the Hollings Center
for international dialogue

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

CONFERENCE REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today, with the effects of globalization and with dramatically expanded access to higher education, the quality of education has become more crucial for national development and competitiveness as well as for individual success. The rise of cross-border education, including branch campuses, student and faculty mobility, and partnerships between universities in different countries, also raises new and complex questions about how to define, measure, and assure quality in higher education. Despite obvious differences in their educational systems, economies, and sociocultural contexts, many predominantly Muslim countries and the United States share a growing concern about quality in higher education.

To explore this important issue from a comparative international perspective, in October 2009 the Hollings Center for International Dialogue convened a three-day colloquium in Istanbul, Turkey, entitled "Quality Assurance in Higher Education: An International Dialogue on Progress and Challenges." The fourth program in the Hollings Center's higher education dialogue series, the meeting convened outstanding higher education leaders from 12 Muslim-majority countries and the United States. Twenty-nine university presidents and deans, senior government officials responsible for quality assurance (QA), leading quality assurance experts, and representatives of higher education organizations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States took part in intensive discussions about identifying, measuring, and assuring quality in higher education, as seen from the vantage points of different institutions, nations, and regions.

The colloquium covered the following topics:

- Quality as Seen from University, National, and Global Perspectives
- Whose Standards?
- The Importance of Mission
- Promoting Quality from within the University
- Students and Quality
- Assessing Student Learning
- Rankings
- Assuring Quality through External Means
- How Governments and Primary and Secondary Education Influence Higher Education Quality
- Quality and Cross-Border Education
- Working across Borders to Promote Quality: International Partnerships and Networks

The rich dialogue allowed participants (see Appendix 1) to learn about developments in other countries, reflect on common challenges, and build partnerships to help strengthen higher education across borders and cultures. This report summarizes the discussions and presents the main findings and recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Several decades ago, when attaining a university education was sufficient for an individual to enter the professions or the middle class, the rare distinction of earning a degree was a sufficient indicator of excellence. Today, with the effects of globalization and with dramatically expanded access to higher education, the quality of education has become more crucial for nations' competitiveness and economic development and for individual success. The rise of cross-border education, including branch campuses, student and faculty mobility, and partnerships between universities in different countries, also raises new and complex questions about how to define, measure, and assure quality in higher education. The pursuit of excellence is demonstrated by the fascination with rankings, the quest for world-class universities, and the search for external validation, such as accreditation.

Despite obvious differences in their educational systems, economies, and sociocultural contexts, many predominantly Muslim countries and the United States share a growing focus on quality in higher education. To explore this issue from a comparative international perspective, in October 2009 the Hollings Center for International Dialogue convened a three-day colloquium in Istanbul, Turkey, entitled "Quality Assurance in Higher Education: An International Dialogue on Progress and Challenges." Twenty-nine university presidents and deans, senior government officials responsible for quality assurance (QA), leading QA experts, and representatives of higher education organizations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States took part in an intensive dialogue on identifying, measuring, and assuring quality in higher education, as seen from the vantage points of different institutions, nations, and regions. Colloquium sessions allowed participants to learn about developments in other countries, regions, and territories, reflect on common challenges, and build partnerships to help strengthen higher education across borders and cultures.

The Hollings Center promotes dialogue between the United States and Turkey, the nations of the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast and Southwest Asia, and other countries with predominantly Muslim populations to open channels of communication, deepen cross-cultural understanding, expand people-to-people contacts, and generate new thinking on important international issues. The Center convenes dialogue programs in Istanbul for opinion leaders and experts in various fields. It also awards grants and fellowships to selected dialogue participants for collaborative projects that build on discussion recommendations. The Center was established as an NGO through legislation enacted in 2004 and 2005 by the U.S. Congress, particularly through the efforts of Senator Ernest F. Hollings, a Democrat who represented South Carolina in the U.S. Senate from 1966 to 2005. The Center's headquarters are in Washington, D.C., and it maintains a staff presence in Istanbul. The Center is supported by a trust fund, for which the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State serves as the fiduciary agent.

Higher education is one of the Hollings Center's key program areas, reflecting a belief that universities have a unique role to play in strengthening understanding between predominantly Muslim societies and the United States. This colloquium was the fourth such Hollings dialogue. Previous education dialogues, held in 2005, 2007, and 2008, focused on the topics of strengthening independent universities and expanding U.S. study abroad in the Arab world. Those discussions identified quality in higher education as a cross-cutting, fundamentally important theme deserving of a dedicated meeting.

This report was written by Barbara Brittingham, Director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education at the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and Amy Hawthorne, Executive Director of the Hollings Center. Aaron Karako of the Hollings Center provided research support. It summarizes the proceedings of the colloquium, which was held under the Chatham House Rule to promote a frank and open dialogue. Accordingly, participants are not identified.

OVERVIEW

Colloquium sessions explored the following topics:

- Quality as Seen from University, National, and Global Perspectives
- Whose Standards?
- The Importance of Mission
- Promoting Quality from within the University
- Students and Quality
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- Quality and Cross-Border Education
- Working across Borders to Promote Quality: International Partnerships and Networks

Several overarching questions animated the discussions:

- In an era of globalization, questions of defining excellence in higher education and finding the appropriate balance between national or regional standards and international standards have become more acute. Can a set of universal standards be identified, or do standards necessarily differ from country to country, from region to region, or even from culture to culture? **How can institutions aspire to external standards while also respecting their own countries' traditions, values, and needs?**

- External pressures for quality assurance can provide much-needed accountability and incentives to reform higher education. But they also can impinge on a university's autonomy. QA agencies, governments, and the public all bring their own sets of expectations that may not be aligned with the institution's mission or

resources. **How can universities respond to "outside" expectations of quality while maintaining institutional independence and remaining true to their mission?**

- When quality assurance is driven by external demands, how can systems be reformed not only to meet external requirements, but also to **develop a culture of quality within the institution?** How can small institutions leverage the resources needed for reform? How can large, diverse universities engage the entire campus in quality assurance?

- Notions of quality frequently focus on having the best—the most modern facilities, the most accomplished faculty, the most talented students. But many institutions serve a broad array of students of varying academic caliber. **Can quality be judged on a value-added basis, such as by how much and how well students learn,** rather than by comparing their achievements to those at other institutions? What are the best ways to measure student learning? How can institutions that serve large numbers of under-prepared students promote and demonstrate quality?

- Especially as the economic benefits of higher education are so universally emphasized, **how can universities also focus on developing the ethical, social, and cultural dimensions of education** as indicators of quality?

QUALITY AS SEEN FROM UNIVERSITY, NATIONAL, AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Reforming a university is difficult work that requires talent and vision, financial resources, support from the institution and the community, and time. The experience of Qatar University, the country's national institution of higher learning that has made great strides in the past seven years, offers several valuable lessons. An honest assessment of where past performance fell short, careful planning, and bold leadership allowed the university to focus on clarifying its role in serving the country, improving its processes, and ensuring that its graduates met higher standards and could be better prepared to compete in the 21st-century economy. Reform has been successful in part because the university was granted more autonomy and decision making was decentralized so that responsibility for quality is shared broadly within the university. The university introduced systems that require achievements from administrators, faculty, and students. It increased compensation to recruit the best faculty, and linked compensation to performance. Yet, such changes are disruptive when the systems are new, and some people will oppose change. Some will leave voluntarily, and some may be asked to leave when performance does not meet the new expectations. A critical mass of supporters within the university is necessary. At the same time, reform offers the opportunity to identify the university's next generation of leaders who will sustain and advance quality improvements beyond the initial phase. Having the support of political leaders is necessary for reforms to succeed, especially when the opponents of change are vocal and organized. In Qatar, when the university asked unmotivated and underperforming

students to leave, society reacted negatively and the Parliament questioned the university's president. But the country's leadership strongly backed the reform effort. Qatar University now has an independent governing board and is seeking accreditation first for certain programs and then for the institution overall. Certainly, Qatar's abundant resources and a relatively small campus made the reform effort more feasible.

When resources are not so plentiful—ever, or because of an economic downturn—there are additional challenges in pursuing quality. A colloquium participant from Jordan noted that the largest and most prominent university in his country serves 38,000 students with an annual budget of just $130 million, which leaves little to fund reforms. The lessons learned from wealthier countries are worth studying, he said, but the ability to apply them is constrained.

Reform offers the opportunity to identify the next generation of leaders who will sustain and advance quality improvements beyond the initial reform phase.

In the United States, many institutions are feeling the results of the recession in greatly reduced endowments, in the case of many private institutions, or in diminished state support, in the case of public institutions. In the face of shrinking budgets, it may be daunting to envision major reforms to achieve quality improvement. Increasingly, students must borrow to finance their education, and when jobs become scarce for graduates, they may be burdened with debt they cannot repay. In the spirit of seeking innovation when times are hard, there is considerable discussion of new, less expensive models (such as three-year bachelor's degrees, increased use of online learning, and no-frills campuses). But reduced time or reduced resources may diminish the student experience, the quality of learning, and student achievement. It is easy to become excited about innovations that might lower costs, a U.S. participant remarked, but quality should be the primary concern.

