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EU-U.S. INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONNECTIONS

EU-U.S. International Education Connections:
U.S. Opportunities to Participate in Erasmus Programs and the Case for a Renewed Commitment
to Transatlantic International Education Collaboration

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Abstract

The European Union's suite of Erasmus programs are an ambitious effort to facilitate educational mobility and research across the EU's 28 member countries and with partners around the world. It is one of the primary means to achieve a sense of European identity among the citizens across the Union, and governmental and educational organizations in the U.S. are keen to learn more about how they can also engage with it. The Departments of State and Education, because of their respective work in international education, are particularly well-positioned to lead that effort. Erasmus is ambitious in its social objectives and level of funding, and stakeholders in the U.S. including at Higher Education Institutions have heard about its programs but generally assume they're only for Europeans and their institutions. That is not the case. Programs jointly supported by the U.S. government (USG) and EU have been implemented including the discontinued Atlantis program and ongoing Fulbright-EU Schuman program, and there are additional avenues for stakeholders in the U.S. to engage with Erasmus such as its International Credit Mobility program among others. The EU Delegation to the United States and other official representatives are charged to conduct outreach about those opportunities to a diverse US. audience. An inventory of the EU and U.S.'s respective international education programs should be conducted to identify venues for collaboration, better understand previous and ongoing collaborations (and lessons learned from those efforts), and the state of the programs in domestic and global contexts. The close geopolitical relationship and shared educational traditions between the U.S. and EU (and its member-nations) provide the most fertile soil for international education collaboration in the world, and light of the upcoming 2021 renewal of the Erasmus programs and the increasingly dynamic global educational environment *now* is the opportune time for the U.S. and EU to collaborate more closely in the area of international education.

Erasmus' Role in Building a New Europe

The origins of the European Union (EU) is a well-known story, one born from the ashes of the world wars that occurred during the first half of the 20th century. By 1945 much of Europe had been laid to waste and the United States and the Soviet Union assumed their respective positions of dominance that would last for the next 45 years. This period was a historical turning point of staggering implications, especially considering the positions of power that European nations had held for the previous several centuries. The exhausted community of European nations, now squeezed between the two great powers, had to come to grips with their new status on the world stage and how they'd relate to one another. These circumstances forced Europeans to look inward and craft a new way of coexistence which gradually coalesced in the form of the European Union.

The governmental structures that eventually grew to become the European Union were initially established to rebuild from the destruction of World War II. The European Coal and Steel Community, established in 1952, created a common market for coal and steel and is commonly regarded as the first step towards the establishment of the EU. The original signatory countries were: Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, West Germany, and the Netherlands (The history of the European Union, 2019). Eastern European countries were of course prevented from joining during this time, but Western Europe continued its course towards tighter integration and gradually turned its attention towards social issues as living conditions improved. These included educational standardization across borders and the mobility of students and researchers. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union two years later brought Central and Eastern European countries into the Union in quick succession. This

was accompanied by the eastward expansion of NATO to include nations that had formally been in the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union.

Reflecting on the growth of the European Union experiment, Monica Sassatelli argued that in order to legitimize its authority the EU had to formalize “the realization that the idea of ‘Europe’ as the foundation of an identity” (Sassatelli, 2002, p. 435). To accomplish that audacious goal the EU, through its administrative units, had to tackle both pragmatic bricks-and-mortar concerns (like infrastructure), and broader social issues including identity to prevent yet another rise of nationalism and xenophobia in the region. But how would that be achieved, to reshape the identity of hundreds of millions of Europeans who came from a myriad of distinct, ancient traditions? Was it realistic or ethical to want citizens to identify themselves as Europeans primarily instead of their respective national or regional identity? Could that effort lead to unforeseen negative consequences, such as xenophobia and nationalism?

Embracing European identity, Sassatelli (2002) continued, wouldn’t be achieved by “legal and economic integration alone.” And, cultural matters and integration require actions such as the “sponsorship and subsidy campaigns, exchange programmes, along with the regulation of the cultural good market” (p. 436). These sentiments gained support by public policy makers in Brussels and consequently the Erasmus programs, the “European Capitals of Culture” and other initiatives were launched. As sophisticated consumers and defenders of cultural identity, however, decision-makers across the region knew that Europeans would reject attempts to regulate or homogenize identity so it was decided that the way forward was to support programs that provide opportunities to *explore* and *celebrate* traditions which would hopefully help achieve greater understanding, tolerance and social stability.

“Culture needs to be standardized and universalized to keep up with the increasingly complexity and global scale of the social structure”, Sassatelli (2002) argued, “as it once was for the nationstate” (p. 438). That endorsement of cultural standardization is noteworthy and while not a stated objective of the European Commission (the executive arm of the EU), its mere mention causes alarm to many Europeans and may have contributed to recent expressions of nationalism such as the Brexit decision in the United Kingdom and the rise of populist governments in Hungary, Poland, Austria, Italy and other EU member nations. Anticipating this Sassatelli continued by recommending that “the EU has to deal with another sensitive issue, that of fostering the common European heritage without provoking the reaction of national or local cultures (that is, of the much older respective institutions)” (p. 440). This awareness, to provide a space for local cultures to chart their own development while working towards regional cohesion and a European identity, is a delicate prime directive that must be followed to ensure the Union’s survival. Educational traditions are certainly integral aspects of cultural identity so to make this work they be respected and allowed to continue and develop in different ways. In order to foster regional economic growth and ease learner and worker mobility, however, some standardization across the higher education sector in the form of credentialing and other actions must be implemented. It is within this narrow territory that the Erasmus programs carefully navigate.

