

# WORLD WORLD EDUCATION EDUCATION NEWS NEWS & REVIEW REVIEW R

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## Regional News

### Africa

#### CAMEROON

Efforts to prop up Cameroon's floundering, state-run Yaounde University under the aegis of a World Bank plan have not met with much success.

Following guidelines set by an IMF-sponsored structural adjustment program, the government introduced an annual registration fee and cut scholarships. Despite these measures, laboratories and classrooms remain poorly equipped, students still have to sit on the floor and teachers are poorly paid.

In comparison, the private, Jesuit-run Catholic university that charges a lower registration fee, has better facilities and offers superior teaching. But because most Cameroonians cannot afford the luxury of private schooling, their only hope for a college education lies with Yaounde University.

The university's reputation has been further damaged by the fact that undergraduate degrees earned through its faculties are not recognized by institutions of higher education in France, where many Cameroonians aspire to attend graduate and professional schools.

Yaounde University students who apply to graduate programs in France are required to repeat their senior year and pass an entrance exam.

— *The Times Higher Education Supplement*  
Oct. 30, 1998

#### TANZANIA

The Open University of Tanzania is one of 12 English-speaking African nations to participate in a new distance-learning program. COMSAT, an American based corporation, recently installed special equipment that will enable Open University students to view live lectures from New Jersey (USA) and Dublin (Ireland) via satellite.

During this pilot phase of the project, courses will be offered in mathematics, statistics, computer science and physics.

— *The Inter-University Council for East Africa Newsletter #18, October 1998*

#### KENYA

After three days of bloody student demonstrations in early February, the government shut down the University of Nairobi indefinitely. The students were protesting the controversial sale of Nairobi's last public forest to a private developer.

The demonstrations, which were joined by contingents from neighboring Kenyatta University, spilled out into the streets and led to violent clashes between students and riot police.

Students and environmentalists claim that the land deal was illegal and that they have the right to protect the forest from the scourge of encroaching urbanization.

— *The Chronicle of Higher Education*  
Feb. 12, 1999

### The Americas

#### UNITED STATES

Slightly more than one-third of all colleges responding to the most recent College Bound National Admissions Survey reported no change in the number of international enrollments for 1998 compared with the previous year. Another 34 percent said they admitted more foreign students than they did in 1997, while 32 percent admitted fewer.

The following schools experienced an increase in foreign enrollments for 1998: Bowling Green, Carnegie Mellon, Coe Eastern College, Fordham, Johnson and Wales, Middlebury, Muskingum, Northwestern, Purdue, Randolph Macon, Tiffin, the University of Toledo and Vassar.

Colleges that reported a decrease in foreign student enrollments in 1998 included Boston

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# Regional News

University, Carroll College, Hope, Iowa, Kentucky, Lawrence, Muhlenberg, NYU, Ohio Northern, St. John's, Willamette and Wittenberg.

— *College Bound*  
 December 1998

Native Spanish speakers are in great demand these days as bilingual education programs continue to expand in cities all over the United States. In response, Puerto Rican teachers fluent in both English and Spanish are flocking north in ever-increasing numbers.

Because they are technically U.S. citizens unfettered by immigration restrictions, Puerto Rican teachers are actively sought and recruited by schools on the mainland.

A 1996 survey, conducted by a nonprofit organization called Recruiting New Teachers, found that eight out of 10 schools across the country were experiencing difficulty in procuring certified bilingual instructors.

In California, despite the cutback in bilingual programs, there is still a need for 20,000 more Spanish-speaking teachers per year.

In Puerto Rico, the mass exodus has sparked concerns that the island is losing its best and brightest teachers at a time when they are desperately needed at home. An estimated one-third of Puerto Rico's 10,000 English instructors do not have proper certification.

The brain drain is also affecting private schools, which are likewise experiencing a shortage of bilingual teachers. Marie Aloise, who supervises 200 teachers in Puerto Rico's Caguas district, says she loses between 10 and 20 instructors and administrators to the United States each year.

In New York City alone, up to 35 teachers per year are hired out of Puerto Rico.

Although some Puerto Ricans feel a bit guilty for leaving, the rewards on the mainland are too tempting to pass up. Starting teachers in the United States can earn up to double the \$18,000 they make in Puerto Rico. More enticing still, some states like New York offer to pay for a three-year master's program for Puerto Rican teachers who agree to a three-year contract.

— *American Language Review*  
 January/February 1999

## CANADA

Foreign students in Canada are finding that they can save on tuition and gain entrance into the country by switching to landed immigrant status while enrolled in school. As a result, colleges and universities allege that they are losing as much as Can\$30 million each year.