Participants reflected on other aspects of the current debate about quality in the United States. What should be assessed—students' acquisition of cognitive bodies of knowledge, or skills that transcend specific fields? How should quality be measured—should there be a national test that every student should take, or is such an overarching structure inappropriate in the decentralized U.S. system? Where should responsibility for quality assurance primarily fall—on the federal government, state governments, universities, or accrediting organizations? Is the United States at risk of losing its global dominance of higher education, as other countries reap the benefits of sustained major investments in their systems? How should U.S. colleges and universities position themselves in relation to international protocols such as the Bologna Process (a set of higher education standards adopted by 47 European and other countries)? Would adopting such norms attract more foreign students to the United States, or erode some of the special attributes that make U.S. higher education so appealing around the world?

Also relevant are the World Bank's findings, based on its work in more than 200 countries, that world-class universities share three attributes: a concentration of student and faculty talent, a concentration of resources, and favorable governance (sufficient autonomy for the institution and different bodies within it having authority to do their jobs without undue meddling). At world-class universities, all constituencies—the board of trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students—have a role in governance. A challenge is to bridge the gaps among them, supporting communication without inviting any group to overstep its role. It was noted that many of the universities represented at the colloquium are not striving to become world-class institutions. For many, simply becoming good or very good is a worthy goal. The aforementioned three attributes may be worth trying to work toward, to whatever degree is appropriate for each institution, because doing so may only strengthen quality.

In any country, in any situation, reform is difficult. There are multiple stakeholders with different levels of power and different expectations. In the United States, for example, the federal government wants evidence of student learning, high graduation rates, and graduates' success in the job market. Yet many universities, especially independent (private) institutions, compete for good students and must also cater to their expectations. Some of what students want is positive with respect to quality (flexible courses of study), and some of it may distract them from their studies (fancy amenities). Universities must balance what different constituencies want from higher education.

WHOSE STANDARDS?

The last two decades have seen a rapid increase in QA agencies around the world. Formally or informally, many countries are using standards developed elsewhere, often in Europe and the United States, to advance, measure, or validate the quality of their universities. For some countries, meeting standards set in a nation with a highly regarded educational system is a sign of achievement and prestige. Some participants contended that their countries must look to such external standards because their own standards are mediocre or poorly defined. In other countries, however, taking on standards from elsewhere may mean that a university loses authenticity and perhaps then local support. Foreign accreditation may be seen as the "wedge of globalization," either connecting countries with a larger global enterprise or representing an intrusion that threatens to homogenize higher education.

A participant who leads a women's university in Saudi Arabia explained that she seeks to create a campus that brings in aspects of international models from France, Italy, Spain, and the United States while also upholding local norms. For example, the university offers the first engineering degree program for female students in the Kingdom. This requires accommodating male engineering instructors while respecting the requirements of gender segregation. The university has involved students' fathers in decision making, focused on changes that can help students succeed, and explained change within the context of the university's mission.

Colloquium participants discussed why the Middle East, which has experienced such forceful U.S. interventionism and where there is widespread opposition to U.S. policies,

continues to embrace the U.S. model of higher education. Across the region, the American brand is still widely associated with quality and many higher education institutions use "American" in their name. Often the reference to America is meant to assert prestige and good value, regardless of whether the institution has an actual connection to the United States. The reputation for practicality in U.S. higher education is also attractive. (Practicality is not found only in the U.S. model, of course. For example, the Bologna Process is making European universities more practical by introducing modular classes so that students can graduate faster, creating multiple paths for entry and exit, and reducing waste.) A participant from Kuwait noted that the perceived value of a U.S. education goes beyond what happens in the classroom. A U.S. college or university, he noted, has a strong system of remedial action, with follow-up and accountability. Problems can be expected, but so can action to address them. A participant from Egypt remarked that the heterogeneity of U.S. higher education—the diversity of colleges and universities, with its range of offerings and strengths—is its most impressive feature.

Although U.S. accreditation from a respected organization assures a minimal level of quality and can be a force for improvement, it does not ensure excellence. The United States has many internationally recognized colleges and universities and has provided outstanding educational experiences for international students who have gone on to become leaders in their countries, but the range of quality among U.S. colleges and universities is considerable.

Although there are not—or not yet—truly international standards for higher education, many participants pointed to university autonomy and academic freedom as the factors most crucial for quality.

Relying either on national or on other-country standards may not be the only choice. Are there definable "international standards" against which countries can measure their institutions of higher education? Perhaps some fields with widely quantifiable areas of curricula and knowledge, such as engineering or medicine, may meet such an expectation. But for other fields, such as humanities and social sciences, and for universities overall, the situation is different and common standards are often elusive. Although there are not—or not yet—truly international standards for higher education, are there common elements to which all can agree? Many participants cited university autonomy and academic freedom as the fundamental criteria of quality.

In the absence of agreed upon international standards or processes to measure and apply them, *adapting* rather than *adopting* international standards is one way to strike an appropriate balance between localisms and universalisms that could lead to homogenization.

Colloquium participants sought to identify some quality indicators, if not yet quality standards, for universities that would be broadly applicable across countries and regions. These might include:

- **Measures of resources:** the quality of faculty, the financial health of the institution, the quality of infrastructure, and the quality and diversity of incoming students.
- **Measures of processes:** accreditation or other forms of external validation, community involvement, and the use of technology in teaching and learning.
- **Measures of outcomes:** graduation rates, employability of graduates, students' communication skills, critical thinking, competence in different disciplines and success in external exams, and institutional reputation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MISSION

A clear mission helps the university answer the essential questions, "What do we do best?" "What niche are we filling?" and "Which students and social needs are we serving?" A mission statement reflects the university's special character and focuses its efforts on its priorities and core objectives. Mission statements can clarify the range and level of academic programs, describe the role of research for the faculty, indicate what religious or other traditions and values inform the academic program, address the communities the institution seeks to serve, and lay out other goals. In short, the university's mission should be seen as the foundation of quality, as it says, "This is what we do best."

The president of a Moroccan university founded in part on a North American model described how his institution constantly reviews its mission statement and considers new initiatives by first assessing their relationship to the mission. The mission includes national dimensions (the university is first and foremost a Moroccan institution) and international ones (English is the language of instruction). Fulfilling both dimensions has required special attention, for example, to how the university is serving students' language skills so that they graduate with proficiency in three languages—English will help students succeed in the global economy, whereas the Moroccan labor market demands French and Arabic fluency. Underscoring the role of the mission statement in the institution's strength overall, the president says, "We can address a budget deficit with less difficulty than we can a mission deficit."

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The president of a university in West Virginia discovered that his institution had five different mission statements. Developing a single statement was the first step to determine a roadmap for quality improvement. That process provided clarity for the university and helped to create stakeholders. The final version of the mission took into account the competitive position of the university—the higher education context in which it existed and its strengths—and reflected the expectations of students for their education. Now the mission is to prepare each student for a life of productive work, enlightened living, and community involvement. As a private institution, the university

competes for students with the public institutions that have very low tuition. It must demonstrate value to students and families, and that requires evidence of quality. To focus on its mission, it has become outcomes-focused and assessment-based. Buy-in from the faculty is necessary to make the assessment-based mission work. Faculty are motivated because they know that the university must attract enough qualified students for the institution to succeed. A faculty committee defines and monitors six areas of skills and knowledge important to all students. It approves courses, monitors student success, and reviews faculty tests and rubrics. Using national tests provides external feedback. The governing board is involved as well to help the university answer the question, "Are we fulfilling our mission better this year than last year?"

There is a saying that a reasonable university adapts itself to the world around it, and an unreasonable one tries to change the world around it; therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable university.

Mission statements need to be realistic and match the resources available or attainable. In Egypt, a system-wide reform effort led by the Ministry of Higher Education has worked with the country's universities to establish mission statements and strategic plans. To create incentives for faculty and administrators to work toward quality improvement, the Ministry has linked appointment to university leadership positions with individuals' contributions to the mission and strategic plan. An effective governance system can be useful in motivating the campus to focus on the mission.

Many universities reflect a commitment to serve their local, national, or regional communities in their mission statement. Religious and cultural values sometimes are articulated in mission statements, and sometimes are assumed. For many institutions providing service to the local community, developing students' values to faith, public service, or social justice, or stating aspirations to "make the world a better place," are important reflections of the character—and quality—of the institution. The test is how to measure these outcomes, and to learn how successful the university has become in these dimensions and how they contribute to excellence.

PROMOTING QUALITY FROM WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

It is useful to think of different levels of quality, with the first two levels found inside the university: (1) foundational structures and policies (mission statements, handbooks, budget processes, curriculum committees, job descriptions, governance documents) that establish order and standards; and (2) internal review and validation (learning objectives, institutional research, strategic planning, teaching centers, international advisory committees). Such internal mechanisms to promote excellence are important in themselves; they also serve as an important foundation for external quality review.

When promoting quality, the special character of universities matters. In business, which generally works from the top down, the company can build a system and then can demand that everyone accept it and work to implement it. Universities are far more

unwieldy. Faculty and students often have the power to push back and press for their own priorities. The governing board deals with the macro issues (e.g., budget, strategy) and the faculty engage at the micro-level (e.g., classroom teaching, syllabi, labs); it is at the micro-level that quality is foremost achieved. Most academic administrators reside in the middle ground, combining strategic vision with the nuts and bolts. A governance system links the macro- and micro-levels. Internally, a system of faculty governance can engage the faculty in supporting strategic moves and increasing quality. It can help the faculty understand that if the university sets its admission standards, if a student fails, it is possibly the university's fault. If many students fail, the university should ask whether it is admitting the wrong students or not adding value.

