

# WORLD education NEWS & review ENR

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European Credit  
Transfer System

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## Africa

### SOUTH AFRICA

Anticipating cutbacks in state subsidies, the University of Cape Town recently reported that it plans to downsize its faculty and staff by 10 percent over the next two years. Many of the country's universities have been eliminating faculty positions and laying off administrators in response to the government's restructuring of South Africa's system of higher education.

Cape Town currently has 10 faculties, but by next year that number will be reduced to six, according to university officials. The biggest change in this respect is that the now separate faculties of the arts, education, and the social sciences and humanities will be collapsed into a new faculty of humanities.

Compounding matters is the fact that Cape Town is undergoing a painful transition from being largely an all-white university to becoming a first-class "post-apartheid institution." In compliance with the country's new employment-equity laws, Cape Town University is hiring more blacks and women — sometimes at the expense of white males, who feel that they are being unfairly targeted.

But the university's director of communications, Helen Zille, claimed that the cutbacks were not racially motivated. She stressed that the school was merely trying to expand in some disciplines, like

information technology, and that other faculties need to be pared down.

— *The Chronicle of Higher Education*  
Dec. 18, 1998

### SENEGAL

Officials in the Senegalese Ministry of Education recently confessed to selling diplomas to students looking to travel to the west. The *baccalaureat* diplomas can be used to gain entrance to universities overseas.

Once accepted, would-be students submit their admission letters from the host universities to European and North American embassies in Dakar.

This documentation, along with proof of their academic standing provided by the illegitimate diploma, significantly increases their chances of acquiring a student visa abroad. In reality however they use the visa to travel to western countries to work illegally.

— *The Times Higher Education Supplement*  
Dec. 18, 1998

### NIGER

Western-style schools are currently being built for Niger's Touareg nomads to replace traditional modes of education in the bush. The Touaregs have been herdsman for generations, moving from place to place with the changing of the seasons. Hence their nomadic life-style has not been compatible with the kind of schooling found in large towns and villages.

And ever since the days of French colonialism, when western schooling was first introduced in Niger, the Touaregs have been resistant to educational programs that threaten their traditions or take away their children for extended periods of time.

The goal of the new primary schools then is to provide nomadic children with a modern education complete with curricula, class schedules and vacations while, at the same time, maintaining sensitivity towards Touareg culture and life-styles.

The curriculum at the school presently under construction in the Erough Valley, for instance, will combine basic reading, writing and math courses (taught in French) with practical training in animal husbandry and agriculture. The courses are aimed at helping the Touaregs to better manage their

## Regional News

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# Regional News

lives in the wilderness.

Ideally, the new bush schools will not require that children be separated from their families and will strive to preserve the nomadic way of life.

The northern-Niger project, financed by the French government, is not the only one of its kind. There are many other such projects in the making. However funding and resources are slow in coming. In general, school supplies are scarce and the objective of one book for every two students is rarely met. Another goal is to help the nomads find alternative means of making a living without uprooting them from their pasturelands.

The successive droughts of 1968-1972 and 1983-1985 wreaked havoc on the Touaregs, killing off their livestock and driving many nomads into large cities where they were quickly reduced to beggars and squatters.

In this respect, the bush schools could prepare them for jobs suitable to the nomadic way of life.

— *Le Monde de l'Education*  
 December 1998

## The Americas

### COSTA RICA

The University of Costa Rica (UCR) is currently offering a special program in environmental science for undergraduate students from the English-speaking world who want to study the rain forest from a hands-on perspective.

All classes and field trips pertaining to the course of study are conducted in English by UCR professors. Students are provided with private rooms in the homes of Costa Rican families while attending the university. The program includes the following courses: tropical ecology/conservation; natural history; biological diversity; and Spanish at the beginning, intermediate and advanced levels.

Students who successfully complete the program receive four credit hours for each course on a UCR transcript. All credits are transferred from the university's Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation.