Educational System Standardization to Advance Collaboration and Mobility

If the Erasmus programs are the fuel to propel European student and educator mobility then the Bologna Declaration, signed in 1999 by ministers from 29 European countries, is the engine that the petrol is used in. Bologna established a suite of processes including credentialing articulation and transferal which have continued to increase since its inception and now, like Erasmus, has expanded into Eastern European countries that were formally part of the Warsaw

Pact and Soviet Union (including some in Central Asia). As reported in “The European Higher Education Area in 2018: Bologna Process Implementation Report” (2018) the number of participating countries has grown to 48 with Belarus joining in 2015. That number is noteworthy for several reasons including there are only 28 nations in the EU so it has a wider more “Eurasian” scope of engagement. This level of participation begs the question why almost one quarter of all countries globally would voluntarily opt-in to follow Bologna’s rules, regulations and reporting requirements? While every country has its own reasons, those that are geographically contiguous or close to Europe most likely did so, in part, to connect with its vibrant educational systems and the corresponding funding opportunities that come with that association.

As mentioned, the most commonly known feature of Bologna is that it provides structures to achieve greater standardization of higher education systems by establishing means to confer credit and credentialing recognition. That is:

Like the degree structure it should cater for comparable and transferable qualifications and facilitate mobility and recognition irrespective where and how learning outcomes have been achieved. European and national qualifications frameworks are based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulations System (ECTS) in terms of quality (learning outcomes) and quantity (workload). (Three-cycle system, 2019, para. 3)

The transferability of qualifications was part of the Bologna Process’ original intent but over the years its grown to incorporate a variety of other functions. Specifically, according to “The European Higher Education Area in 2018: Bologna Process Implementation Report” there are “7 key policy areas” that had been identified at the Yerevan Conference in 2015: The European Higher Education Area Landscape; Learning and Teaching, Degrees and Qualifications; Quality

Assurance and Recognition; Opening Higher Education to a Diverse Student Population; Relevance of the Outcomes and Employability; and Internationalisation and Mobility (The European Higher Education Area in 2018: Bologna Process Implementation Report, 2018, p. 5).

Each of those areas have their respective sub topics that are reviewed periodically – usually every two to three years, and articulated in communiqués named after the cities where the working group met that year (e.g. Rome 2010). Section 5.1.1.2. of the 2018 Implementation Report addresses “Gender balance”, for example, and has a wide-range of information about that topic including the “Percentage of women among new entrants in tertiary education in 2004/05 and 2014/15” (p. 160). Although the United States is not a full participant like the aforementioned 48 countries, but being familiar with Bologna’s processes and priorities (like gender balance) is helpful for international education professionals who do things like document preparation and review for students studying between the U.S. and EU to ensure, among other things, credit transferability.

Bologna uses technical definitions that international education professionals need to understand. “First-cycle programmes”, for example, refer to bachelor degrees or equivalent, “second-cycle” master’s or equivalent and “third-cycle” Ph.D. or equivalent. Specifically:

The *first cycle* leads to a qualification (in many countries labelled “Bachelor”) which is obtained after successful completion of a study programme with 180 – 240 [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System] ECTS credits. Programmes of the first cycle last typically three years. (Ministerial Conference Bologna 1999, 1999, para. 3)

And:

The *second cycle* leads to a qualification (in many countries labelled “Master”) which is obtained after successful completion of a study programme with 60 – 120 ECTS credits.

These ranges for undergraduate and graduate programmes have been defined with the development of the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. (Ministerial Conference Bologna 1999, 1999, para. 3)

Doctoral programmes were added as the third cycle at the 2003 conference in Berlin (the Berlin Communique). In addition to setting policy and definitions, Bologna tracks a range of education-related data such as per student expenditure on higher education, rates of participation in tertiary education and graduation. This is not dissimilar to the work of the U.S. Department of Education that tracks and reports similar information in its “Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System” (IPEDS).

National educational systems have distinct cultures and traditions composed of curriculum, course naming and numbering protocol, how performance is measured (grading), and other features. To make sense of those differences a “diploma supplement” was developed as part of the Bologna Process and provides a framework to describe coursework to facilitate the recognition of qualifications across those national systems (diplomas, degrees, certificates, etc.). Among other things it explains a course’s level, content, and format of the respective academic program it’s a part of. It is intended to be free from any value judgements such as assessments of rigor or instructional quality. There are different templates used for diploma supplements, but information categories generally remain the same. One example is from Bournemouth University in the United Kingdom and the supplement it uses organizes information in the following general and sub categories: (1) Information identifying the holder of the qualification (name, DoB, etc.); (2) Information identifying the qualification (qualification name – Bachelor of Science, etc.); (3) Information on the level of the qualification (official length of programme, etc.); (4) Information on the contents and results gained (programme requirements, etc.); (5) Information on the

function of the qualification (access to further study, etc.); and (6) Additional information (Bournemouth University Diploma Supplement, 2008). The diploma supplement is a component of a larger package of supporting documents, known collectively as “Europass”. The other documents in Europass include: A curriculum vitae in a standardized format, a “language passport” which is a self-assessment tool for language proficiency, and a record of the knowledge and skills acquired in another country known as “Europass Mobility” (Connect with Europass, n.d.). The idea is that collectively those items provide a holistic snapshot of the individual’s educational credentials and technical training for academic and professional placement among other uses.

In order for Bologna’s ambitious mandate to work - to provide a framework for the educational coordination of more than forty countries – it must be coupled with a powerful propellant to achieve learner, educator and administrator mobility at a meaningful scale. This is largely achieved by Erasmus. Before diving into Erasmus, however, it should be mentioned that there are other programs offered by various organizations that also contribute to the overall goal of educational coordination and mobility. The components of the aforementioned Europass, for example, feed into other bodies that provide information for credentialing interpretation on a global level such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and European Network of Information Centres in European Region – National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union (ENIC-NARIC) which promotes itself as a “gateway to recognition of academic and professional qualifications” (ENIC, n.d.). More specifically, ENIC-NARIC is:

...a joint initiative of the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, has been created primarily as a tool to assist the ENIC-NARIC Networks in carrying out

the tasks they have been mandated to accomplish within their own jurisdiction, by directing them to up-to-date information supplied and maintained by the competent bodies in each member country and by each member organisation. It is also its express purpose to help other interested organisations and individuals easily find information on current issues in international academic and professional mobility, and on procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications. (ENIC, n.d., para. 1)

Clicking on one of the country links provides a glimpse of the breadth and depth of the resources provided. Information about the U.S., for example, is divided into eleven categories including: “National Information Centres” (where information about educational systems can be found), “System of education”, “Quality Assurance in Higher Education”, “Recognised higher education institutions”, “Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees”, and other topics.

