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Let's Talk: csuglobal Conversations

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Introduction to *csuglobalaction*

From its beginning, the mission of the CSU has not only been the training of teachers but the teaching of its students as the youth of the state of California destined for leadership in the state and beyond. For the CSU, teaching has meant a drive for “access and quality” where “the primary focus of the faculty is on students” and while scholarship and research are important, applied research and research that includes students as partners have been foundational characteristics. In this regard, the CSU has been leading the way building a “sound and productive system of comprehensive universities” and as such, the CSU has been “visited and studied by educational leaders from every continent and a multitude of nations” (*Gerth, xiii*). However, while this section will showcase the teaching across the campuses and therefore draw attention to our domestic classrooms, it will also highlight the programming that the CSU has developed as part of its international reach through opportunities to study in other countries and cultures.

In 2023 we mark the 60th anniversary of CSU International Programs and remember those efforts of Lew Oliver at Chico who began taking groups on guided tours of Italy as early as the 1950s. The Master Plan did not mention the subject of study abroad or the CSU’s international aspirations, but it was not long after that international programming began to take shape particularly under the stewardship of Glenn Dumke, who was appointed chancellor in April of 1962. First, there was a program to France during the academic year 1962- 63. The newly established Chancellor’s Office commissioned a study of international education in that same year, which led to a plan for the “development of a unified state college program” in this area (*Gerth, 270*).

In 1963 a number of trustees visited 11 countries (at their own expense) with an introduction to all the relevant ambassadors from Governor Pat Brown. By the start of the 1963-64 academic year, programs began in 5 countries: France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, and Taiwan. Another report was commissioned in 1966, reported out by 1967 and its generally positive tone set International Programs on its way to becoming a permanent feature of CSU life.

It was not all smooth sailing however as the next Governor Brown (Jerry - elected in 1974) immediately decided to delete all funding for international programs in 1975. Only by sheer dint of determination and skilled lobbying was the still young program saved. Happily, it not only survived, but continued to thrive in the coming years such that, by the 1980s, the CSU was firmly ensconced in the international arena.

In 1997 a task force on globalization was created as the system once again began to consider its role in the international space. This time the effort resulted in the creation of an “Office of Global Education” in the Chancellor’s Office. However, it is interesting to note that Donald Gerth believed that, while the CSU had masterfully evolved as an “important social invention” that it still needed more work on how to address change not only in California, but in the world. He goes so far as to suggest that while the CSU is, and remains the largest system of higher education in the US (and one of the largest in the world) it has “not been international as a whole beyond International Programs...The CSU is a citizen of the global higher education community, a major citizen”, however, he goes on “Exercising the responsibilities of that citizenship is an agenda yet to be developed” (*Gerth, 284*).

The goal therefore of this section of *csuglobal* is threefold. First, this section is intended to address a perceived gap in the scholarly world for a publication focused on pedagogy and specifically geared to the internationalization of the classrooms and the campuses of the CSU. Second, this will be a useful place to discuss the collective knowledge/best practice/evolving issues around our students going abroad (and those coming from abroad to our campuses) in terms of how they fare and what we can do better. Finally, and to go that extra mile, the journal seeks to be a place where we can discuss the role of California in that global space and how the CSU’s leadership can and should be stronger at the intersection of the local and the global. We aim to act in the world not only as separate campuses, but to better unify that strength for the good of our students and an increasingly global California.

In keeping with this mission, this section of the journal will be led by an administrator and a faculty member. Cari Vanderkar (Cal Poly San Luis Obispo) and Amy Below (East Bay) bring their own powerful voices, but the combination of their experience, expertise and roles in the system could not be better suited to reaching across the staff/faculty boundaries to address the teaching/curricular issues that lie at the very core of the CSU. To that combination, we have also added an Ad Hoc editor Maria Ortuoste (East Bay) who will help support students seeking to publish and engage with the journal – not only in this specific section but across every area of the journal.