A participant from Lebanon described the steps that his university has taken to improve internal governance and strengthen quality. When faculty complained about the students' low level of English, the provost replied, "You're complaining? It's your job to teach them." From a heated discussion about responsibility grew the idea of a writing center, for which the university provided support. Faculty have learned to question each other ("Why do you need this new program?") and work together on program- and course-level outcomes. Support for the new governance system is provided by faculty orientation and mentoring to "reculture" new faculty into the system. When the liberal arts and sciences proved to be more difficult than the professional programs in terms of student learning outcomes and assessment, the university pursued funding for a program and learning assessment center that serves not only the university but the wider region. The visibility of this center and the university's leadership has helped faculty pursue the daunting task of developing learning outcomes and assessment tools in the liberal arts.

There is a saying that a reasonable university adapts itself to the world around it, and an unreasonable one tries to change the world around it; therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable university. If a university wishes to be an agent of change, it must do the unreasonable yet remain mindful of the surrounding context. A university in Pakistan was established as a role model for quality, and in achieving that developed internal systems that challenged and changed some longstanding practices that were corrupting higher education and stymieing educational progress in the country.

In a culture where people were accustomed to influence and family background making the difference in admissions, this university developed an elaborate system for selecting 100 highly qualified medical students from an applicant pool of 4,000. The university developed its own admissions test to whittle the pool to 300 and then involved faculty from inside and out of the university along with respected professionals (business people, accountants, and lawyers) to interview each applicant blind (i.e., without name or community of origin). Test scores, interviews, committee ratings, and high school grades were weighted to determine the final selection. The transparency of the process—and its removal from the purview of top administrators and the board—gave the university a merit-based system for choosing its students. The university also instituted new standards and systems in its teaching hospitals, a process that took more than a decade. Some 30 faculty and staff committees reviewed everything from medical practice to record-keeping to housekeeping. After implementing new quality-control measures, the

university worked first to meet the ISO 9001 standards (business-quality standards that focus on reducing error) and then to gain accreditation from the Joint Commission for International Accreditation, one of the most difficult accreditations in the medical field. The changes in admissions practices and in how the hospitals are run to achieve international validation have had a salutary effect on other institutions in the country.

Sustaining internal QA systems over time is not easy. Faculty can be energized to define learning outcomes and gather assessment information. If the resulting analyses identify problem areas, however, it can be much more difficult to remedy deficiencies that call for changes in teaching or curriculum or for significant resources over many years.

The broader social and cultural context is always important. Because laws and customs help to set societal expectations for universities, it can be arduous for the university on its own to redefine how excellence should be identified and promoted. In addition, many universities in Muslim-majority countries have faculties that are broadly international, bringing different ideas of quality from their home countries and requiring the orientation of foreign faculty members to a set of common expectations. Finally, universities are never insulated from their political environments. Universities in places undergoing or scarred by conflict and unrest, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, or Palestine, face the most difficult struggles to improve quality.

STUDENTS AND QUALITY

The link between students and quality is fundamental, but not always simple. When expectations for access to higher education outpace improvements in secondary education, universities may end up enrolling significant numbers of underprepared or unmotivated students. In many Middle Eastern countries, public universities are obliged to admit all students, regardless of qualification; sometimes the right to (free) higher education is enshrined in the constitution. Facing this problem and not being able to change the entry requirements, the national university in a Gulf country instead improved quality by raising the exit standards. Students who could not meet the requirements at the end of their university career were not able to graduate and receive a degree.

Such moves are controversial, however, and in some cases may not be feasible. For instance, most private universities depend on enrollments for tuition and fees to finance their institutions. If they set their standards too high, there may not be a large enough pool of qualified high school graduates to fill the institution. A participant from a private university in a South Asian country remarked, "To put it bluntly, the fastest way to raise quality would be to reject about 25 to 30 percent of our student body, but of course our board of trustees would not allow this because the university needs the tuition revenue." In such situations, the best alternative may be to work toward setting clear standards for student achievement and for progress toward a degree. Although such reforms may be disruptive initially if they go against the institutional culture or wider social norms, they allow universities to establish higher expectations. The result is that quality improves and employers value graduates more.

For instance, a university in Pakistan was not attracting enough qualified applicants for its nursing program. Families didn't view nursing as a prestigious-enough profession and the university itself had barriers to admission, such as a maximum age of 25 for nursing students. By educating the community and by removing these barriers, the university was able to increase the quantity and quality of the pool of potential nursing students. Conversely, in Turkey there is not enough space in the universities to meet demand. Some 1.5 million secondary school students take the Turkish university entrance exam each year, but only about 500,000 are accepted. Expanding access to higher education is crucial for the country's continued economic growth. Turkey's solution was to open some 60 new universities in the past four years. Some observers, however, ask how high standards will be maintained with such rapid growth.

The national university in a Gulf country improved quality by raising the exit standards. Students who could not meet the requirements at the end of their university career were not able to graduate and receive a degree.

Where students are capable but underprepared as a result of poor secondary schooling, it may be the role of the university to improve their academic skills. In Qatar, many students spend a year or two in a foundation program to improve their English, math, and technology skills. In the United States as well, many students require special remedial or developmental courses before beginning work toward a degree. And some U.S. institutions with a teaching rather than a research mission concentrate on the amount of growth in student learning between matriculation and graduation. Thus, it is important that notions of quality include a "value-added" dimension, so that improving the achievement of all students, including under-prepared students, is recognized as a dimension of quality.

Convincing faculty, who are themselves academically talented, that their job includes helping underprepared students is not always easy, however. Faculty may be inclined to think that the caliber of admitted students, rather than effective teaching, is the biggest determinant of institutional quality. Involving faculty in setting admission standards and reviewing applicants can be a way of gaining faculty support to ensure that admitted students have a better chance of graduating.

In countries where wealth is high and jobs are available regardless of qualification, or more commonly, in less wealthy countries where good jobs are scarce, student motivation may be low, which is a major impediment to quality. Universities may find ways to require consistent progress toward a degree at appropriate levels of achievement, rather than having the university become mainly a place for young adults to congregate.

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

There are four common ways that quality in higher education has been measured. The first three—looking at resources, rankings, and surveys—are all indirect measures. The fourth method—directly measuring the impact of education on the student, such as

through exams or student work—is more complicated. Yet it is widely becoming seen as essential to quality assurance.

Universities generally devise a combination of measures to assess what their students learn. On many U.S. campuses, these can include a "culminating senior experience" for each student: a class or assignment that asks students to pull together what they have learned and demonstrate their knowledge and skill in some complex way. One example, often reserved for the best students, is a senior thesis. Other indicators that students have met the institution's goals include community service and success in finding employment after graduation.

Exit surveys of undergraduate and graduate students, alumni surveys, and faculty surveys are also useful. One U.S. university found that alumni singled out verbal communication skills as the most critical skills they gained as undergraduates. This is an important finding, because verbal communication skills can be developed across the curriculum. Other indirect measures include time-to-degree. If certain subgroups of students are not graduating on time, the university can find ways to provide them with additional support.

Assessment committees on campus can help faculty and administrators decide the best ways to measure student learning on important goals. The committees can also scrutinize assessment results and determine what investments are needed to improve programs and services for students. Support can be provided by an institutional research office for issues related to data and by the staff of a teaching and learning center to improve pedagogy.

One new way to measure student learning is the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), which focuses on measuring critical thinking skills. Universities prepare students for a world that does not yet exist; by the time today's students graduate, half of the technological information they learned in their first semester will be obsolete. Teaching critical thinking may be the most important goal in higher education. A test should focus on transfer, meta-cognition, and other higher-order skills. At issue is to measure how students can apply critical thinking skills learned at university to situations that they've never seen before. The CLA was developed as such a test, using measures developed in consultation with faculty focus groups.

The test poses real-life scenarios to students. For example, one item might ask students to consider how to reduce crime: Should there be more police officers or should the focus be on drug-treatment programs? Students are given numerous documents (quantitative data on crime and drug use, newspaper articles, research on success rates in drug treatment programs), and they have 90 minutes to use the documents to reach a conclusion. The students are graded on whether they can look at quantitative data and analyze them correctly. These direct measures are important because there is no correlation between students' self-reported critical thinking skills and their actual demonstrated skills.

Measuring these higher order skills is quite laborious, and not everyone endorses using the CLA. Critical thinking is important, but it is only one learning outcome, and there is no widely accepted definition of exactly what should be measured. Problem solving is a related skill, although the techniques differ by discipline. In engineering, for example, there is a fundamental body of knowledge, but more importantly is how to use knowledge to think through a particular problem. This problem-solving skill is so valuable that engineers are often recruited for jobs outside the field because of their way of thinking. Also, the CLA doesn't control for maturation; perhaps students naturally become better at critical thinking as they move through college. An additional challenge is the resources required (both financial and time) to administer the CLA, which may be beyond the scope of some campuses.

Some U.S. universities are experimenting in how they might best use the CLA to evaluate learning outcomes. Administered to freshmen and seniors, the CLA helps the university understand how much its students have learned in four years, and the norms help the institution compare their students' learning with that of students from other institutions. Some schools have used the CLA items as a way to help faculty develop their own exams to address higher order thinking skills. The Council of Independent Colleges is working with groups of institutions using the CLA to find practices to improve teaching and learning. There are also other exams being used in the United States, including the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) and the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). Some institutions use the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) major field tests to measure outcomes. Graduate and professional schools also have national board exams in areas such as medicine, dentistry, law, and engineering.

What critical or analytical thinking means varies from place to place, making the direct application of external, Western measurement tools impractical.