There are only several countries outside the European region that contribute to the ENIC-NARIC including the U.S., Australia, Canada, Kazakhstan and New Zealand. A probable reason why those countries chose to participate is because of the rate of mobility between them and Europe. The U.S., for example, receives more than 90,000 European students at its institutions of higher education each year and half of all its university students who study abroad do so in Europe - approximately 150,000 in 2018 (Institute for International Education, 2018).

Participation in ENIC-NARIC helps achieve a more efficient credit and credentialing transfer process, and a Program Specialist from the U.S. Department of Education’s international affairs office serves as the U.S.’s representative to the network. While ENIC-NARIC is not an Erasmus Program it is an example of how the U.S. participates in a European-led higher education initiative, and speaks to the need for coordination related to education between nations and supranational entities like the EU.

Erasmus Programs and How U.S. Stakeholders Can Participate in Them

“Erasmus+”, which started in 2014 and will last until 2020, is the title of the current iteration of the Erasmus suite of programs which started in 1981. The next cycle, slated to start in 2021 and run until 2027, is currently under development and according to the European Commission (EU Budget, 2018) may have its budget roughly doubled to thirty billion Euros. If that happens, the number of individuals who participate in its programs each year will significantly increase as will other outcomes such as the number of dual and joint degree offerings and collaborative research projects. It is also likely that the support to citizens and institutions of non (EU) member countries will also increase.

Erasmus places the U.S. in the “partner country” and “other industrialized countries” categories (Who can take part? n.d.). It joins 11 other nations in those classifications such as Australia and Canada. It’s important to note that while similar, Erasmus+ Partner Countries are not the same as the non-European countries that participate in the aforementioned ENIC-NARIC - they are separate initiatives with their own classification conventions. There are several Erasmus programs that entities from partner countries can participate in, and in the U.S. the EU Mission to the U.S. (the EU Embassy in Washington, D.C.) disseminates information about those opportunities.

The first is the International Credit Mobility (ICM) program which in terms of pure numbers supports more mobility than any other Erasmus Program by far (tens of thousands student per year within and outside of Europe). That program, which generally provides support for shorter-term non degree bearing educational experiences, classifies the U.S. and Canada together in the “ICM regional budget” and from 2015-2017 65% of that budget was applied to the U.S. and 35% to Canada (European Commission, 2018).

Table 1

2015, 2016, and 2017 ICM mobility rates between the EU and U.S.

<u>Mobility Direction</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
Students and staff to Europe	586	494	466
Students and staff to USA	494	468	418

The chart above shows mobility growth in both direction – a 26% increase of U.S. students and staff to Europe between 2015 and 2017 and an 18% increase of European students and staff to the U.S. during the same period - which demonstrates a willingness by the Commission to provide increased funding to achieve more mobility between the EU and U.S. In order for students in the U.S. to receive support from ICM their U.S. Higher Education Institution (HEI) must work with an institution in an EU member nation. Specifically, that European institution is considered the “lead” applicant, and the U.S. institution’s information is captured in an “inter institutional agreement”. In other words, the onramp for U.S. participation in the ICM program is via a European institutional partner as a subgrantee.

The International Credit Mobility (ICM) program includes a “Handbook for Participating Organizations”, a recent version of which was published in 2017 (European Commission, 2017). That handbook covers a range of topics from per diem rates and travel allowances, and provides guidance like:

“Participating Partner Country HEIs must be recognized as higher education institutions (HEI) by the relevant authority in the Partner Country. They must sign an inter-institutional agreement with their partner in the Programme Country before any mobility can take place.” (European Commission, 2017, p. 7)

This means that the primary applicant must be the HEI in a “programme” (EU) country, and it must facilitate the signing of an inter-institutional agreement with the accredited HEI in the U.S. This process also demonstrates the interoperability and importance of tools like ENIC-NARIC

which EU HEI lead applicants can refer to for resources about U.S. higher education accreditation and other topics.

In regard to tips for the lead EU HEI applicant to find an appropriate co applicant in a “non program country” like the U.S., it is recommended that the lead institutional applicant “look at current or past cooperation agreements your institution might have, either at the level of the institution (typically via the international relations office), or at the level of individual faculties” (European Commission, 2017, p. 12). After an eligible U.S. partner institution for collaboration on the ICM program is identified, a “supplemental application” from the lead EU institution must be submitted (p. 15 – 18). That supplemental application consists of four sections each with its own evaluation point allocation: (1) Relevance of the strategy (30 points); (2) Quality of the cooperation arrangements (30 points); (3) Quality of the project design and implementation (20 points); and (4) Impact and dissemination (20 points). The Handbook provides definitions for those categories and “do and don’ts” tips. The application itself is done through the Erasmus+ Application portal and a “Participant Identification Code”, or PIC, for each organization is required to start an application.

The primary document that U.S. HEIs would be responsible to complete for the supplemental application is the “Inter-institutional agreement”. It consists of 8 sections: (1) general information about the institutions; (2) mobility numbers per academic year (between the institutions); (3) recommended language skills (language of instruction at the respective institution); (4) respect of fundamental principles and other mobility requirements (per the principles articulate in the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education); (5) additional requirements, e.g. the selection criteria for students and staff; (6) calendar (for the institutions’ academic calendars); (7) “information” which consists of several sub categories: grading systems, visa

requirements, insurance, housing; (8) signatures of the institutions. (EU login, n.d.) Once that information is inputted the application is submitted from the institution in the (EU) partner country to the ministry or agency that manages the Erasmus programs in the respective country, which can be a Ministry of Education or another entity with delegated authority. It is then routed to the overall (EU-wide) funding competition for the program, such as ICM, which in turn has funding limitations that can be applied to programming in non-member countries like the United States. Before concluding this discussion of ICM, it's important to note that according to a report from the Commission:

The budget for Canada and the United States makes up almost 5% of the entire international mobility budget and so far has funded 524 projects for bilateral partnerships that organize mobility for almost 4,400 students, researchers, and staff. (European Commission, 2018, p. 1)

This budget allocation is not insignificant considering the primary intent of ICM – to facilitate mobility of Europeans within Europe.

