

INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGIES OF LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTIONS IN A GLOBALIZING ECONOMY

Small to medium liberal arts colleges (SMLAC's) face a constant struggle to remain competitive in order to continue to attract students to campus. Most recently this competition has a new dimension as institutions must prepare students to be effective in an increasingly global economy while at the same time there are pressures for the institutions to become international actors themselves through a range of international arrangements (such as increasing student diversity or opportunities for academic engagement and research). At the same time, these colleges are often noted for their effectiveness in retaining and graduating students due, in part, to the typically small, rural setting –well developed characteristics found in the literature on place in general, and of college towns specifically. This importance of campus as place is contrasted with the literature on globalization of culture and economy. In addition, SMLAC's produce graduates with credentials highly suited to a globalized knowledge economy that emphasizes the ability to learn (by “learning how to learn”). A theoretical model is developed to reconcile these seemingly disparate and contradictory perspectives. Such reconciliation provides a new framework for the development of strategies to help small liberal arts institutions continue to preserve their unique communities while providing a rich educational experience with relevance in a globalizing world economy. This is achieved by the elimination of ‘scale’ as an epistemological construct from human geography allowing an investigation of the role of SMLAC's in American higher education and how they serve as a suitable case study of how place can be studied independent of scale (‘site ontology’) when placed in the context of the learning economy specifically and globalization of culture and the economy in general. The model is tested using case studies from SMLAC's in Indiana. To help test the model, a Higher Education Internationalization (HEI) index is developed to assess the level of an institution's ‘internationalization’. This metric will permit meaningful comparisons across institutions as well as trend analysis over time with varying institutional characteristics. The analysis involves a mixed method approach using available data on aspects of internationalization at the institution level, a survey of institutional leadership, and corporate interviews of campus presidents and chief academic officers. The results of the quantitative and qualitative surveys are expected to confirm the perception of a gap in institution internationalization based on size, but that the gap is underestimated by those from smaller

institutions. Their reflection of their institution's internationalization efforts is expected to be in conflict with the institution's HEI scores, which can have deleterious effects on the ability to attract and retain students, and more importantly with what their graduates experience upon entering the labor force. A broader outcome of this research is its contribution to a framework that allows a place – such as a college community – to be studied with a contemporary perspective on the impact of globalization on place by approaching college campuses as a 'milieu' in which a complex set of process are operating, often in conflict with each other.