Universities noted a 16-percent drop in foreign-student enrollment between 1992 and 1996. At the same time, the number of visa students who changed their status by claiming permanent residence rose almost four-fold during the same period.



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It is estimated that at least 10 percent of the overseas students enrolled at the University of British Columbia become landed immigrants each year. The university's foreign students pay five times as much in tuition as domestic students.

The Canadian Education Centre Network (CECN), the organization that promotes Canadian higher education abroad, strongly condemns the practice of using student visas as a stepping stone to acquire permanent residency. CENC currently works with university recruiters overseas to try and "weed out" those students who may try to abuse their privilege to study at Canadian institutions of higher education.

— *Times Higher Education Supplement*  
Jan. 15, 1999

## CUBA

An exchange agreement between the University of Havana (UH) and the University of Buffalo (UB), signed in July 1998, calls for expanding and enhancing UB's study-abroad program in Cuba.

It is the first agreement to be signed between UH and an American institution since 1959, when the revolution brought Fidel Castro to power.

Thirty-three students from throughout the United States participated in UB's *Havana '98* program, which was conducted in two sessions. The program included eight courses taught by three UB professors and two faculty members from UH. Fifteen visiting professors were also featured. Students were given the option of choosing from five subject fields and could earn up to six UB credit hours.

Moreover UB's program organized several expeditions and field trips in and around Havana and provided students with the opportunity to meet with artists and intellectuals throughout the country.

The agreement further commits UB and UH to develop a jointly administered research program, including the publication of material dealing specifically with Caribbean-related issues. The two universities are also thinking about creating a master's program in Caribbean studies that would be administered on an alternating basis from Buffalo and Havana.

A meeting between representatives of both institutions will be held sometime in the spring of 1999.

— *UB International*  
Fall 1998

## THE CARIBBEAN

The University of the West Indies (UWI) is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. UWI will be hosting a number of activities throughout 1999 on its three campuses in Cave Hill, Barbados; Mona, Jamaica; and St. Augustine in Trinidad and Tobago.

Founded in 1948 as a medical school with 33 students, UWI has a current enrollment of 20,000. It features degree programs in agri-

academic year 2001/2002; increasing the number of students enrolled in science and technology faculties by 60 percent; expanding research in the field of development aimed at enhancing regional economic growth; providing students with links to governments and private sector companies; strengthening ties between the region's various institutions of higher learning; and sustaining the university's financial stability without relying on tuition increases and government hand-outs.

— *The Bulletin*  
December 1998

## Asia-Pacific

### SINGAPORE

The University of Chicago Graduate School of Business recently announced plans to open a branch campus in Singapore that will feature an Asian international executive MBA program. This would make it the first American business school to set up a perma-

## The University of Chicago Graduate School of Business recently announced plans to open a branch campus in Singapore that will feature an Asian international executive MBA program.

culture, law, engineering, medicine, natural sciences, fine arts, social sciences, education and nursing.

The university has also achieved recognition in such diverse fields as nutrition, tropical medicine, soil science, tropical agriculture, Caribbean economics and West Indian literature.

UWI has also outlined its strategic objectives for the next three years, which include the following: enrolling 21,000 students by the

next facility in Asia.

In 1994, UChicago established a European international executive MBA program in Barcelona, Spain, where it maintains a permanent campus.

The international executive MBA program in Singapore is scheduled to begin sometime around the middle of the year 2000. Only about 80 students will be admitted to the program annually.

The course of study is subdivid-

ed into 16 residential sessions, called modules, to be taught over a period of 19 months.

The program is specifically designed for seasoned corporate executives who possess at least 10 years of experience. Because the majority of students will be based outside of Singapore, they will rely heavily on distance-learning technology when not attending residential sessions.

Furthermore, the program includes international exchange with students from the Singapore campus taking four weeks of classes with colleagues enrolled in the European and U.S. programs. For at least part of that time, participants in the Asian program will study in Barcelona and Chicago, while students from the other two programs will travel to Singapore.

— [www.uchicago.edu/programs/exec/singapore](http://www.uchicago.edu/programs/exec/singapore)

## INDONESIA

It is estimated that more than 1,000 ethnic Chinese were killed last summer during the student-led democracy movement that led to President Suharto's resignation.

While in past years the number of Chinese-Indonesians studying in Malaysia has not been significant, the riots impelled thousands to apply to Malaysian institutions of higher education.