The next Erasmus program that allows participation by U.S. students is the “Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees” (EMJMD) program which “awards EU-funded scholarships to Master students from around the world that cover tuition, travel, and a living allowance.” (Scholarships and costs, n.d.) Additionally, institutions from partner countries, such as the U.S. “can also be part of the consortia that deliver these programmes (though this is not obligatory) as Full Partners, which means they officially award degree, or as Associated Partners, where they participate in the program in some kind of capacity but not award the actual joint degree” (European Commission, 2018, p. 1). The break-down of the number of scholarships award 2014-2017, during which there were 5,589, is as follows: “programme” countries (870), Canada (96),

U.S. (196), and “rest of the world” (4,427) (European Commission, 2018, p. 1). U.S. student participation in the program, therefore, represented 3.5% of the total during this period. During this same period the number of proposals received that included U.S. institutions increased from 12 in 2014 to 30 in 2017, and the number of awards that involve the U.S. increased from 1 in 2014 to 12 in 2017 (European Commission, 2018, p. 1). Similar to the ICM program, a lead European institutional partner is necessary for a U.S. institution to work with to submit to participate in EMJMD.

The last program to highlight is the “Jean Monnet Activities” which has the aim “to develop EU studies worldwide” by supporting a variety of initiatives including modules, chairs, and centres of excellence (EACEA - European Commission, 2019). This program’s allowable activities are actually quite similar to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Resource Centers which support what’s generally regarded as “area studies” programs. Some of the allowable activities in this program provide significantly more support than others, such as funding a “chair” faculty position compared to smaller ones for curriculum development. U.S. engagement in this program is quite small; in the 2017 competition, for example, 1,177 proposals were received and 238 were selected (European Commission, 2018, p. 2). Of those seventeen were from the U.S. and only three were funded. Unlike the EMJMD and ICM programs U.S. institutions and faculty can apply for participation in this program autonomously (not necessarily in collaboration with a European lead institutional partner).

Disseminating Erasmus Information to American and other Audiences

The Delegation of the European Union to the United States is charged to conduct public diplomacy across the country. To that end, a webinar about the Erasmus+ program was conducted by the Delegation in November 2018 (Slideshare.net, 2019) and provided information

about opportunities for Americans including the ICM and others. Tips mentioned during the presentation included having the attendee contact their respective institution's international programs office to investigate agreements it might have with EU universities (which as mentioned is a gateway to participation), and if their institution may already receive support from an Erasmus program. In addition to ICM the presentation also covered topics related to Jean Monnet and Erasmus Mundus, similar to what was discussed above.

Another effort to promote Erasmus opportunities to a U.S. audience occurred at the 2017 EducationUSA Europe/Eurasia (EUR) Regional Forum, which occurs every 3 years. During that conference a representative from the Spanish Service for the Internationalization of Education (SEPIE) provided an overview quite similar to the webinar that was offered by the Delegation. SEPIE is the entity in Spain that's charged with the overall administration of Erasmus in that country, and the fact that it's conducting outreach to an American audience is a demonstration that the U.S. is a priority country for the program to engage with. As a member of an EU country's ministry of education the SEPIE representative is an integral member of the overall Erasmus administrative ecosystem which includes Program Officers at the European Commission in Brussels, staff at HEIs across the region including those that have institutional partnerships with U.S. HEIs, and others. This stakeholder network is integral to ensure the programs' engagement and administration.

This overview of Erasmus Programs, how U.S. entities can participate in them and outreach efforts conducted by various entities across the EU brings to light a variety of findings including, perhaps most importantly, that Erasmus *does* provide meaningful support directly to U.S. institutions, students and scholars. Additionally, the award rate to the U.S. is quite high within the parameters of the respective program budgets, the overall number of applications for

the various programs are increasing thus indicating that the aforementioned outreach efforts have been successful, and overall funding for Erasmus will change in the near future (per the new budget that will take effect in 2021) thus effecting the degree of U.S. participation in the respective programs. In order to develop new and innovate existing opportunities for international education engagement between the EU and U.S. including with Erasmus programs, however, it's essential to now have an understanding of the international education programs that are supported on the U.S.-side by its federal government.

Support from the U.S. Federal Government for International Education

This is a good point to remember that one of Erasmus' main objectives is inward-facing; to foster a culture so that citizens of the European community increasingly consider themselves as "European" significantly or primarily rather than their respective national identity. That's why the overwhelming majority of the programs' funds are applied to foster European student mobility *within* Europe. U.S. federal government-supported international education programs, however, are significantly more outward-facing in that they provide support for U.S. and foreign students, scholars and higher education administrators to achieve academic, research or professional development experiences outside their respective countries and to foster relationships between citizens of the U.S. and other countries. Through those experiences program participants develop skills necessary to address a myriad of academic, economic, and national security challenges. Even though its motivations are different than the EU, the U.S. has an established record of significant and durable support for international education programming which can serve as a foundation from which to advance collaboration with Erasmus.