More specifically for this issue, Vanderkar and Below offer a strategic overview of the questions that can and should be addressed as part of California's international role going forward as well as laying out the changing challenges of the classroom. If there was ever any doubt that such a section can and should be part of a global CSU, that is instantly put to rest as the themes and questions raised by their colleagues across the other sections are echoed in the practical questions they raise. As an institution that prides itself on the teaching and the practical – we know that the magic happens in the classroom. So it is that we hope this section will provide an opportunity for new collaborations, exciting innovations, and a place for dialogue on the role of the CSU in the development and guidance of California's future global citizens.

Dr. Alison R. Holmes, Managing Editor

LET'S TALK: csuglobal Conversations

One overarching goal of csuglobal is to develop a space where students can have meaningful conversations with our authors who are faculty, researchers and education specialists, among others. Through this direct engagement, we hope that students will not only be more cognizant about a particular field, but that they can discover the authors' motivations in pursuing their respective careers, and how that pursuit may have transformed the authors as well.

More than a Chat

The term conversation usually refers to an informal interaction or a quick casual exchange of news or opinions and is qualitatively different from classroom instruction or formal research presentations. In the classroom, relations are usually determined by rules of authority; in academic conferences, scholars discuss their research findings as part of the knowledge-making practices of their discipline. (Castello & Nelson, 33-51) In both sites, people engage in conversations which are substantive and enable learning. As such, the older meanings of "conversation" and the definitions of its component parts is more applicable. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *con* means "together with" while *ver* is a proto-Indo-European word that means "to turn, bend." The same source also lists the "obsolete" meanings of conversation:

- "place one lives or dwells", "general course of actions or habits, manner of conducting oneself in the world" from the mid-fourteenth century,
- "behavior, life, way of life, monastic life" from the old French *conversacion*, and
- "in frequent use, frequent abode in a place" from the Latin *conversationem*.

The conversations we envision for csuglobal are, of course, to be a mutual exchange of ideas between author and reader with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of scholarship and current issues. These conversations could possibly lead some persons to change their perspectives, i.e. to "turn" their thinking, but not necessarily so. There is also the possibility

that together, new ideas or projects may be proposed. Or perhaps these conversations will inspire some students to make their voices heard, either in our upcoming forums or by submitting academic pieces to be reviewed by the editorial board. All of these possibilities align with CSU's mandate to educate, mentor, and serve its students and with the journal's goal to serve California.

These conversations will also be about place; specifically they will explore the unique situation of California as a global actor, California as the home of multiple identities, and as a site for technological innovation – factors which have shaped its history and will shape its future. Behavior is certainly a part of conversation, that is in order for us to have productive exchanges we need to have mutual respect, have open minds, and demonstrate professionalism. Finally, life is indeed involved in our conversations in part because our perspectives develop from formal study, our culture and lived experiences; and in part because we are living at a time when communication, trade and pop culture are global and we encounter them every day.

Learning and Student Voices

This deeper version of conversation is not at all alien to the university. Academic research can be seen as an ongoing conversation occurring over space and time, involving scholars across generations and continents. We also learn through different conversations — within the classroom among peers or with teachers, in internships, or when studying abroad — that challenge our belief systems, or provide us with new information, or help us empathize with others. And it is through this social interaction that we develop our own voices.

Now why is this important? Students are just expected to listen, take notes, pass the exams, or submit research papers, right? Why develop a voice? First, at the most basic level, careers require effective communication skills that go beyond mere grammatical correctness. Rather, educators say that these skills should include listening effectively “to decipher meaning”, communicating across a range of purposes (such as informing, instructing and motivating) and in different contexts. (Fadel & Trilling, 55)

Second, “listening to, and acting on student preferences, interests, and perspectives helps students feel invested in their own learning and can ignite passions that will increase their persistence.” (Briel & St. John, 1) Studies have shown that students who feel they have a voice are more “academically motivated” and will more likely “experience self-worth...and purpose in school.” In addition, this growing movement in education helps teachers be more responsive to students’ concerns by adjusting course content or developing other teaching techniques.

Certainly, conversations with my students have made me a better teacher.