But Bill Watson, senior lecturer in anthropology at the University of Kent, suggests that other factors may also account for the surge in Indonesian enrollments at Malaysian colleges and universities.

The higher quality of education in fields such as business, management and economics, coupled with the high cost of studying in the United States and England are likewise fueling the mass exodus of ethnic Chinese students from Indonesia.

As foreign students pay up to 25 percent more in tuition than locals, the Malaysian Ministry of

Education has welcomed the influx of Indonesians. Likewise the Indonesian government is happy to see large numbers of students going abroad for higher education because Indonesian universities are already crowded beyond capacity.

In addition, officials are sanguine that these students will return home after they graduate with skills and training that can only benefit Indonesia's faltering economy.

— *Times Higher Education Supplement*  
Nov. 15, 1999

## JAPAN

Tokyo Nerima Advanced Child-Care Institute is a postsecondary school that specializes in training teachers to work in day-care centers. Although this institution is not recognized by the Japanese Ministry of Education, it has been approved by the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

Full-time students usually complete the program in two years, while night students take three years to finish. The only prerequisite for admission into the program is a high-school diploma. The program's curriculum breaks down as follows: 10 credits of core requirements; 49 credits of specialized courses; and 17 credits of electives.

— *Correspondence from Tokyo Advanced Nerima Child-Care Institute*

In October 1998, Japan's University Council (Daigaku Shingikai) published a report calling for an overhaul of the country's traditional system of higher education.

There has long been much criticism over the fact that, while Japanese universities are difficult to get into, students do not have to work particularly hard during their four years of undergraduate study.

Compounding matters, the

steady decline in the number of 18-year-olds applying to college has sparked concerns that an overabundance of tertiary places will lower entrance requirements that, in the past, have served to maintain high standards.

The report, entitled *Universities at the Turn of the 21st Century: Plans for Reform*, strongly recommends that universities adopt tougher grading policies, emphasize more written assignments and improve class attendance, while limiting the number of credits students can take each year.

In addition, the report calls for the expansion of graduate education in Japan. Such measures would include, for instance, establishing business and law schools similar to those in the United States and developing more programs geared towards working professionals who want to improve their skills.

The proposed reforms would also deregulate Japan's system of higher education, allowing each university to determine the length of its degree programs instead of adhering to the standardized four-year undergraduate and two-year graduate tracks.

Moreover, the report calls for the adoption of a semester system to replace the current system, in which all levels of education begin in April and end in March. It also recommends establishing a credit-transfer system to facilitate student mobility from institution to institution.

Finally, the reforms would attempt to create a more efficient management system within higher education by allocating more executive power to university presidents and deans rather than faculty councils.

— *International Higher Education*  
Winter 1999

## CHINA

China's Minister of Education

announced in November that during the next two years, more state funding will be allocated for basic, vocational and higher-education projects.

He further stated that most of the money would be used to fight illiteracy among 15- to 20-year-olds. The money would also be used to oversee full implementation throughout the country of the nine-year compulsory education program by the year 2000.

According to ministry statistics, illiteracy has been effectively reduced from 18.5 in 1978 to less than 6 percent today.

China also plans to promote vocational and adult training programs in addition to pre-employment and on-the-job training. Moreover, the country will set up Internet-based educational and research networks to enhance distance learning.

— *China Daily*  
Nov. 25, 1998

## PAKISTAN

Authorities recently uncovered a scam involving fraudulent degrees at Punjab University in Lahore. A gang calling itself the "Cheetah Group" has confessed to dishonestly giving out thousands of degrees to people who are now working in the medical, legal and academic professions.

The group's ringleader, Muhammad Sharif, said that for fees ranging between 5,000 and 15,000 rupees, he and his cohorts altered grades on award lists and answer sheets to make students eligible for the degrees. Sharif was hired by the university in 1968 as a clerk and started running the scam in 1987.

He admitted to personally giving out degrees in economics, botany and French, and said the most lucrative years for his "business" were between 1990 and 1993, during the first period of rule by the Pakistan Muslim League. In that time, he claimed that one member

of his gang was involved in 100 to 150 cases of fake degree scams every session.

— *The News International*  
*Pakistan (online)*  
Jan. 8, 1999

## INDIA

Distance learning in India was first introduced in 1962, when the University of New Delhi began to offer correspondence courses to help compensate for the lack of tertiary places on campus. Now almost 40 years later, distance learning has become an accepted and increasingly popular alternative to traditional campus-based degree programs in countries all over the world.