Perhaps the most comprehensive official publication about U.S. government funding for international education is intitled "U.S. Government Resources Information Guide – Higher

Education Community” (2019). This four-page document lists international education programs supported by five federal government entities: The U.S. Departments of Commerce, Education, Homeland Security, National Science Foundation, and State. Programs from those departments facilitate domestic and overseas student mobility for international education experiences, the promotion of “U.S. goods” (including U.S. HEIs that international students pay to attend), and immigration services in the form of student visas. Also included in the document is the following guidance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation; “Universities and researchers should protect their intellectual property and be cognizant that there are dishonest actors and organizations that can take advantage of the environment of sharing on U.S. campuses of higher education” (p. 2). This excerpt demonstrates how the USG employs a comprehensive interpretation of “national security”, one that extends beyond the traditional hard power (military) interface between nations to knowledge transfer.

USG programs that have had the most interface with the EU and Erasmus are the U.S. Department of Education’s Title VI National Resource Center (NRC) Program, its Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education’s (FIPSE) “Atlantis” program (discontinued in 2008), and the Department State’s Fulbright-Schuman program. The long-standing NRC program currently funds seven centers that are supported to teach the history, culture and languages of “Western Europe/Europe” and 10 for “Russia/East Europe/Eurasia” (National Resource Centers Program, 2019). Those programs run on four-year funding cycles, with the current one lasting from the U.S. Federal Government Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 until 2021. In total the funding for those 17 centers for FY 2018 was \$4,049,145, and most of those centers are located at large public or private comprehensive research HEIs. Many of the Erasmus “Jean Monnet Chairs” are located in the same academic departments that also receive NRC funding, and there is significant

similarity between the objectives and allowable activities of the two programs. Specifically, as explained in the NRC program 2018 application:

Grants awarded under the NRC Program enable institutions of higher education (IHEs) or consortia of IHEs to establish, strengthen, or operate comprehensive or undergraduate centers that will be national resources for modern foreign language training in combination with research and training in area studies, international studies, or the international aspects of professional studies. (Federal Register, 2018, p. 24297)

The closest approximation to the NRC program offered by the Erasmus programs are the “Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence, Chairs, and Modules” which is intended to:

...deepen teaching in European integration studies embodied in an official curriculum of a higher education institution, as well as to conduct, monitor and supervise research on EU content, also for other educational levels such as teacher training and compulsory education. They also intend to provide in-depth teaching on European integration matters for future professionals in fields which are in increasing demand on the labour market, and at the same time aim at encouraging, advising and mentoring the young generation of teachers and researchers in European integration subject areas. (Erasmus+ Programme Guide, n.d., Sec. 4)

The allowable activities for the Jean Monnet Chairs are to “deepen teaching in EU studies in an official curriculum of a higher education institution; provide in-depth teaching on EU matters for future professionals in fields which are in increasing demand on the labour market” (Jean Monnet - Chair, n.d.). While the objectives and allowable activities of NRC and Jean Monnet do not directly align, there is enough similarity to provide significant program activity cross-pollination in collaboration with those U.S. HEIs that have demonstrated language and area

studies capacity so that HEIs are able to continue to offer European-related area and language studies. Another program to connect the EU and U.S. educational systems was previously supported, the Atlantis Program, and its story should be considered before new collaboration efforts are attempted.

Atlantis

For more than ten years the U.S. Department of Education's "Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education" (FIPSE) and the European Commission's "Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency" jointly administered the "EU-U.S. Atlantis Programme" (Atlantis). It was discontinued in 2011 after the end of a five-year funding cycle. The program consisted of HEIs from different member states in the EU and U.S. which received support to develop and administer joint or dual undergraduate degrees in a "wide range of academic and professional disciplines for four years." Atlantis was one of FIPSE's three internationally-oriented programs, and were a:

...collaboration among the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education and foreign government agencies to fund and coordinate federal education grant programs. For the period 1995-2004, the EU-U.S. Program, North American Program, and U.S.-Brazil Program have involved over 1,400 institutions in Europe, North America, and Brazil. Through funding from FIPSE and its foreign government counterparts, these programs, from 2001-2004, helped over 3,500 students study in their disciplines and professions in another country, often in a foreign language. Over 9,000 non-mobile students have been impacted by the changes to the curricula at their home institutions that have come about through collaboration among the participating

institutions. (Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education – Overview of the International Initiatives, n.d., para. 5)

These programs represented an important tool to help higher education institutions advance their internationalization strategies and connect the HEIs of the participating countries. This was achieved by not only providing support to students to study abroad, but also to embed global themes in curriculum which impacted the aforementioned 9,000 “non mobile” students who didn’t study abroad but whose coursework was “internationalized”. As explained by the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.), allowable activities for the program included: multilateral, multi-institutional collaboration; student mobility; mutual recognition of credits and study activities; development of shared and/or common curricula; acquisition of host country languages; development of apprenticeships and other work activities; and faculty and staff cooperation and exchange.

The U.S. Department of Education identified the Transatlantic Declaration of 1990 between the U.S. and the European Commission as the inception event for the Atlantis program and it grew from there. Specifically:

From 1995 to 2004, the United States and the European Commission funded 107 consortia involving over 725 U.S. and EC institutions. In December 2000, the United States and the European Union signed a five-year agreement to renew the Cooperation Program in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training. A new multi-year agreement was negotiated for the EU-U.S. Program that entered in force in 2006. (Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education - Overview of the International Initiatives, n.d., para. 7)

The overview goes on to explain that funded projects lasted for several year and allowed for a wide range of activities including: “multilateral, multi-institutional collaboration; student mobility; mutual recognition of credits and study activities”, and other activities (Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education - Overview of the International Initiatives, n.d., para. 6). The program’s history continued to 2007 when the European Commission and US authorities jointly launched 14 new transatlantic cooperation projects. The agreement did not reach its agreed upon duration, however, and the program was cancelled a short time later. It is reasonable to assume that the decision to end the program was due, in part, to the financial crisis of 2008 and budget cuts on the U.S.-side. Although the Atlantis Program has not been relaunched the Fulbright Schuman Program continues to this day and provides opportunities for Americans and Europeans “to study and conduct research on the transatlantic relationship. The program funds graduate and post-graduate study, research, and lecture proposals in the field of US-EU relations, EU policy, or EU institutions for interested American and EU citizens” (About the Fulbright Schuman Program, n.d.). A significant difference between Schuman and Atlantis, therefore, is that Schuman provides support to students to study at HEIs in the U.S. or EU in existing programs while the Atlantis provided a means for those HEIs to develop and administer programs collaboratively with students ultimately dividing their time between them during the course of the respective academic program.