Third, and most important, developing one’s voice is timely given the cacophony in social and traditional media. Our conversations in **csuglobal** will hope to clarify, to rise above the din of disinformation and misinformation. They are also intended to aid students in effectively using their power for change, as seen in the wave of youth movements around the world. (Be Seen Be Heard Global Youth Survey)

Finding and Developing One’s Voice

I understood this power for change when I was a college student in the University of the Philippines. Like most college students, I was unsure what a college degree would lead to, I suffered from what is now called “impostor syndrome”, and would second- (even triple-) guess my ideas. All of these usually resulted in not saying anything and feeling more powerless than I felt before the genesis of any of these ideas. However, the choice to be silent was challenged by political events in the Philippines in the mid-1980s.

In 1986, the then-president of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, called for a “snap presidential election.” Marcos had ruled the Philippines for approximately twenty years by then, with around half of those years under martial law. The supposed “freedoms” post-martial law were illusions – human rights were constantly violated, peaceful protests were usually met with force, people were still scared to speak their minds, and venal political leaders were bleeding the country dry. The elections, and the lead up to them, were a chance to be heard. Civil

disobedience activities were organized, there were teach-ins with professors, and young people were part of the campaign to encourage voting despite the threat of violence. Widespread reports of cheating and of Marcos' unwillingness to accept electoral loss led to events that would culminate in the "People's Power Revolution" where more than two million civilian Filipinos peacefully protested even though Marcos had given the military orders to use deadly force. (Kiani). Eventually, Marcos left and a new democratic regime was inaugurated. To be part of that phenomenon was a formative experience like no other. Our generation knew we could accomplish much and that our ideas about "democracy," which were then belittled by older generations, could be realized. Suddenly being silent and not using your voice did not seem to be good ideas.

Global Youth and California Students

The kind of political change ushered in by youth is not unique to the Philippines. The civil rights movement in the U.S., the protests during the Arab Spring, global environmental projects, and recently the protests in Iran – youth made these possible. An international survey called *Be Seen Be Heard Global Youth Survey* found that "young people are far more politically involved than they are given credit for," and their engagement is not limited to traditional forms of engagement, e.g. voting, but they also include peaceful protests, activism, and service on issues of climate change, human rights, and justice. Californians are not strangers to youth activism as seen in the Black Lives Movement, the actions against Asian hate, and actions to support DACA students. However, many surveys have suggested that Americans do not know a lot about world geography and global events. (Center on Foreign Relations) However, rather than accept that as gospel truth, I wanted to know what students were *actually thinking* even if those ideas are not articulated in academic lingo.

Thus, in the spirit of openness to various voices, and as a way to become a better partner and instructor, **csuglobal** sent an informal survey to CSU graduate and undergraduate students whose focus of study falls within global studies. We wanted to find out what ideas students have about the term "global," whether or not they thought that Californians' perspectives

about global issues differ from other states, and how they see California as linked to global processes.

We received 78 responses from students enrolled in Cal Poly Humboldt, Sacramento State, San Jose State, CSU Dominguez Hills, and CSU East Bay. Even though the sample size is quite small, several dominant themes emerged.

Most of the respondents defined “global” as connections between countries, while a few added more nuance by talking about linkages that transcend or transgress territorial boundaries. A student from Dominguez Hills said that it was “a network of interconnecting communities and cultures and countries [whose] decisions impact one another.” And these interconnections, according to a Humboldt student, can be political, economic, social or cultural with local issues having an impact on the global stage. For others, the global means a wide diversity of people and perspectives even as people may have shared fates in light of climate change, for example.

On the second item, most of the respondents said that Californians definitely have a global perspective that is different from people in other states. Roughly 70% of the respondents said that this difference is due to the state’s massive economy, a cultural diversity that leads to a degree of openness to different viewpoints, its progressive policies that involve reaching out to international partners (such as those agreements initiated by Governors Brown and Newsom on climate change) or showing solidarity for protests abroad. Nevertheless, some students also observed that despite this global outreach, CA still has an America-centric perspective, that xenophobia still exists, that socio-economic status and media exposure also influence individuals’ global (or non-global) perspective, and that this California perspective is not monolithic given the diversity of its population.

