, 31 major colleges and universities around the country are home to a CIBER. Each organizes a range of programs annually designed to further the study and teaching of international business and to support applied research on America's competitiveness. Programming ranges from faculty development and enrichment opportunities to collaborating with foreign language department to develop and support business language courses. CIBERs are also charged with supporting small- and medium-sized local businesses which seek to develop international markets.

With its network of centers spanning the nation, the CIBER network is perfectly positioned to link businesses, with their human capital and technological needs, to the international education, language training, and research capacities of universities across the country. Through programmatic activities designed to advance the study and teaching of international business, the CIBERs are also poised to affect the international education, language training, and international research capacities of these same schools, faculty, and students.

CIBERs' objective is to increase and promote the nation's capacity for international understanding and economic enterprise through the provision of suitable international education and training for business personnel in various stages of professional development.

Developing Synergies

Just as NAFSA, and social sciences generally, have begun to develop synergies with business schools, many business schools, often led by a CIBER, are beginning to focus on areas that have traditionally belonged firmly in the social science and international education arena. For example, CIBERs have increased their focus on foreign language training, particularly of the less commonly taught languages. Not only are the CIBERs supporting foreign language training, but they are doing so often using methods that draw foreign language learners into the business realm, such as by developing and supporting business language courses.

The CIBER network sponsors an annual Business Language Conference, which draws many traditional language faculty interested in exploring new ways of teaching the languages they love. Similarly, CIBERs are becoming more involved with study abroad programs, working with faculty at institutions around the country to develop overseas programs that emphasize culture and language, traditional bastions of the social sciences, as well as business training and skills.

We live in an increasingly connected world, with business and social sciences intertwined as never before.

By working together, CIBERs and NAFSA can build upon one another's strengths and maximize their synergies, developing a globally-minded, internationally-prepared global workforce. To this end, various CIBERs are beginning to engage with NAFSA more seriously than at any time in the 20-year history of the CIBER network.

Our students' futures are ones of global interactions, global communications, and global thinking. Working in concert, NAFSA and CIBER can ensure that students embark on this global journey as completely as possible.

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Sources

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