Even with the discontinuation of the Atlantis Program it is still a helpful template for possible future collaborations to connect the U.S. and EU higher education systems. An example of a successful project supported by the Atlantis Program was one awarded to the University of Montana which helped to:

...develop and implement an innovative dual B.Sc. degree programme in Geosciences that focuses on field-based learning in an international setting, while also including substantial training in allied sciences, language, and culture. The programme will be centered on the different natural geosciences laboratories already used by each partner and will take advantage of complimentary in-house research facilities operated by each. This programme builds on the strength of existing institutional relationships, geosciences curriculum, and complementary research facilities among all three consortium partners. The project is expected to mobilize 48 students (24 from each side) and 24 faculty. (Europa.eu, 2007, para. 11)

For institutions like the University of Montana, which generally do not have extensive brand recognition outside its state or resources to establish and run time and resource-intensive projects such as the one supported by the Atlantis, the support it received was particularly impactful.

The Erasmus+ Program that shares many of Atlantis' characteristics is the "Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees" (EMJMDs) program. "From 2014 to 2017, 63 institutions from North America (U.S. and Canada) were involved in 41 of the 108 selected EMJMDs", and 48 of those institutions were in the U.S. (European Commission, 2018, p.2). The opportunity to receive support for collaborations to achieve outcomes like joint masters degree programs offered by U.S. and EU HEIs do still exist, therefore, but currently they're supported almost exclusively by the EU.

The Arguments for International Education on both sides of the Atlantic

By now it should be clear that the EU and U.S. have their own primary motivations when it comes to support for international education to address (and perhaps even solve) large social and diplomatic issues. There are a variety of other measurable outcomes that come from support

of the programs, however, and these include things like improved employment rates and modern skills development as noted in The Erasmus Impact Study (Erasmus+ webinar, n.d.).

Specifically; “Unemployment rates among Erasmus participants are 23% lower 5 years after graduation compared to those who did not go abroad. Two-thirds of employers think that international experience is a key asset for job candidates and leads to greater professional responsibility.” The Study also found that; “92% of employers are looking for transversal skills such as curiosity, problem-solving skills, tolerance and confidence; 64% of employers say graduates with an international background are given greater professional responsibility; and 64% of employers think international experience is important for recruitment (compared to 37% in 2006).” These findings strengthen the argument to support Erasmus as the outcomes extend beyond only long-term social goals.

The European Commission administers the “EuroBarometer” report which consists of approximately 1,000 face-to-face interviews per (EU) country on a variety of topics including “Media pluralism and democracy”, “Attitudes of Europeans towards Animal Welfare”, and other topics. As reported by the Independent about one of the survey’s findings (Stone, 2017); “A record number of people in EU countries now personally feel like they are citizens of the European Union (68% of EU citizens polled).” It should be noted that this survey came approximately one year *after* the BREXIT vote which may have prompted respondents to reexamine and affirm their European identity, and by the time of that poll Erasmus programs had been operation for approximately 30 years and hundreds of thousands of Europeans had participated in its programs mixing with other students from across the continent (thus influencing them to identify as European). Whatever the reasons for this heightened sense of European identity, its findings speak to the comments of Sassatelli (2002) and others who wrote

about its gradual adoption and the strategies and challenges along that road. Since that 2017 survey events across the region have unfolded at a rapid pace with particularly significant changes in Germany and France (which have long served as the EU's economic and political center): Chancellor Merkel will soon step-down after more than 15 years in power, Marine Le Pen and other "Eurosceptics" in France (and other countries) gained more seats in the European parliament in the 2019 election, and the region's economy remains stagnant compared to other countries and regions around the world. It remains to be seen, therefore, if the political center that produced this increasingly European-identifying generation will hold or if other options, like nationalism, will gain in popularity.

Meanwhile in the U.S., a 2011 survey conducted by NAFSA (Association of International Educators) to likely voters found that a strong majority of respondents (57%) say study abroad is very essential to the educational experience. 65% of Americans surveyed believe that if our young people do not learn foreign languages then they will be at a competitive disadvantage in their careers. And 73% believe that America's higher education institutions must do a better job of teaching students about the world if they are to be prepared to compete in the global economy. Leon Pannetta, a former Congressman and Secretary of Defense, added in 2011; "It is vital to our economic interests. It is vital to our diplomacy. It is vital to our national security to use the language of the people that we engage throughout the world" (Abdul-Alim, 2010). The American public and political leaders, therefore, seem to endorse meaningful support for international education programs.

But what are the outcomes of these efforts on the soft power public diplomacy front, specifically global perceptions of the U.S.? According to a Pew Research study (Wike, et al, 2018) that was conducted after the first two years of the Trump administration, favorability had

generally and quite dramatically fallen especially among traditional allies such as Germany and France and geographic neighbors (Canada and Mexico). For example, since the end of the Obama administration there has been an 11% decline of the opinion of the U.S. in the United Kingdom, 31% in the Netherlands, 26% in Canada, and 34% in Mexico. Countries where favorability has increased include Israel (+2%) and Russia (+11%). Considering that funding for international education programs offered by the federal government has remained roughly steady over the past couple years, it can be concluded that these declines aren't due to rates of student, scholar or administrator mobility to the U.S. Rather, the biggest change during this period has been political in the form of policies (e.g. visa regulations) and rhetoric.