There are nascent initiatives to explore using the CLA outside of the United States. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for example, has undertaken the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project, planned as the most comprehensive assessment of universities in many countries. AHELO will have three assessments to measure learning outcomes in generic skills, learning in context, and discipline-related skills (in engineering and economics) and a fourth research-based assessment to determine if universities "add value" to their students' skills. The OECD has asked the developers of the CLA to see if their work can be translated into other cultural contexts for this value-added measure. There has been an attempt to develop a version for Arab universities, although it is still in the preliminary stages.

The discussion led colloquium participants to debate whether critical thinking skills are an appropriate indicator of quality education in cultures where critical thinking, as it is understood in the West, may not be encouraged or valued and people are expected not to question authority or key beliefs. As a participant from Saudi Arabia explained, in

hierarchical societies, culture can be a constraint on critical thinking skills, even as universities acknowledge their utility in the competitive globalized economy. She asked, "How can we provide higher education that embraces our values, but also integrates us with the rest of the world?" There is hesitancy among students and faculty in some countries, a participant from Bangladesh noted, to "go against the group." On some campuses in the region, however, there are some initiatives to improve teaching analytical skills. In one Gulf country campus, a faculty committee was tasked with determining how to integrate analytical skills into the core curriculum. After studying the issue, the committee's recommendation was to hire 10 new faculty to teach special courses on critical thinking—not quite the recommendation the university's leader was hoping for. What critical or analytical thinking means varies from place to place, making the direct application of external, Western measurement tools impractical.

RANKINGS

Rankings are the quality measure academics love to hate. But rankings are here to stay, so it is important to understand them and think carefully about their role in quality. Lists ranking universities worldwide garner immediate attention when they are released, and invite intense scrutiny based on year-to-year gains and losses. Is such scrutiny justified? And what do changes in rankings really tell us about quality?

Rankings depend entirely on what's being measured—the chief weakness of any single ranking system. Rankings in other domains are based on measurable data: sports rankings are based on performance, and best-seller lists are based on sales, although with no indication of literary quality. Inevitably, higher education rankings are based on a relatively small number of factors applied to an enormous range of complex universities. Whether these factors can be quantified or if they mean the same thing in all cases are matters of heated debate.

Consider, for example, three widely cited rankings systems: the *U.S. News & World Report* National Universities Rankings, *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings, and the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Academic Ranking of World Universities. The Shanghai ranking considers output in the sciences only (e.g., alumni winning Nobel prizes in physics, chemistry, medicine, and economics, faculty winning Nobel prizes in those fields and highly cited researchers in 21 broad field categories; scientific publications, and per capita performance in the above, weighted by FTE faculty). The *U.S. News* and the *Times* rankings focus more on the quality of education, with peer assessment accounting for 25 percent and 40 percent, respectively. *U.S. News* gives credit for retention and graduation rates, faculty resources, selectivity, and alumni giving. The *Times* rankings favor student-to-faculty ratio, employer surveys, and the percentage of international students and faculty. These are three unique ranking systems, all widely regarded, using three very different sets of criteria. The Shanghai ranking may be more objective (there is no peer assessment per se), but it is also narrower, focusing only on research output and highly favoring the sciences. The *U.S. News* and the *Times* rankings rely so heavily on peer assessment that the easiest way to change the rankings may be to change who gives the peer assessments.

Other ranking systems produce data whose relationship to educational quality is unclear. The "Webometrics" from the Cybermetrics Lab in Spain, for example, ranks 16,000 universities based on factors from their websites. The Ecole des Mines de Paris produces the Professional Rankings of World Universities, which purports to represent educational effectiveness by ranking universities by the number of alumni who are CEOs of Fortune 500 corporations.

As universities consider rankings, several questions arise. To what degree should universities respond to the rankings, changing their behavior in line with specific ranking criteria? Are students influenced by the criteria used in the rankings? Or do they simply look at which institutions rank higher than others? To what extent are universities complicit in encouraging the use and proliferation of ranking systems?

Rankings are here to stay, so it is important to understand them and think carefully about their role in quality.

For rankings to be useful to a university, the criteria should match the institution's mission. The measures should have a close relationship with those areas in which the institution seeks to excel. One U.S. institution with a business-related mission knows it will not do well in the *U.S. News* or *Times Higher Education* rankings. It is relatively new and unknown among peers who would rank it; reputations take a long time to build. It scores well in the *Economist* and *Financial Times* rankings, which do not include peer rankings, and concentrates more on employability, an area in which the school's graduates do well.

One problem with any ranking is that it is a zero-sum game: for one university to move up, another must move down. The whole system could get better (or worse), and the rankings would still reflect the same order. There are clear alternatives to rankings that institutions may find useful. One is to develop a "dashboard indicator," a set of key variables, such as to track progress over time. Retention and graduation rates of students, employability rates of graduates, and giving records of trustees are some examples. The goal is to rate the institution's quality against progress toward its own goals, rather than to compare it against other institutions. A second alternative is to benchmark these variables against peer institutions using publicly available information. A third option is to join or start a consortium of similar institutions that decide together what are their most important indicators and agree to share data. For example, the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) consortium, consisting of 160 mainly liberal arts institutions in the United States, enables members to see how they are doing relative to their peers. HEDS also uses common student and alumni surveys. These are all private ways of sharing, so each institution keeps the information to itself and decides what information it wants to release.

In the public arena, ratings and report cards can be used. Ordinal rankings are inherently misleading, as they don't tell the distance between items. Summary scores of ratings are

better, allowing one institution to succeed without cost to another. Examples of ratings and report cards in the United States include:

- **College Sustainability Report Card,** in which 48 indicators evaluate performance in categories such as administration, climate change and energy, food and recycling, and green building.
- **Measuring Up,** a state-by-state report card that examines states' economic development and international competitiveness, and considers multiple factors such as preparation of secondary school students, college-going rates, affordability of higher education, completion rates, economic and civic benefits of adults with degrees, and learning. (In this last category, information on what students have learned in their education, every state gets an "incomplete" grade).
- **Voluntary Accountability System for Community Colleges** is a new initiative to look at graduation and completion rates, developing a new set of metrics for these institutions, most of which typically enroll a high proportion of part-time and transfer students, many of whom need remedial courses.

There are clear alternatives to rankings that institutions may find useful.

Most of the current rankings focus on Western or Asian institutions. Universities in Muslim-majority countries generally have not done well in these rankings, causing much hand-wringing. In response, and reflecting the trend toward regional rankings, now the Organization of the Islamic Conference, an association of 51 Muslim-majority states, is developing an "Islamic university ranking." It is causing increased competition, leading some countries to spend more on higher education to achieve a better ranking for their universities. A participant from an Arab country asked whether this was leading to a superficial regional competition to gain prestige, in which countries are throwing resources just to "move universities up in the rankings," rather than achieving meaningful quality improvements. Another participant questioned the very premise of creating a ranking group based on the majority religion of the countries involved, asking for instance what universities in Indonesia have in common with those in Syria.

Colloquium participants recognized that rankings will likely proliferate given the increased importance of higher education, improved access to data, and the public fascination with rankings. The Berlin Principles on Ranking of Higher Education Institutions articulate 16 important standards of good practice. They specify that rankings should recognize the diversity of institutions and take the different missions and goals of institutions into account; be transparent regarding the methodology used for creating the rankings; measure outcomes with reference to inputs whenever possible; use audited and verifiable data whenever possible; provide consumers with a clear understanding of all the factors used to develop a ranking; and offer them a choice in how rankings are displayed.

International rankings to assess quality are important to relatively few institutions. There are 17,500 institutions of higher education around the world that give diplomas or degrees after three or four years of study, and many more that make awards after one or two years. Obviously not all institutions can be internationally ranked in any meaningful way. Comparisons of peers on a national or regional level are more useful in promoting quality for most institutions.

A case study from Pakistan offers a good example. The government wanted a ranking of its universities. The first set of rankings was not published by the Higher Education Commission because some of the best private universities scored relatively low while some mediocre public institutions scored high. An examination of the criteria revealed that the ranking system favored size over quality, so the very large public universities did well. Concluding that the system mixed apples and oranges, the Commission took a new approach by breaking the rankings into groups by specialty, such as engineering and technology, economics, business, and health sciences. The public found value in the rankings, and the universities, in general, appreciated the focus on their areas of specialization.

Some ranking systems are aimed at prospective students. In the United States, the best-known ranking system of this kind is the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, published annually by a weekly magazine. These rankings have been criticized for encouraging the idea that there is a single ranking system useful to all students. Now, some nonprofit organizations, such as the College Board and Consumer Reports, are developing their own systems based on educationally valid principles and what students and parents want to know. At the undergraduate level, most of the rankings are for national or regional colleges and universities, depending on how widely they draw students. At the graduate level, the rankings are by discipline and profession, drawing heavily on peer assessments.

Rankings can promote competition among universities, so if the factors used in the rankings are valid measures of quality, rankings can help institutions measure themselves against others. One challenge is that the measures are relatively more or less relevant—or perhaps irrelevant—to universities depending on their mission. Some online ranking systems allow the user to specify which criteria are most important and then re-weigh the factors to produce tailored rankings.

Perhaps *competitiveness* would be a better goal than *competition*. Rankings are useful when they allow universities to see how well they compare with other similar institutions. Rankings become less useful when competition tempts some institutions into gaming the system—changing what they do for the sole purpose of moving up in the rankings. There have been stories of institutions not counting some part-time faculty or aligning class sizes to *U.S. News* categories so they rank higher. For rankings to be legitimate, they must be based on valid, comparable data. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to determine the quality of the data that are used.