India, of course, is no exception to this trend. Of the 6 million or so students currently attending Indian institutions of higher education, 20 percent are enrolled in some form of distance or "open" learning program. There are currently 80 colleges and universities in the country providing this alternative mode of education. Even the elite oriented Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) offers distance learning courses.

There are currently four categories of open and distance education in India:

1) National and state open universities, which includes the Indira Gandhi National Open University and the state open universities in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal.

2) Dual mode universities comprised of 70 conventional institutions of higher education, which offer a variety of distance-learning courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

3) Professional societies like the Institute of Engineers offer distance-learning courses mainly in engineering and technology.

4) Private sector and corporate organizations (Aggarwal, Rapidex,

NIIT, APTECH, etc.) have discovered the profit potential of distance-learning programs and now offer a variety of online courses of their own.

NIIT (one of the world's first virtual universities) and APTECH, for example, teach courses in information science that lead to graduate and postgraduate equivalency qualifications. More recently, private organizations and open universities have been merging to offer joint distance-learning courses.

— *University News*  
Dec. 28, 1998

## NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand's government has recently taken steps to relax immigration laws in an ongoing effort to encourage more Asian students to enroll in the country's institutions of higher education. Such measures, which have increased the yearly quota of Chinese students from 1,000 to 4,000, are aimed at matching the success of Australian universities in attracting foreign enrollments.

A study conducted by New Zealand's Ministry of Education found that the country's seven universities are somewhat lethargic when it comes to recruiting overseas. New Zealand's foreign student population accounts for only 4.9 percent of the total, compared with Australia's 9.6 percent.

Furthermore, unlike their counterparts in Australia, New Zealand universities have failed to advertise themselves as cheap alternatives to the United States and the United Kingdom for overseas students hit by the Asian crisis.

At present, a university education in Australia and New Zealand is half the price of what it would cost at a public institution in the United States.

The changes in immigration laws include lowering the English requirement for entrants and moderating the point system (based on

age, marital status and financial position) used to determine who qualifies for a student visa.

The new government policy signifies a radical shift in the position of the ruling party, which has done much to cut the number of Asians coming into the country for higher education.

A recent report published by the Australian government estimates that during the next 12 years, 800,000 students from the Asia-Pacific region will seek university degrees outside their own countries.

Educators, dismissing fears of an Asian invasion as xenophobic, caution that New Zealand has to get moving if it wants to become competitive in the growing foreign-student market.

— *Chronicle of Higher Education*  
Nov. 6, 1998

## Europe

### FRANCE

Of the 121,000 foreign students currently enrolled in French institutions of higher education, 60,000 are from the African continent (50 percent from Algeria and Morocco). Because of these figures, Thierry Audric, deputy-director for the *cooperation universitaire*, continues to boast, "We are still educating African elites."

Yet in spite of the impressive numbers, there has actually been a 20-percent reduction in the number of Africans coming to study in France during the past five years or so.

The high quality and affordability of French education, coupled with the absence of a language barrier, have long made France an ideal place for French-speaking Africans to study. In recent years however, that image has suffered in the eyes of many North Africans.

Much of the negative feeling

stems from the restrictive immigration policies imposed by the Pasqua law, passed in 1993. The reams of procedural red tape involved in obtaining a student visa, the obstructionist tendencies of certain consular officials and the uncertainty of finding a job in France after earning a degree there are all factors that have discouraged a good number of Africans from applying to French institutions of higher education.

In comparison, English-speaking nations — and the United States in particular — are looking more and more like the new El Dorado. Undaunted by the high tuition, French-speaking Africans are turning to the United States in increasing numbers for higher education.

These students are largely attracted to the flexibility of academic programs in the United States, easier application and admissions procedures and the prestige attached to degrees earned at American universities.

While Africans still accounted for 10 percent of the total number of students attending French universities in 1994, this number had fallen to 8.5 percent by 1997.

However, the government has

been less concerned with the drop in African enrollments than with the declining popularity of French universities among foreign students in general. Indeed, it does not reflect well internationally on the country's institutions of higher learning.

Government ministers Claude Allegre and Hubert Vedrine are worried that the reputation of France's higher education is effectively being undermined by racial prejudice. In response, they recently announced measures aimed at relaxing the stringent visa requirements for foreign students applying to French universities.

Yet despite these efforts, the UNEF-ID, France's largest student syndicate, claims that in reality there has only been a change in government rhetoric and that little has actually been done in terms of addressing the problem. It is nevertheless hoped that the decree, which appeared in the Jan. 5 issue of *Journal Officiel*, will facilitate a change for the better.