Is there a connection between the respective pressures that the EU and U.S. face - challenges against EU cohesion and waning global perceptions of the U.S.? Li (2018) may have partially addressed this by stating; "...the hubris of soft power led to the illusion that soft power could somehow exist on its own. But even [Nye] never said that. In reality, soft power is and always will be an extension of hard power." This observation calls into question if the U.S. and EU's international education programs can achieve their respective objectives, however different, if they're not also interfacing with or via an instrument of hard power. Li continues:

The European project, perhaps even more so, was built on a false understanding of soft power. For many decades, Europe was essentially a free rider in the soft power game; the United States guaranteed its security, and its economic well-being was reliant on the U.S.-led global economic order. With the United States now less interested in providing either—and focusing more on hard power—Europe is facing real challenges. (Li, 2018, para. 15)

Chief among these challenges, to both the U.S. and Europe, is China; a nation which embraces a starkly different set of political values compared to Western liberal democracies. Those values are quickly congealing into a distinct political ethos which go by a variety of names including “a community of shared destiny.” Lee explains within in that “community”:

...nations are allowed their own development paths while working to increase interconnectedness. In the policy arena, such soft power mostly takes the form of the Belt and Road Initiative, which leverages China’s massive capital and capacity to drive infrastructure-led development in other countries to spur economic growth that would ultimately benefit China itself. It is a new potential soft power proposition: “You don’t have to want to be like us, you don’t have to want what we want; you can participate in a new form of globalization while retaining your own culture, ideology, and institutions.”

(Li, 2018, para. 27)

What China is really doing here is to encourage nations around the world, including those in Europe, to focus on economic development primarily and set aside the processes and institutions necessary to develop and sustain a liberal democracy. In other words, it’s saying ‘enough of this patronizing American and EU meddling in your internal political affairs, we (China) are here to help with pragmatic concerns that have an immediate impact in peoples’ lives.’ It remains to be seen if the U.S. and EU will coordinate their efforts in a meaningful enough way to counter China’s growing influence or continue their narrow emphasis on civil society reform and democratization which is increasingly seen ideological relics from the post-Cold War era.

That being said, if the EU does not robustly defend, develop and, yes, demand democratic institutions in its member nations then it will, quite simply, lose its moral justification to exist. At the same time, if the U.S. does not double-down on its commitment to the institutions that

connect both sides of the Atlantic - the EU and NATO specifically - then it will have squandered the opportunity to support and strengthen ties with its most important military, political and economic allies. A vacuum would be created by this type of neglect, and antagonistic powers would rush in even more quickly and inexorably than they already have. To counter this, the U.S. and EU should continue support for their respective international education schemes and tie them even more closely together, somehow incorporate NATO into these efforts as the hard power backstop (per Li's advice that soft power can't stand alone), and make significant tangible investments like China's one-belt-one-road initiative.

If things weren't dynamic enough already, Rahul Choudaha (n.d.) addressed other changes in the field of international education by commenting on the current status of international student mobility around the world (which is international education's most important metric). In his article "Driving Enrollment Growth in the Third Wave of International Students" he posits that since 2001 there have been three distinct "waves" of international student mobility linked to certain economic and geopolitical events. Specifically:

Table 2

The Three Waves of International Student Mobility:

<u>Wave</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
I	2001/02-2007/08	Impact of global financial recession	Slower international enrollment growth
II	2008/09-2015/16	Impact of global financial recession	Rapid international enrollment growth
III	2016/17 onwards	Impact of a new political order	Slower international enrollment growth

'Wave three', according to Choudaha, is shaped by:

...the uncertainties triggered by the new political order in the U.S., particularly the anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies that have raised barriers to attracting international students. Also, increasing global competition and rising tuition costs are making it more

difficult for higher education institutions to attract global learners. For example, a recent report by Studyportals, “Megatrends Shaping the Future of Global Higher Education,” identified the dramatic increase in the number of English-taught programs in Continental Europe and Asia at lower tuition cost as a challenge to high-cost destinations like the U.S. and the U.K. (Choudaha, n.d., para. 8)

These conditions in addition to the aforementioned ascendancy of China, represent significant challenges for the U.S. to maintain its status as the leader in international education, and are also some of the pressures pulling the U.S. and EU apart.

It’s also important to note that even though the U.S.’s market share of internationally mobile students is decreasing the number overall continues to rise; according to “Project Atlas” (Institute of International Education, n.d.) in 2018 over five million students studied abroad with the U.S. receiving just over one million of them, and over the past several years its market share of these internationally mobile students has fallen from 28% to 24%. Consequently, as its appeal to international students declines the power of the U.S.’s overall public diplomacy efforts will also weaken.

None of this is to assume a *fait accompli*: that the EU and U.S.’s international education engagement are doomed to weaken and wither, that entities in the EU will tighten their embrace of illiberal political forces, or that the U.S.’s market share of international students will continue to decline and xenophobic attitudes rise. Rather, these articulated challenges and pressures should serve as a diagnostic tool to identify pressures on the trans-Atlantic partnership generally and its international education collaboration specifically so that appropriate responses can be employed.

Conclusion

Has peak educational internationalization been reached? Have programs like Erasmus and those offered by the USG been effective to address their stated social objectives? Internationalization at the more grassroots institutional level has certainly received significant airtime and investment but, as Karin Fischer (2019) argues, international education's golden age may have "lost its sheen." In her argument Fischer includes comments by Philip G. Altbach, the founding director of the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College, who said that, "The era of internationalization might be over, or on life support." The reasons for this are multifaceted, some of which have been discussed, but at its core seem to be related to the jarring impact of economic globalization that's led to a sense of alienation felt by wide swaths of the population. Global mobility and collaboration, things that international education advocates trumpet as good or at least inevitable, are exactly the type of forces that wide swaths of the newly economically disenfranchised diagnose as the reasons and not the solutions to their problems. As Madeleine Green, a senior fellow at the International Association of Universities, observed, "Of course, if you don't want to live in a diverse world, that's not a very compelling argument [to promote international education]" (Fischer, 2019). These observations seem to be supported by a report by the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) that's reported a "drop-off in the share of institutions reporting that internationalization is a high priority in their strategic plans, from 60 percent, in 2011, to 47 in 2017" (Association of International Education Administrators, 2017).