A university in Egypt scored very low in an international ranking, apparently because the ranking body had neglected to include all the relevant information. The university called

attention to the error, and its ranking rose the following year. Although such stories raise questions about the validity of the rankings, they also highlight the intense importance that universities attach to rankings.

International ranking systems tend to focus on research rather than on teaching, in part because there are variables related to the quality of research for which data are easily available, such as grant support, publication in key journals, citations by others, and research prizes. A university that is focused on good teaching, not on research, will not do well in these ranking systems, and there is not yet any international system that can rank universities based on the quality of teaching or on how much students learn.

Kuwait uses rankings to determine which institutions can establish branch campuses there. Although generally a useful system, it has limits. For example, there are no useful rankings of vocational schools, so the Ministry of Education developed other criteria (e.g., being legitimately accredited, coming from an OECD country). Also, the rankings do not necessarily include the schools that would be good for particular students.

Rankings are here to stay because the public loves them. They provide a way to summarize complex information to a digestible size. Busy people seek simplified information. Higher education is complicated, and people want something they can understand easily.

In the United States, the *U.S. News* rankings have become a *de facto* standard, and even though *U.S. News* admits that the criteria need to change, they have basically remained the same. In countries without a system of rankings, higher education has the opportunity to develop a ranking system—not leave it to commercial interests to do so—by agreeing on what criteria are important and finding valid ways to measure them.

Although there is a growing tendency toward regional cooperation and international communication in quality assurance, QA systems should always be based in the country they serve and therefore be responsive to local conditions.

ASSURING QUALITY THROUGH EXTERNAL MEANS

Although rankings may attempt to measure quality, they do not directly assure or promote it. In the past 20 years, countries worldwide have developed QA systems, the best of which also promote institutional improvement through a regular system of review against a transparent set of standards. These systems are becoming more prominent as both the economic importance and the cost of higher education have increased. Although there is a growing tendency toward regional cooperation and international communication in quality assurance, QA systems should always be based in the country they serve and therefore be responsive to local conditions.

QA and accreditation systems are evolving from traditional approaches (focused on inputs and specific indicators for government audiences) to transitional systems

(focusing on minimal standards and accountability for consumer audiences) and now to strategic systems (emphasizing learning outcomes and outputs). Countries that are just developing QA systems need not repeat these steps; they can begin with strategic systems.

The push for QA systems can come from universities, business, social groups, or the government. In Bangladesh, private universities, a relatively new phenomenon, wanted a QA system so they could be acknowledged as being of high quality. In other cases, the push comes from the public sector, where public universities feel threatened by private institutions, or from businesses and other parts of society when universities are not preparing students well for the labor market. Some countries have developed QA systems as a way of countering corruption in the higher education sector. In part because the United States has a highly developed system of accreditation, some institutions and programs from other countries seek U.S. accreditation. For example, where the sociopolitical conditions are not well developed to support peer review by providing a large enough pool of impartial evaluators, U.S. accreditation can provide a useful way to obtain a valid, third-party review for quality against a well-developed set of standards. Middle Eastern countries do not do well in international comparisons on human development and human rights. Because the issues that those low rankings reflect could too easily find their way into regional accrediting schemes, it is preferable to use a well-developed system free of those issues. In these cases, importing accreditation can be a way of adopting useful practices regardless of their origins.

The development of QA systems depends on the local situation. Context matters, and no single approach works. Turkey, with 102 public and 52 private universities and a GDP of $860 billion, faces very different challenges than Syria, with just six public and fourteen private universities and a GDP of $100 billion. As QA systems develop, it will become clear whether they are improving quality or simply generating reports and satisfying the government bureaucracy. Improving quality often means a change of culture at a university, a difficult process. One might think of the QA system, in this case, as the rudder on a moving airplane: small in relationship to the plane, yet with careful moves, powerful enough to turn a plane so it goes where it should without disrupting the aircraft or the people inside. Colloquium participants examined two case studies of accreditation in the United Arab Emirates and the United States and discussed what it means to take accreditation systems across borders.

Accreditation in a Muslim-Majority Country

The United Arab Emirates has a system of federal and private higher education institutions, and institutions operating in free zones. Its accreditation system began in 2000 by closing 26 inadequate institutions. During the past decade, through dealing with institutions established locally and with branch campuses from various countries, the national accrediting agency, the Commission on Academic Accreditation (CAA), has learned some valuable lessons.

The standards were developed based on a U.S. regional accreditor and tailored to local circumstances. The standards were rather prescriptive, with many detailed requirements,

which were important as the agency was dealing with many for-profit institutions whose culture requires a clearly identified written reference or guide. In adapting the U.S. standards to fit local circumstances, cultural issues were addressed, such as requirements for protection of women's privacy in hostels and the provision of separate prayer rooms for men and women. Also, the agency developed requirements for a high percentage of full-time faculty and faculty with terminal degrees to ensure the quality of the teaching staff. The requirement that a course in Islamic Studies, Islamic History, or Islamic Civilization be included in the curriculum also was important to be in line with the prevailing environment.

The CAA's experience working with many new universities provides some useful lessons. The most important element for a new institution is mission. At newly established local institutions in the UAE, mission statements are often unrealistic, especially in their emphasis on trying to become research institutions. A key role of the CAA has been to help institutions learn how to create a realistic mission statement to use as a basis for strategic planning and quality assurance.

Similarly, a branch campus may have a small operation in the UAE but still use the mission of the home campus, which may not apply to the branch campus. The accrediting agency encourages the branch campus to have a subset of the mission of the home institution, with goals and objectives against which the excellence of the institution's operation can be assessed.

New institutions and branch campuses are challenged by the quality of incoming students from the regional secondary education system; entering students often do not have an appropriate level of English language proficiency and study skills. Institutions need to develop a foundation or remedial program to ensure these students are prepared to do university-level work. When branch campuses of international universities adhere to their high admission standards, the consequence may be a smaller number of students than anticipated. This will force them to rethink their business model, or even to close down operations, as was the situation with one U.S. university's UAE branch campus.

The CAA hit a speed bump regarding teaching and learning. Many institutions have difficulty adopting an outcomes-based assessment model and restructuring the teaching and learning process to be driven by outcomes. Programs must have clearly measurable outcomes, and institutions must develop appropriate tools for measuring learning outcomes. The agency works with institutions to help them develop this perspective.

The accrediting agency looks at the QA system within each of its licensed institutions so that it functions as a complement to promoting high standards internally. In addition to holding workshops on quality assurance for local higher education institutions, the agency is developing a database of good practices to be shared among institutions.

Working with branch campuses from assorted countries, the agency has observed considerable variation in how quality assurance crosses borders. Many QA agencies visit the branch campuses of institutions under their purview, but others do not. Either way,

with branch campuses, QA agencies in the host country are better placed to follow closely and also more frequently what is happening on the ground, as opposed to a far-off accreditation body in the home or provider country. Cooperation between QA agencies in the provider and the host countries can provide complementary oversight when higher education crosses borders.

Accreditation in the United States

In the United States, there are some commonly accepted elements of accreditation and quality assurance. These elements require that the process be:

- collegial and peer-based,
- mission-based,
- judgment-based, where evidence is qualitative, quantitative, or both,
- trust-based,
- standards-based, and
- outcome-focused, resulting in the awarding of accredited status.

The U.S. academic and accreditation communities would reject a process that is predominantly regulatory and not collegial; mainly standardized (using the same standards for everyone) instead of judgment-based; exclusively quantitative in the approach to reliable evidence; and predominantly publicly dominated rather than professionally led. U.S. accreditation and quality assurance focuses on institutions and programs and specifically on their resources, processes, governance, performance, results, and outcomes.

In the United States, there are three ways that internal and external quality mechanisms are connected. The first connection is accreditation's attention to quality improvement (in addition to quality assurance) because the process looks for evidence of ongoing investment in maintaining and enhancing set standards. The second connection is that accreditation institutionalizes a process to assure and improve quality. The third connection is that accreditation establishes a quality culture within an institution or program. Thus, although accreditation is an external means of quality assurance, universities can use the standards and expectations to improve their internal processes.

Assuring quality to the public and promoting quality internally are both complementary and competing functions. Some in the United States believe that the internal and external aspects of accreditation are competing. Some ask whether it is possible to capture reliable evidence about student learning, especially in areas such as the liberal arts. For others, the efforts must be complementary because both internal and external quality review are important to the future effectiveness of higher education. With students, government, and the public calling for transparency and readily available and understandable information about quality, the culture has become accountability-driven. The role of the public in accreditation is evolving, and one challenge is to respond to that role while preserving the peer review aspects of accreditation.

In the United States, institutional accreditation is carried out by membership organizations, with the accredited universities being the members. These associations

began more than 100 years ago and operated for decades with a principal focus on quality improvement. More recently, with increased federal financial aid for students and the U.S. government's reliance on accreditors to assess the quality of education and institutions' eligibility to receive federal financial aid, the quality assurance role has become increasingly important. Thus, many see the focus of accreditation in the United States shifting as government plays a bigger role, and they worry about the risk to institutional autonomy, individual privacy, and the diversity of higher education as accreditation becomes more regulatory.

Taking accreditation across borders raises many issues. Although the words may be the same, the meaning may be different because higher education and quality review are culture-dominated in many ways. Developing a shared understanding of values and being respectful of differences are both essential for taking accreditation abroad. Countries approach accreditation and quality assurance with different assumptions and different values built into their systems.