Each semester is 14 weeks long, including 30 days of rigorous fieldwork. The total cost for the spring 1999 semester is \$6,995 (airfare not included).

For more information contact the University of Costa Rica at 1-800-321-7625 or by e-mail at [WorldC@EducationAbroad.com](mailto:WorldC@EducationAbroad.com).

— *Costa Rica University*  
[www.neosoft.com/~worldc/learn.htm](http://www.neosoft.com/~worldc/learn.htm)

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

As part of a reform package first introduced in 1995, the State Secretariat for Education, Fine Arts and Cul-

ture (SEEBAC) has established a set of guidelines for student evaluation and promotion to a higher grade or educational level.

During the first two years of elementary school (*educación básica* or *educación media*) students will undergo evaluation but will automatically be promoted irrespective of exam scores.

In the last six years of elementary education (grades three through eight) students who receive 65 percent or better in all their classes, and who have not been absent more than 20 percent without justification, will automatically be promoted to the next higher grade.

Those who receive less than 65 percent in up to three classes will be eligible for makeup exams. A single failure in any of the makeup exams means the pupil has to repeat the school year. Students who miss more than 20 percent of their classes without justification or who fail four or more subjects are automatically suspended and must repeat the school year.

SEEBAC has also introduced a new grading scale for the secondary school level which reads as follows:

- A=90-100=Excelente (Excellent)
- B=80-89=Muy Bueno (Very Good)
- C=70-79=Bueno (Good)
- D=0-69=Deficiente (Deficient)

Students are required to pass all subjects with 70 percent or better (based on continual assessment and final examinations) and not miss more than 20 percent of all classes without justification in order to pass the school year.

The most important reform to date is the introduction of national examinations at the end of elementary school and secondary school. In the final year of their elementary education, students must pass the national examination in order to enter secondary school.

The national examinations administered at the end of secondary school will serve as part of a student's qualifications to earn a bachiller (bachelor) diploma and will cover all four areas of the school curriculum: Spanish, mathematics, social studies and natural sciences.

— *Secretaría de Estado de Educación Bellas Artes y Cultos*

## UNITED STATES

A recent study conducted by the Institute for International Education reports a significant increase in foreign student enrollment at American colleges and universities during the 1997-98 academic year.

According to the report entitled *Open Doors 1997/98*, the total number of foreigners studying in the United States climbed to 481,280, which represents a 5.1 percent increase over last year's figures. In addition, the number of Americans studying abroad rose to almost 100,000, which is 11.4 percent more than the prior year.

The figures published in the *Open Doors* study would appear to reverse a downward trend in foreign student enrollment at U.S. institutions of higher education.

Although the United States attracts the largest number of foreign students worldwide, it has been steadily losing ground throughout the decade to other countries. In the 1980s, for instance, the United States' share of all international students was 40 percent. However, by 1997 this figure had dropped to only 30 percent, down from 32 percent in 1995.

Experts suggest that the reasons for the sudden increase revealed in the *Open Doors* report are essentially twofold: Intensified efforts on the part of universities and colleges in the United States to recruit overseas and a growing preference among foreign students

towards the less-expensive community colleges.

Although foreign students represent a mere 3 percent of the higher education population in this country, their numbers have a huge impact on campuses and local communities alike. The U.S. Department of Commerce currently lists higher education as America's fifth largest service-sector export.

Not only do foreigners represent an important source of income for the colleges and universities they attend (most of them pay full tuition), but it is estimated that they contributed some \$7.5 billion to the U.S. economy last year in tuition, living expenses and miscellaneous spending.

Moreover, the money spent by these foreign students and their dependents has generated more than 100,000 jobs in state and local economies, according to *Open Doors*.

— *Open Doors 1997/98 Press Release*

In a move aimed at bolstering declining enrollments, the University of Chicago (UC) will be relaxing its traditionally rigid core requirements beginning next September.