In particular, the ruling enforces the Reseda law of May 1998, which deals with foreign nationals entering, living and seeking asylum in France. The law requires consulates that deny requests for

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The screenshot shows the eWENR website interface. At the top, it says "eWENR January/February 1999 Netpage". Below that, the title "eWENR education NEWS & REVIEWS" is displayed in a stylized font. The main content area is titled "REGIONAL NEWS" and "Africa SOUTH AFRICA". The text discusses the University of Cape Town's plans to downsize its faculty and staff by 10 percent over the next two years. It also mentions the university's transition to a post-apartheid institution and the impact of the new employment equity laws. The interface includes a "CONTENTS" section with links to "Africa (cover page)", "The Americas", "Asia Pacific", and "Europe". There is also a "PRACTICAL INFORMATION" section with a link to "Using the European Credit Transfer System" and a "RESEARCH" section with a link to "Document One".

student visas to state the reason behind their decision.

At a Nov. 6 press conference introducing Edufrance, a new agency that will promote French higher education abroad, Claude Allegre expressed his wish to see the number of foreign students in France reach 400,000.

Yet according to UNEF-ID, the new undertaking to increase overseas recruitment is selectively targeting richer foreign students — primarily those from Asia and Latin America — and will not benefit some of the poorer students from Africa.

— *Le Monde de l'Education*  
February 1999

## ITALY

Starting this fall, education in Italy will be made compulsory through age 15. This is the first stage in a series of reforms aimed at raising the age of compulsory education to 18.

This new program will mean that all Italians leaving school will have earned a secondary school diploma or some form of vocational qualification.

At the present time, 30,000 students do not stay in school beyond the third year of middle school (*scuola media*), and an additional 90,000 leave before completing the first year of upper secondary school.

With these reforms, Italy joins the European mainstream in education. Germany has compulsory education through age 15 or 16, depending on the state. In Austria, students are required to attend school through age 15. For students in Britain, France and Spain, school is mandatory through age 16. In the Netherlands, it is compulsory through age 17.

In most of these countries, students who decide not to continue on to upper secondary school receive some form of occupational training until they are 18- or 19-years old.

The new law will make a difference for the thousands of Italian children who drop out after middle school and those who never make it beyond the first year of upper secondary school.

Under the new law, education will be compulsory for nine years and schools will facilitate the transition of students to upper secondary school or into vocational tracks that lead to employment.

Moreover, the government pledges to increase the budget for schools by 324 billion lire (approximately \$180 million U.S.) over the next two years.

— *Corriere della Sera*  
Jan. 20, 1999

## Middle East

### IRAN

In October 1998, authorities closed down the Baha'i Open University and arrested 36 faculty members, four of whom are still being detained. The university has taught courses in private residences all over the country for the past 10 years. Baha'i officials claim that security forces raided 532 homes and confiscated literature, files and computers.

Although Iran has long tolerated Christians and Jews, the Baha'i faith has been largely suppressed since the 1979 revolution. In 1987, Baha'i members established the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education, which later became the Baha'i Open University.

In 1998, the Baha'i Open University enrolled more than 900 students and was staffed by 150 volunteer professors. It is essentially an underground institution offering correspondence courses and

teaching in private homes.

While the university is not recognized by Iran's Ministry of Education, it nevertheless offers bachelor's degrees in the following subjects: accounting; applied chemistry; civil engineering; com-

**Although Iran has long tolerated Christians and Jews, the Baha'i faith has been largely suppressed since the 1979 revolution.**

puter science; dental science; law; literature; pharmacology; and psychology.

— *Chronicle of Higher Education*  
Nov. 13, 1998

### LEBANON

Bending to pressure from religious lobbies, the government has granted licensing to six new universities that were established along confessional lines during the civil war. Three of these schools are run directly by religious organizations.

Hence Dar al-Fatwa, the Islamic University of Beirut that was founded by Sunni Muslims, now has a license to teach Islamic law and jurisprudence, in addition to Islamic art. The Shiite Muslim community established the university to teach Islamic studies, health sciences, tourism and management.

In turn, a Christian Maronite order called the Antonine Fathers has been given a license to teach theological studies, and the Francophone Society for Educational Development plans to open a University of Technology.

The licensing of the three universities has sparked concerns over the future of higher education in

*Continued, Page 12*

## Online Education May Impact Foreign Recruitment

by Robert Sedgwick  
Editor, WENR

There are a number of factors that account for the recent success and expansion of the electronic classroom in the United States. Shifts in the demographic landscape, changing market forces and technological advancements, coupled with the rising demand for college degrees, have all given impetus to this new trend that is quickly changing the shape of higher education.