In the absence of international standards, how can countries calibrate comparable degrees, promote student mobility, and otherwise promote partnerships?

The United States is in an unusual position with respect to accreditation abroad. Because its accreditation/QA bodies are private and nongovernmental, they can operate internationally as they see fit and thus can export accreditation easily. Of the 80 recognized U.S. accreditors, 46 operate internationally in 97 countries. This means the United States has a serious responsibility to proceed carefully in how it carries out this role and to be very sensitive to letting indigenous institutions take the lead. Several organizations have developed a statement encouraging accreditors that cross borders to work in cooperation with the local QA agency.

The accreditation standards of one country may not easily translate into another country. A university in the United Arab Emirates whose student body was composed almost exclusively of socioeconomically homogenous female Emiratis was challenged to consider how it could meet the "diversity" standard of its U.S. accreditor. In the end, the university developed its own definition of diversity having to do with the students' ages and backgrounds. The university ultimately satisfied the accreditor, but one could question whether this was an efficient use of the university's time and effort.

There is not yet an international set of standards, and there is no recognized international body that can identify what is appropriate accreditation and have a basis to act. This creates a problem for local students who receive professional degrees in other countries. A participant from Morocco noted a trend among Moroccan students going to Russia or Eastern Europe for degrees in medicine and pharmacy and asked how to judge the adequacy of their degrees for professional employment in Morocco. There may be government approval or accreditation, but how can another country judge the adequacy of the standards and the effectiveness of the process?

In the absence of international standards, how can countries calibrate comparable degrees, promote student mobility, and otherwise promote partnerships? One approach may be to find a common set of international quality standards at a very high level of generality. Another approach is to develop reciprocity agreements among country-based QA systems. Or, individual countries or regions may establish bilateral arrangements.

The law in many countries represented at the colloquium requires that the Ministry of Higher Education be in charge of the accreditation system and may require the Minister to head the body as a means of ensuring that the agency does not diverge. The legal framework provides independence and ensures that no one can overturn the work of the group.

HOW GOVERNMENTS AND PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION INFLUENCE QUALITY

The quality of universities is shaped in part by the role of government and by the effectiveness of the country's primary and secondary school systems. Two case studies presented at the colloquium illustrate how quality is both promoted and constrained by these external factors.

Turkey: An Example of Government Influence on Quality

The foundation of the current Turkish system of higher education dates to 1981, when the Higher Education Board (YÖK) was established. Responding to political unrest for which the universities were partially blamed, and to the lack of strong central authority within universities, the government enacted a law that reduced the autonomy of the local university councils and established a centralized control system that oversees all universities through YÖK. Although the law made the higher education system more hierarchical, it introduced diversity and competition by allowing private universities, called "foundation universities," to be created. Turkey benefited from this, especially in the 1990s when many new universities came onto the scene and pushed older universities to improve themselves.

The main issue in such a centralized system is autonomy. Universities have little control over student intake and must admit students based on standardized national exams (although most universities like this entrance process because it saves them time and resources). Public universities are not financially autonomous. They cannot own property and are funded through line-item budgets overseen by the state; they have no control over faculty salaries. By contrast, foundation universities can own and manage property and have relatively more control over faculty profile and wage levels. These conditions make it much easier for the foundation universities to do long-term strategic planning. Yet neither public nor private universities are completely free in designing their academic programs and both have to comply with YÖK standards.

In terms of quality control, there is no accreditation system in Turkey. Once a university is approved to operate or receives approval for a new program from YÖK, there is no periodic review. There is a system of government bureaucratic inspection, however, that examines the workings of the university, such as files on transfer students, foreign

students, and faculty, and faculty and students who have been subject to disciplinary action. Many educators in Turkey believe it would be much more effective and efficient to let universities themselves be in charge of controlling their "input" (students, faculty, and curriculum). Their quality could be evaluated based on outputs, by measuring performance, assessing budget, and doing accreditation. Decentralizing these quality control mechanisms and making them independent of YÖK would be a step toward ensuring more positive government influence on the higher education system.

Universities are inherently heterogeneous, so a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach does not work.

Another challenge brought with centralized oversight is that universities are inherently heterogeneous, so a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach does not work. In many countries where private higher education is relatively new, the government takes on the role of guaranteeing that it is up to par with public education, ensuring that the same rules and similar curricula are followed. This can create a situation in which there are demands from society that the higher education system cannot accommodate. For instance, public universities cannot meet the demand for continuing education programs for adults, because they are structured to teach younger students and not allowed to run fee-based business enterprises, so developing a successful model is difficult. In addition, the faculty consider extra teaching as time away from research and are not interested. One of the foundation universities has partnered with a for-profit company from the United States to undertake such adult education programs.

With a growing young population and a limited number of universities relative to demand, higher education in Turkey is facing a challenge, despite the upsurge in number of universities opening in recent years. The system functions, but can no longer respond fully to the needs of a dynamic society. Reform should bring more institutional autonomy through a system of incentives rather than one of rigid control. To its credit, the Higher Education Council recognizes this. It has approved a new council, formed by the deans of engineering faculties of several universities that will function similarly to ABET, the U.S. accrediting body for engineering. Moreover, a realization that the age of globalization necessitates universities to go through internationally recognized QA mechanisms has led 22 Turkish universities to participate voluntarily in the European University Association evaluation process.

Colloquium participants commented that in other countries where private higher education is relatively new, governments tend to view it with suspicion and impose controls than can lead to homogenization. The impulse (often misguided in terms of quality development) is to assure that private higher education mirrors the public system, following the same rules and curriculum, thereby stifling quality.

Quality in Higher Education and Primary and Secondary Education

Universities are linked to primary and secondary education in two direct ways: their incoming students are products of the local or national school system, and higher education generally is responsible for preparing the teachers, principals, and headmasters of primary and secondary schools. In the United States, many universities adopt a program of working with local schools to address these two issues of self-interest and also to help fulfill their mission of service to the community.

A private university in Massachusetts has extensive experience with primary and secondary education. It provides 70 scholarships to local public school students who often are not well prepared to succeed at the university. The students participate in a bridging/remedial program in the summer, which provides academic training and orientation to college coursework to help them succeed at the university. The university also assumed responsibility for 20 years for the school system in the state's poorest city. At the invitation of the city, the university took full authority for the schools and rebuilt the system from the ground up—replacing buildings, reforming financing, developing infrastructure, and improving systems. One important contribution was developing good governance structures that clarify where authority resides. When the state developed an accountability system, the students scored low on the standardized tests, and the university introduced a set of practical reforms for the school system. It is difficult to sort out the responsibility of higher education for improving secondary education. But it is important to recognize that some of the problems in schools have been introduced by higher education, whose schools of education often focus on theoretical notions of what might be a good idea and are not always sufficiently attentive to what works in practice.

Universities in many countries contribute to the problems of primary and secondary education. Schools of education are not highly respected within the university, and these education programs typically do not attract the top students. Often students do not see that the career prospects for teachers are good, in terms of financial and social rewards. Yet it is important for teachers to receive continuing education and for universities to have a strong role and not leave the updating to bureaucrats.

Countries that have decentralized systems of secondary education can see the effects on universities of relying on multiple sets of examinations for university entrance, an approach that does not allow for effective nation-wide comparisons. In Pakistan, for example, the examination system was poor and corrupt, with 28 different public sector examination boards. It is impossible to compare the top graduate from the Baluchistan board with the top from the Karachi board. There was a need for a private sector examination board for use at a leading private university. Establishing it was politically controversial, but the eventual outcome was successful, and the International Baccalaureate is adopting it. It evaluates students based on information received in the classroom and their ability to apply that information through critical or analytical thinking. In contrast, Egypt and Turkey and many other countries with highly centralized systems rely on a single national test to admit students to public university. The universities like this system because it simplifies the admissions process. Universities and departments in high demand get the best students automatically. Yet the test takes over

the last three years of secondary schooling because students devote most of their time to preparing for this single high-stakes event, often taking private "cramming" courses. The system is efficient and well executed, but it is bad from an educational perspective.

When tests become important, teachers will teach to the tests, so it is important that the examinations are focused on critical and analytical thinking. As national interest in the economic importance of good schooling increases, there is movement toward common standards and common examinations. Government interest in education can also promote collaboration between secondary and higher education. Yet at the same time, there is an impulse to experiment, to try new ideas to improve a system that does not meet the public's expectations. Balancing control and experimentation while relying on imperfect examinations is an obstacle facing many countries. A certain amount of regulatory engagement may be useful.

Much of the history of higher education around the world is based on looking at successful models abroad and adopting the ideas to local circumstances.

Links to secondary education can also help higher education anticipate teaching the next generation. Universities can learn by paying attention to how children are learning in an era of technology. What was previously called "cheating" now may be considered collaboration, and universities must be prepared for students who have learned throughout their school years using technology that often far outpaces what is available in higher education.

QUALITY AND CROSS-BORDER EDUCATION

Universities have long been influenced by what they see in other countries. In the United States, the liberal arts college was developed with a strong influence from England, and research universities were greatly influenced by the German model. Indeed, much of the history of higher education around the world is based on looking at successful models abroad and adopting the ideas to local circumstances. To explore the relationship between quality and cross-border education, the colloquium explored case studies from a single country, an international professional network, and the recent phenomenon of branch campuses.