On the final item, most of the respondents believe that California is already well connected to global affairs by virtue of its large economy, the impact of climate change and environmental problems, and the spread of the pandemic. Some students pointed out that California exerts

influence in other ways such as in pop culture via Hollywood, the innovations made by big tech, and its political activism (as seen through the BLM protests) and its celebration of human rights (as seen through the pride parades). Two students saw California's connection to the global at the individual level, specifically in the large number of international students in the state. Yet even while many students noted that California can make a positive contribution to address global issues, California can also be a source of these global problems such as carbon emissions due to the number of registered cars in the state.

Because the survey did not require any prior exposure to any course with an international or global orientation, or any prior research on the issues, it would have been easy to discount these responses as opinions that are only loosely-based on reality. However, if there is to be a productive conversation among students, educators, and faculty, it would behoove us to take these opinions seriously and check them out against the "facts"; specifically, information about US and California's global connection. Being from Asia, and with California at the edge of the Pacific Ocean, it seemed logical to look at the connections between California and Asia. I looked at data from *Asia Matters for America*, a non-profit organization that tracks the "trade, investment, employment, business, diplomacy, security, education, tourism, and people-to-people connections between the U.S. and the Indo-Pacific at the national, state, and local levels." Their 2019 data showed that many of our students are correct that California is distinct from other U.S. states, specifically:

- California has the largest share (18% or \$122.5 billion) of total U.S. trade exports to Asia (\$680.9 billion);
- California has the largest share of direct and indirect export jobs, and jobs from Asian investments in the U.S.;
- California is the largest recipient of Asian visitor spending at \$14.3 billion, or 16.5% of total visitor spending in the U.S. (\$86.8 billion);
- California also hosts 126,200 international students, which is 16.75% of all international students in the U.S., and unsurprisingly the economic impact of these international

students is largest in California at \$5.1 billion or 18.6% of the total economic impact of international students in the U.S. (\$27.4 billion); and

- California has the largest number of sister-city partnerships (245) with fourteen countries; for comparison, Washington (73) and Hawaii (71) are ranked second and third in the number of sister-city partnerships.

So what do all these mean? For students, it means that they should be a bit more confident and not discount their own ideas or voices. For educators and for faculty, it means engaging with students in a way that is not patronizing but rather uplifting. And conversations in **csuglobal** could be part of this process of engagement.

An Invited Space for Many Voices

csuglobal can be considered as a virtual “invited space.” Similar to classroom applications of the concept, this invited space is a “site of engagement” and offers the potential of transformative thinking and action. Let me explain. In graduate school, students would often ask each other “Why did you choose this topic?” Some will say that they were very fascinated with the intellectual gymnastics that are required to logically prove their arguments. Great. More often, the answers are very personal. One of my classmates, for example, was a Bulgarian who experienced the fall of communism and democratic transition in her country. Another classmate studied abroad and wanted to learn more about the political economy of Chile. Another was an American who identifies as biracial and was trying to navigate the intersections of her ethnic identities. Such conversations dispelled the myth that the people who pursue graduate education simply want to be in an ivory tower thinking great thoughts. Rather, many people I met were shaped by their lived experiences, culture, religion, tradition and see graduate education as a means to better understand certain problems in order to help advance a solution or to teach people about the issue.

Yet the process of sharing can be intimidating. Like other students – undergraduate and graduate – I was also concerned that I was just regurgitating the most recent textbooks, or that

my research was so ordinary that it had been done before. Enter the mentors. Good mentors will teach you the canons in academic literature, but exceptional mentors will appreciate your true potential and will encourage you to go beyond what are considered the dominant paradigms in your field. In International Relations, for example, most of our texts are based on Western thought even though the “international” is more than just America or Europe; as our students said, the global is about diversity of cultures and ideas. Good mentors will teach you what they think the world is, exceptional mentors will try to show you what is hidden or invisible from our discussions. Good mentors can teach you how to write clearly, but exceptional mentors will help you find your authentic voice.

It is this spirit of many voices, mutual learning and mentorship that we invite all students of the CSU to engage in our conversations. We hope you will engage with our authors by responding to what you read on these various themes - and we hope you will engage as authors yourself.

Maria Ortuoste

Notes

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