Although Fischer speaks from an American perspective, policy makers in Washington *and* Brussels should heed these warning as they depend on public support to sustain and advance their international education programs. Choudaha's three waves of student mobility is another

construct to keep in mind when considering all this, particularly the “third wave” (the impact of the new world order and slower international enrollment growth). The remedy for decreased student mobility could be more public support for students to study abroad such as what Erasmus is doing within Europe including its ambitious plans to scale-up in the programs’ next iteration (starting in 2021). The U.S. has meaningful international education student mobility programs, such as Fulbright, Gilman and the Critical Language Scholarships Programs, but to achieve broader-based public support and address economic and national security challenges they, like Erasmus, need to be scaled-up.

A significant portion of student mobility between the U.S. and Europe is achieved via institutional partnerships and their corresponding student exchange agreements, dual and joint degree programs, faculty-led study abroad programs, and post-doctoral research opportunities. These partnerships are contingent upon the elements of a healthy relationship: trust, communication, and equity. In her article “Practical Considerations for International Partnerships” Suzanne Alexander (2013) presents a series of tips for partnerships to be effective, including: the partnerships must provide multiple benefits (diversified), are for the long term, and need a clear focus from the beginning. Her last tip, that partnerships work best when they are “like us”, deserves a deeper analysis in the context of collaboration between the U.S. and EU’s international education programs. Specifically, she recommends that prospective partners “take some time to understand what each partner wants from the partnership” which is important here considering Erasmus’ inward focus to address European identity, and the U.S. programs’ more outward public diplomacy-facing stance. This does not mean collaboration between the programs can’t be achieved, rather it’s best to have that understanding from the beginning so each entity can better understand how to help their partner achieve their respective objective(s).

The type of guidance Ms. Alexander provides is mostly for HEIs when they enter partnerships with one another so a similar conceptual framework is needed for international education partnerships at the governmental-level. With this in mind, the following are considerations that large government programs like Erasmus and the USG's international education should keep in mind when determining how to best engage with one another:

- (1) Understand the larger social issues that the investments in international education programs are trying to address. As explained, in the case of the EU it's mostly to achieve a great sense of European identity and for the U.S. they're primarily soft power public diplomacy tools.
- (2) Map program offerings to determine similarities, differences, opportunities for collaboration and best practices. For the EU and the U.S. this can be achieved by a side-by-side comparison of the programmatic offerings especially those from the U.S. Departments of State and Education, and the Erasmus programs. In the case of the Department of Education's National Resource Centers and Erasmus' Jean Monnet, for example, their similarities can be leveraged to increase the number of constituents (learners) who are served.
- (3) Provide opportunities for students and institutions to participate in one another's programs. Erasmus' Credit Mobility Program supplemental application (to allow for U.S. HEIs to participate) is a good example of this; it's not an overly onerous instrument and achieves meaningful mobility in both directions.
- (4) Ensure that investments are durable. This is especially important as outcomes from programmatic and institutional collaborations are achieved several years down the road if not longer. The abrupt end to the Atlantis Program serves as a cautionary tale here as it was an initiative that was achieving positive outcomes but, unfortunately, discontinued in an abrupt

manner that may have impacted the overall relationship (between Erasmus and the Department of Education).

- (5) Align soft power and hard power objectives. In the case of the trans-Atlantic partnership this means articulating how NATO, Erasmus and USG international education programs can work towards similar outcomes, and to provide mechanisms to allow them to more closely collaborate. This could be accomplished by those entities contributing to an area of common priority, such as cyber security, disinformation or media literacy; after the threat is articulated NATO would be designated as the front-line force providing immediate and ongoing protection, and Erasmus and USG international education programs implement corresponding technical training programs.
- (6) Increase student participation. Support to staff and administrators to build capacity is important, but without significant student participation in international education programs, especially by populations who historically have not participated in them, broad-based public support for their continuation will wane. Support is achieved by the impressive scale of students who participate in Erasmus Programs each year and the U.S.'s Generation Abroad initiative and Gilman Program, but other actions, such as the languishing Simon Study Abroad Act in the U.S., also need to be activated. If international education programs serve those who would've had an international education (study abroad) experience regardless if they existed or not, then there isn't a strong argument why they should receive public support.
- (7) Articulate the importance of international education with partners across multiple sectors. Educators have long advocated for international education, but other stakeholders who also recognize its value have not been brought into the conversation enough. Leon Panetta's

comments and the findings of the Erasmus Impact Study are examples of the additional types of voices that can be brought into this conversation and speak to international education's role to ensure economic competitiveness and national security.

The public institutions that were born after World War Two, developed during the Cold War, and stood to ensure general peace and prosperity in Europe, the U.S. and for much of the world over the past 70 years are under threat: NATO is the most successful military alliance in the history of the world but its relevance is now questioned. The European Union lifted Europe from the ashes of World War Two, helped bring it back together after the Cold War and fostered a sense of shared cultural identity but it's increasingly seen as out-of-touch, intrusive and inefficient. Meanwhile across the Atlantic, the United States is acting in an erratic and isolationist manner eerily similar to how it behaved after World War One when its presence on the world stage was perhaps most needed. As the EU and U.S. struggle to find their footing in this new world, illiberal and authoritarian powers are waiting in the wings ready and eager to fill the void. It's no exaggeration to say that the global geopolitical paradigm is resting on a knife's edge and the actions over the next several years will determine if democratic or authoritarian political systems gain the upper hand. To ensure that liberal democracy keeps its position of dominance, two of its largest practitioners, the U.S. and EU, must work even more closely together. Effective ways to do that are to expand commitment to their respective international education schemes, establish more programs to stitch them together and work closely with NATO. The pieces are in place to achieve a new level of transatlantic international education collaboration which, if wholeheartedly committed to, will also help the EU and U.S. achieve their respective social and public diplomacy objectives.

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