Jordan: A Country Example

Higher education in Jordan started in 1962 when the University of Jordan (UJ) was established. Although it is the oldest university in the country, it is fairly new compared to universities elsewhere. Jordan itself was created in 1921 and won its independence in 1946. When UJ was established, there was no higher education tradition in Jordan. From the beginning, higher education in Jordan was influenced by cross-border education; UJ was established by graduates of British, Egyptian, Iraqi, Lebanese, Syrian, and U.S. universities and was influenced by all of these systems.

In 1972, UJ switched to the U.S. credit-hour system, the first university in the region to have done so. Many educated in U.S. graduate schools returned and started teaching at UJ, which influenced the decision. This is a testimony to the relative liberalism of the Jordanian higher education system.

From the 1960s until the early 1990s, Jordanian universities viewed themselves primarily as national and regional universities, but not international. There was a sense of pride and achievement. In the mid-1990s, however, Jordanians became more critical of their higher education system. Jordan started making international comparisons, which created a degree of dissatisfaction. Now higher education in Jordan is experiencing a transition from the national to the global. In that sense, globalization has been a positive influence as it has spurred new emphasis on reform. Many students coming from national and regional secondary schools are taught by rote learning and memorization, but UJ increasingly stresses communication and critical thinking skills. Jordanian universities also learn from students coming from other countries. For example, Americans studying Arabic have high expectations for rigor, which has raised the importance of faculty having a full syllabus, not a simple course plan and textbooks.

As a result of dissatisfaction, the system took actions that enhanced quality. Beginning in 1998, students admitted into Jordanian universities were required to take five language or communication courses in the first two years. In 2001, UJ established an international programs office, and in 2002, an advisor to the president was appointed for quality issues; now he is a vice president. Several assistant deans for quality were also appointed to focus on learning outcomes and on enhancing quality. Research remains a significant challenge for Jordanian universities, but the country is taking a number of concrete steps, from increased funding to new or changed laws.

From 1962 to the 1990s, the U.S. influence was dominant; now European influence is greater. Many people are participating in many European Commission programs and projects, which has raised the importance of quality and lifelong learning and increased the recognition of degrees. Jordanian universities are also establishing boards of trustees, which are seen as a positive step. There is more international involvement in higher education, as well. For example, Columbia University opened a research center in Jordan to work in partnership with Jordanian universities and civil society institutions. There is also a German-Jordanian university, a joint venture, as well as the University of Jordan's joint Ph.D. program in English with Durham University. These are models of equity, partnership, and joint effort and can have a big effect on quality over time.

The higher education sector in Jordan is going through a serious restructuring now, with a new, independent Higher Education Council, an independent Accreditation Commission, independent Boards of Trustees for universities, and an Independent Scientific Research Fund. All of these changes are affected by cross-border influences.

Crossing Borders: The Engineering Profession

In the United States, ABET, the engineering accreditation body, accredits programs in applied science, computing, engineering, and technology, and also works internationally.

Globalization in these disciplines is more practical and easier than in other disciplines, such as the social sciences, because there is a more clearly defined and measurable body of knowledge and skills. Under ABET practices, a branch campus's engineering program has to be accredited and master the same evaluation process as the host campus if that branch campus wishes to carry the same accredited status as the host campus. The process ensures that the host institution offers the same level of quality in the branch campuses that it does at the accredited home campus.

In engineering, ABET has mutual recognition agreements with accrediting agencies in other countries based on a shared nongovernmental, voluntary, and peer-review approach. Today, there are 13 countries involved in mutual recognition of graduates from engineering programs. Under this arrangement, if a country is admitted as a signatory to a mutual recognition agreement (such as the Washington Accord), the programs the agency accredits are recognized by the other 12 countries. Thus, engineers who have a degree from a program in one country can enter professional practice in any of the other 12 countries; the Washington Accord members are Australia, Canada, Ireland, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, Taiwan, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Four countries are currently in provisional status, in preparation for full membership. (None of the Muslim-majority countries represented at the colloquium are members.) Maintenance of the mutual recognition agreement requires continuous monitoring and verification of the member agencies, observation of accreditation visits, and attendance at the meetings in which the accreditation action is taken. The full membership conducts a final review and recommends continued membership.

What does this mean for quality improvement? In 1994, ABET, driven by external pressures, was encouraged to change its criteria so that engineering programs could be more innovative, creative, and flexible in delivering their programs. The criteria had become so prescriptive that engineering programs were very similar to each other because the schools were bound by these inflexible criteria. This precipitated a change to an outcomes-based accreditation model, with more focus on what students learn than what they're being taught. In 2007, the members of the Washington Accord adopted a list of generally accepted attributes (outcomes) of graduates from programs recognized by the members of the Washington Accord. All members of the accord subscribe to these attributes; hence, the quality level is enhanced in the 13 countries that produce most of the world's engineers.

Branch Campuses

Another difficulty related to cross-border higher education is that countries establishing new university systems or reforming existing ones tend to borrow from other systems, often from the United States or Europe, having not yet developed their own tradition of reform. But borrowing without adapting cannot lead to sustainable reform. Without their own processes, these countries may be "at the mercy of international models." At present perhaps the most well-known example of such "borrowing across borders" is the branch campus. A branch campus is a degree-granting campus of a college or university that is located in a different country than the main university or college area. Branch

campuses of many U.S. universities have opened in the Arab Gulf states in the past decade, funded by generous underwriting by the wealthy Gulf governments. These campuses pose special QA challenges. For example, although the home institution may be highly ranked, there is no similar comparative measure of quality for the overseas branch. Although branches from highly regarded institutions provide local choice, they may siphon off the best students from government institutions. Similarly, the money used to support foreign branches could be used to build local capacity. Some question whether what is offered in another country can be "exactly the same degree as offered at home." If not, there is a danger of hypocrisy; perhaps speaking of equivalency of degrees would be the better path. The question of how branch campuses can integrate with the local community rather than operate as foreign islands remains an issue.

Yet, there are also great advantages to cross-border higher education. Adapting solutions and reform methods from other countries can inject new energy to a higher education system. Branch campuses can be a way to provide a high-quality education right at home to students, especially female students in conservative societies whose parents may not want them to go abroad. Access to higher education can be increased, especially for women, and branches can contribute to local research and development programs. In short, the presence of branch campuses can help raise quality overall.

The question of how branch campuses in the Middle East can integrate with the local community remains an issue, yet the presence of these campuses can help raise quality overall in a country.

The experience with international branch campuses is leading to shared wisdom. Careful exploration and planning are important for universities wishing to go abroad. Some institutions go only where invited; in any case, it is important to work with local authorities to understand the requirements and expectations. It is important to aim for the same quality of education at the branch campus as at the home campus, but it is also key to make reasonable adaptations to local conditions. Finding that balance can be difficult. The UAE, for instance, has found that the keys to successful branch campuses include a stable and clear legal licensure system, a credible licensure/accreditation agency, an experienced local partner, and a technical or feasibility study completed well before beginning operations. Both UNESCO and the U.S.-based Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) have developed guidelines of good practice for institutions offering education in other countries. The export of education through branches and partnerships, however, remains a concern in the Muslim-majority countries where foreign universities have entered to offer degrees.

WORKING ACROSS BORDERS TO PROMOTE QUALITY: INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS

It is impossible to know how many international partnerships exist among universities in the United States and Muslim-majority countries and how meaningful they are. Some are as thin as the paper on which a partnership agreement is recorded. Others take on a life

of their own and have a deep effect on the universities involved, giving them competencies and perspectives they could never otherwise have developed. Similarly, organizations, including QA agencies, are motivated to work across national boundaries. Here, the challenges are great, as the relationships are typically many-to-many, often across great distance, and frequently with challenges in finding a common language. Below are examples of partnerships discussed at the colloquium, one a well-established university partnership between the Middle East and the United States, and the other a new network of Arab QA agencies. Each partnership is designed to promote certain dimensions of quality standards among the members.

A University Partnership: Al Quds University and Brandeis University

The partnership between Al Quds University (AQU) in East Jerusalem and Brandeis University in Massachusetts traces its roots to a 1997 visit by the AQU president, Sari Nusseibeh, to Brandeis to meet with President Jehuda Reinharz. The partnership represents the vision of the two presidents toward building peace and a better future. They embarked on a long-term partnership, bridging East and West, opening a window for the Brandeis faculty to the Middle East, giving AQU an opportunity for development, and enhancing mutual learning of the communities of both universities—each of whom had traditionally called the other "the enemy"—to be defined as a friend to be made.

The partnership began with three sets of goals: (1) to improve the administrative capacity and operations of AQU; (2) to strengthen its faculty, especially in areas relating to pedagogy; and (3) to educate the internal and external communities of each institution.

Brandeis is nonsectarian but has longstanding ties to the Jewish community. When the partnership began, Brandeis had close ties with Israel but not with Palestine. AQU is a small university striving for excellence and relevance in learning and achievement, while struggling for its own existence. AQU seeks a leading role in the cultural, intellectual, and educational life of its community, and is mindful of the needs of the Palestinian population. The Al Quds-Brandeis partnership perpetuates AQU's strategy to develop creative, cooperative, and multicultural mindsets and scholarship for society's benefit, and to strengthen its civic role as the Arab university in Jerusalem.

The partnership has three defining features. First, the two institutions are very different, as opposed to other partnerships based on similarities. Besides the obvious differences, such as nationality, there are differences in aims for the partnership. Brandeis has more focus on and resources for research, whereas AQU has a special expertise and a role in serving the national community and being part of Palestinian civil society. Second, the partnership is subsidized through private funding, so there were not financial concerns about generating income. Third, the symbolic value of the partnership made it very important to address conflict and differences from the outside.