Many feel that the university's traditional emphasis on higher learning and a common core curriculum has become anachronistic in an age where students are primarily concerned with preparing themselves for the ever-demanding job market.

Starting in the late 1960s, many American colleges and universities began to phase out certain core requirements to make room for new courses and give students greater flexibility in designing their own curricula. Brown University, which represents the most extreme example in this respect, has done away with core requirements altogether.

While applications and endowments at universities like Duke and

Brown are currently soaring, UC is suffering from a decline in the number of new applicants not to mention increasing dropout and transfer rates among its student body. Last year for instance, UC attracted only 5,500 new applicants while Stanford and Princeton enrolled 17,000 and 13,000 respectively.

Contributing to the decline in applicants is the shrinking number of alumni children who cite UC as their college of choice (only 5 percent compared with the 10-20 percent at most Ivy League schools).

Compounding matters is UC's failure to see many of its students through to graduation compared with other top universities in the United States. The student retention rates at Harvard and Yale, for instance, are 97 percent and 96 percent respectively, compared to only 83 percent at UC.

In an effort to reverse these trends, UC will increase its undergraduate population over the next 10 years from 1,000 to 4,500.

At the same time, administrators plan to restructure the university's core system. At present, there are 21 core requirements that are subdivided as follows: eight quarters of science and math; seven quarters of humanities and civilization; three quarters of social sciences; and three quarters of a foreign language.

Under the new system, the number of core courses will be reduced to either 15 or 18, depending on how the foreign-language requirement gets figured in.

Hence, starting in September, the core curriculum will only account for one-third of each student's course work instead of one-half.

In addition, UC President Hugo Sonnenschein intends to improve UC's career placement service to better meet the needs and expectations of students.

— *New York Times*  
Dec. 28, 1998

## CANADA

One of the biggest concerns facing liberal arts students today is that the nature of the academic work they undertake in college will not count for much in the real world.

Many graduates who chose to major in subjects like English literature and history are often denied jobs because, they are told, they lack marketable skills.

But students at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia may be getting a leg up while still in school. In an effort to strengthen the ties between the classroom and the job market, the university recently introduced a new "skills transcript" as part of its grading system for undergraduates.

The transcript program allows students to earn extra credit in their regular courses by demonstrating proficiency in such skills as teamwork, problem solving, and written and oral communication that can be transferred from the classroom to the workplace.

At the end of each semester, the skills transcript gets tacked onto the end of a student's regular grade report.

Although the program is currently being implemented on an experimental basis, it is hoped that ultimately these skills will help liberal arts majors get jobs after they graduate.

But not everyone is eligible to participate. Only students with a "B-" average or better are qualified to earn special credit for mastery of these skills.

— *The Chronicle of Higher Education*  
Dec. 18, 1998

## Asia-Pacific

### CHINA

China's system of higher education has undergone some significant administrative changes following the reshuffling of government ministries and commis-

sions last September.

The nine ministerial departments that formerly oversaw the country's 93 regular universities and 72 higher-learning institutions for self-study have all been merged into the State Economic and Trade Commission.

All but two of the regular universities will now be administered jointly by both the central government and local municipalities.

The exceptions, China Mineral Industry University and the North China Mineral Technical School, are still being administered by the Ministry of Coal Industry, albeit on a temporary basis.

Some of the 72 higher-learning institutions for self study currently sponsored by the central government will be incorporated into regular universities or turned into special education training institutions. Others will come under the jurisdiction of local governments.

The plans for the restructuring of higher education were drafted by China's State Council and were successfully implemented for the first time in the Henan and Jiangsu provinces.

The aim of the new system is to encourage universities, higher-learning institutions and postsecondary schools to recruit students at the local level in order to train and educate them for the promotion of regional socioeconomic development.

However, schools that emphasize industrial programs will continue to recruit students nationally.

— *China Daily*  
Nov. 10, 1998

### INDIA

For several years now, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) has prided itself on turning out most of the subcontinent's leaders in business and high-tech.