The partnership took three main forms. The first focus was on short-term exchanges so that faculty, students, and administrators were involved in multiple ways, spreading the values of the partnership throughout the campuses, through a multiplier effect. Second,

building from the short-term exchanges, the project sought to promote specific effects rather than "megaprojects." For instance, working with the AQU chief operating officer, administration, and financial affairs, the project focused on developing new methods for budget, human resources, and other administrative processes. Another emphasis was mentoring younger faculty members at both universities. The goal of these short-term projects was ideas that could be sustained over time. The third form was a combination of broad community involvement as well as involvement by participating individuals.

There has been significant effect on quality at Brandeis. Faculty members have a broader sense of content and practice. Professors had the opportunity to integrate Palestinian perspectives into their courses. There is also the value of shared understanding. Values are an essential part of the quality of the institution, including the willingness to live and endure conflict, and this partnership has provided much experience in that regard. Also, Brandeis is a pillar of the nonsectarian Jewish community in the United States, and through the partnership it has been able to change attitudes beyond its gates by sharing the learning from this partnership and thus fulfilling its mission.

For AQU, the partnership has many benefits and has helped to improve excellence. A staff member who resided at Brandeis for two years developed a strategic plan. AQU is now automating its managerial systems, thanks to technical expertise from Brandeis. In the academic areas, the University developed a matrix model to improve methods of learning and teaching, and support teaching through mentoring. There are also faculty exchanges, curriculum development, scientific research, and pedagogy in the fields of health and social policy, American studies, gender studies, English, science education, and business.

Collaborative enterprises between universities should be approached carefully as they promise high gain but also take time, resources, and risk to pursue.

In many respects the relationship offers a model of U.S.-Middle East cooperation, because it has been based on parity, partnership, and transparency. The three phases had proper vision and mission and were well-managed with plans, programs, budgets, and evaluations. The partnership has not always been easy; there have been difficult times when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict became especially intense. Early in the project, the second *Intifada* began, and fear crept in. Many questions were raised. Now participants generally are satisfied, and everyone has learned a great deal, enabling them to better understand the conflict. The partnership has helped participants understand the personal, historical, and social aspects of the other perspective. The dialogue continued not only within AQU and Brandeis, but also outside of these campuses. "We started the cooperation by saying that coming together is the beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success," as a senior official from AQU put it. Funding for partnerships is important, but the most essential factor is the will.

All partnerships raise questions. What is the relationship between connectivity—links between institutions—and excellence? Is connectivity a measure of quality, an element of

quality, or a means to achieve other quality factors? Also, how can we measure the effect of relatively small projects like this one in the context of other, larger projects in a higher education setting? Finally, what is the role that these partnerships play in defining institutional quality as a whole?

Another university in a predominantly Muslim country had a partnership with a North American university that further illustrates some of the issues. There was an asymmetry of resources between the "Northern" institution and the "Southern" institution. Priorities were different. The main question for each partner was "What's in it for us and our students?" The symbolic value has significance for the AQU-Brandeis partnership, but not for all other partnerships. Sometimes there are marketing values if the university can translate the partnership into an attractive selling point. The funding asymmetries make exchanges difficult; having students from a developing country go to the United States is very expensive and raises questions of funding and the length of study. To avoid a patronizing relationship, the partner needs to bring significant intellectual capacity to the table. To have a sustainable relationship means working through notions of copyright and other concepts. These collaborative enterprises between universities should be approached carefully as they promise high gain but also take time, resources, and risk to pursue.

Most of the cross-border collaborations involving Muslim-majority countries have involved the *transfer* of knowledge, more than the *creation* of new knowledge.

A Network of Arab QA Agencies

The Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) is an independent, nonprofit NGO. The idea for ANQAHE was conceived in 2004 and established in June 2007. The founding goals were to ensure ANQAHE's independence and to establish a credible nongovernmental network to work mainly with the governments of the Arab countries to strengthen higher education quality.

Motivating ANQAHE's creation were demographic and economic challenges in the Middle East and North Africa along with a general desire to improve excellence in higher education through regional cooperation. The growing numbers of graduates of Arab universities need stronger skills from quality institutions to build a solid Arab-region labor force and to compete in the global economy. The trend of labor mobility within the Arab region and to Europe, owing to the weak economies in many Arab countries and to labor demands in Europe, also points to the need for Arab graduates to have degrees from recognized accredited universities.

Currently ANQAHE has 10 full members and one associate member, together representing half of the Arab countries. The full members are the established QA agencies in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates; Morocco is an associate member. Three other Arab countries are developing QA agencies, and four do not have such an agency. In 2008,

professionals meeting through the ANQAHE realized that despite differences in the political, sociocultural, and educational systems between the countries represented in ANQAHE, there are similarities in the elements of the standards for quality assurance of higher education throughout the region. These include mission, governance, teaching and learning, faculty, students and student support services, learning resources, research, community engagement, institutional integrity, and most important, internal quality assurance.

Plans for future ANQAHE partnership activities include sharing activities among well-established QA agencies in the region, additional cooperation with similar agencies in the Mediterranean region, cooperation with quality assurance in other Islamic countries, and building a proper database and support for the exchange of regional specialists and consultants. ANQAHE works with the Association of Arab Universities and also connects to universities by a policy of having each QA agency send a university representative to its meetings.

Countries involved in ANQAHE are involved in other networks as well. For example, there is a Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World associated with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) that also has been trying to establish a QA network. There are Mediterranean initiatives with some of the countries in ANQAHE. Today, most of the cross-border collaborations involving Muslim-majority countries have involved the *transfer* of knowledge, more than the *creation* of new knowledge. In the future, participants pointed out, it will be important to generate more research in this part of the world by making use of partnerships. Countries with universities that are not pursuing research will not be able to create wealth.

Several colloquium participants, however, questioned the premise of such regional- or religion-affiliated institutions, asking if they would "isolate Arab or Muslim-majority countries from the rest of the world, rather than integrate them." A participant from Morocco argued that "before there is an international or regional 'anchor' for quality higher education, there must be a national 'anchor.' The problem for our country is first to build up our national system of accreditation. If we talk too much about partnerships right now, we will lose focus."

Drawing on these case studies, colloquium participants identified the following principles for successful international partnerships:

1. A "win-win situation" with mutual benefits for all institutions involved.
2. Clear, aligned goals, valued and agreed upon by all participating institutions.
3. Faculty involvement.
4. Mutually agreed-upon success and quality indicators.
5. Periodic assessment of the partnership (either by self-assessment or by a third party).

CONCLUSIONS

The colloquium's intensive discussions led to several conclusions:

- The focus of excellence in higher education must always be the college or university and its students. Accrediting bodies and governments can play a significant supporting role in improving quality, but the mission of the university should always drive the quest for quality. University autonomy is a critical factor, although it will be defined differently in different higher education systems.
- Leadership and sustained vision is essential to improve quality.
- Defining what quality means and how to achieve it is complex. There is no checklist. There are core elements for improving excellence in higher education, but how these are conceptualized, prioritized, and implemented differs from institution to institution, from country to country, and may change over time.
- Education is inherently culture-bound and reflects cultural norms and society's values. Any consideration of quality must take culture into account.
- Many stakeholders need to be engaged in issues of quality in higher education: students, parents, faculty, employers, primary and secondary education systems, government, and civil society organizations. Every part of society has a stake in the quality of higher education.
- External factors, such as rankings, funding, and politics, can complicate or even distort the quest for quality; centralized control can stymie rather than assure quality. These factors, however, are critical for offering incentives to improve and generating pressure for change, incentives, and accountability.
- Cross-border and international dimensions of quality are important now and will become more so in the future. Although cultural differences in education and norms of quality pose obstacles, they also offer powerful learning opportunities and can deeply enrich the educational experience for all involved.
- U.S. models of quality continue to be emulated around the world and to influence international debates about quality, including in predominantly Muslim countries. But as higher education goes global, reform processes from other countries may gain currency in the United States. The U.S. higher education system is accustomed to setting the agenda and to exporting its ideas and standards abroad, but is not accustomed to adopting standards and systems from elsewhere. This would represent a challenge to U.S. higher education, but perhaps also an opportunity.
- The issue of quality in higher education is critical to all countries and there is every indication it will become even more important in the future.

ABOUT THE HOLLINGS CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

The Hollings Center promotes dialogue between the United States and predominantly Muslim countries, opens channels of communication, expands people-to-people contacts, and generates new thinking on important international issues. The Center was established as an NGO through legislation enacted in 2004 and 2005 by the U.S. Congress, particularly through the efforts of Senator Ernest F. Hollings. The Center convenes conferences, typically in Istanbul, on a wide range of contemporary issues involving opinion leaders and experts in a variety of fields, and awards small grants and fellowships to selected program participants for collaborative projects that build on conference recommendations. Higher education is one of the Hollings Center's main program areas, reflecting a belief that universities have a unique role to play in strengthening understanding between predominantly Muslim societies and the United States.

Previous higher education dialogue reports are available at www.hollingscenter.org:

- "Expanding U.S. Study Abroad in the Arab World: Challenges and Opportunities" (2008)
- "Independent Universities in the Muslim World: A New Approach, Part II" (2007)
- "Independent Universities in the Muslim World: A New Approach, Part I" (2005)

For more information, please see www.hollingscenter.org.

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