In more recent years, however, increasing numbers of IIT graduates have gone abroad to achieve global prominence in American

corporations like Citigroup, US Airway's Group, McKinsey & Co. and Sun Microsystems.

Much of IIT's success can be attributed to its tough standards and highly selective admissions process, not to mention the grinding curriculum students have to endure during their four years of study there.

Each May, following several years of preparation work, more than 100,000 aspiring IIT students take the entrance exams hoping to secure a place for themselves in the next freshman class. Out of that number, only 2,500 are accepted annually.

Once they make it past the grueling admissions process, however, the work becomes even tougher with less than 2,000 making it to graduation.

On average, students get only about five hours of sleep a night and, even with round the clock studying, few score higher than a "B" on tests and exams.

The faculty to student ratio is impressive even by American standards.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), for example, maintains a 1:11 ratio while IIT's ratio fluctuates between 1:6 and 1:8.

Since its founding in 1951, IIT has branched out all over the country, setting up campuses in Kanpur, Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Guwahati.

Through the years, the institute has received funding from UNESCO, the United States, the former Soviet Union and Germany.

Moreover, it enjoys substantial aid from the Indian government, which pays the lion's share of the \$3,000 it costs annually to enroll each student.

Because of the limited opportunities offered by the Indian job market, an increasing number of IIT graduates head to the United States. In 1998, for instance, 30

percent of the graduating class, or 500 students, immigrated to the United States in search of more lucrative job prospects.

More than 80 percent of them ended up landing positions in California's Silicon Valley, which has served as a mecca for Indian computer science graduates since the 1970s.

Of the 2,000 or so successful high-tech executives in Silicon Valley, 40 percent cite India as their country of origin and at least half of these are IIT alumni.

Many of IIT's graduates come to the United States specifically to pursue advanced university degrees at places like MIT and Stanford.

Upon completing master's and doctoral programs in fields like computer science and business, they are eagerly scooped up by many of America's top corporations.

Hewlett-Packard, Intel, IBM, Sun Microsystems and Cirrus Logic constitute only a partial listing of companies where IIT graduates have made it big in recent years.

— *Business Week*  
Dec. 7, 1998

While there are a handful of first-rate colleges and technical institutes in India, the overall picture of the country's system of higher education is pretty bleak, according to a recent *New York Times* article.

Allahabad University, for example, used to be known as the Oxford of the subcontinent during the heady days immediately following India's independence.

Since then, the school's buildings have fallen into disrepair, overcrowding and a lack of funding have brought down its standards, and its curriculum is in shambles with courses often being postponed indefinitely.

In short, Allahabad is symptomatic in many ways of the deteriorating state of higher education

throughout the country.

During the last 20 years, the mushrooming population — currently approaching 1 billion — has necessitated building 500 new colleges and universities to accommodate the increasing demand for higher education.

Although only 3 percent of Indians between the ages of 17 and 23 are enrolled in college, that still leaves 17 million students to educate.

At least part of the overcrowding problem at Indian universities can be attributed to their easy accessibility.

The entrance requirements are not particularly challenging and tuition is heavily subsidized by the state, with most students paying as little as \$10 a year.

Moreover, despite government subsidized tuition, only 3.7 percent of India's gross domestic product is earmarked each year for education.

While this figure is high compared with the rest of Southeast Asia, it is low compared to developing countries as a whole.

But whether the blame can be placed on India's failure to prioritize education or on the millions of ill-prepared students who are packed into the country's overcrowded colleges and universities each year, many agree on one thing: The deteriorating state of higher education is the price Indians have to pay for educating the masses.

— *New York Times*  
Dec. 21, 1998

## AFGHANISTAN

It was just more than a decade ago that the first expatriate colleges were established in Peshawar, Pakistan, to educate the increasing number of refugees fleeing the war in neighboring Afghanistan.

In 1988 the Umha-tul-Momineen University was set up as an all women's college while the Islamic University opened its doors