Student enrollments are expected to reach 20 million by the year 2010. The recent surge can be attributed to both the high rate of secondary school graduates applying to institutions of higher education and the growing cohort of part-time students, which has risen at a faster rate than full-timers. At present, only about 15 percent of all American college students are comprised of 18- to 22-year-olds living on campus.

Most part-time students in the United States are adult professionals who go back to school for retraining and — to a lesser extent — intellectual stimulation. Between 1970 and 1993, for example, the number of students over the age of 40 increased by 235 percent.

Instead of preparing for the imminent deluge of students by expanding programs and facilities, most institutions have been preoccupied with cutting costs. At the same time, however, schools have tried to offset the ill effects of shrinking budgets by stepping up overseas recruitment. Most foreign students pay full tuition and hence represent an important source of income for campuses nationwide.

But while an American degree is highly coveted overseas, many qualified students are discouraged

by the small fortune it costs in tuition and miscellaneous expenses to get one. Others are working professionals who can't just pick up and leave their jobs and families to pursue a higher education in the United States. These and other impediments often make it difficult for recruiters to attract foreign applicants.

The solution: If you can't bring the student to the university, why not bring the university to the student? With recent advances in computer and satellite technology, more and more schools in the United States are turning to distance learning — and Web-based courses in particular — as a way of expanding their programs, both at home and abroad.

### Storming the Ivory Tower

For Professor Chris Sciabarra, a visiting scholar at New York University's Department of Politics, online education has the potential to bring students and faculty together from all over the world in a way that was simply inconceivable in years past. Overseas students make up about 65 percent of the enrollment in his *Cyber-Seminar on Dialectics and Liberty*.

"The course has busted through all geographical boundaries," Sciabarra said. "I've taught people all over the United States and in Europe, including Sweden and Norway, and I'm very pleased with the caliber of the students who have registered for these classes."

Sciabarra also believes that many of the changes brought to higher education by way of the new information technology are long overdue.

"I think long-distance learning opportunities are increasing, and slowly democratizing education [while] breaking down the barriers of scholarly discourse," he said.

"Academia has for too long been residing in the 'ivory tower'... and any opportunities which we have that might broaden our ability to reach a more diversified population of students and colleagues should be encouraged."

Perhaps more than other institutions in this country, American higher education managed to remain largely cloistered from the pressures of the market until quite recently. But critics argue that a good number of colleges and universities have, over the years, evolved into inefficient and wasteful bureaucracies maintained and dominated by entrenched cliques of academic mandarins.

Now however, as reform-minded individuals within academia turn to the business world for solutions, higher education is increasingly being discussed in market terms: Courses and degree programs are fast becoming commodities to be packaged and sold to growing numbers of student consumers, both at home and abroad. The Internet has served to enhance this process by providing a platform on which schools can advertise and deliver their educational programs to the public.

### Skeptics Abound

At the same time, there are those within academia who view computer-based education with a great deal of skepticism. Many college professors have voiced concerns over the high dropout rates among online students, the potential for fraud, the proliferation of diploma mills and the lack of control that faculty members have over the development and implementation of these cyber programs.

In particular, the American Association of University Professors asserts that the utilization of distance-learning technologies raises important questions about stan-

dards for teaching and scholarship.

"Certainly online learning can be used to enhance college curricula," said Mark Smith, a history professor who currently serves as the organization's associate director of government relations. "But it is no substitute for the kind of face-to-face interaction that takes place between students and teachers in a classroom. I really don't believe there is a reliable assessment of this kind of education yet."

### Foreign Students

There are a number of ways that overseas students could benefit from online education. First and foremost, the money saved in room-and-board fees and transportation costs can be considerable in the long run. Take the University of Maine, for example, where the cost of a bachelor's degree at the school's main campus in Orono is

to top academic institutions all over the United States.

But while the majority of American students enjoy access to the Internet either at home or at school, the fact remains that most of the world is not sufficiently wired to receive online education — and probably won't be for some time to come.

This is particularly true throughout the developing world where access to computers and the Internet remains extremely limited. Even in cases where students are fortunate enough to have access, the antiquated telephone systems found in some countries often result in faulty Internet connections. Moreover, while subscribers in the United States are charged a flat monthly rate for unlimited usage, users in other parts of the world have to pay by the click, which can be very expensive.

"They are confusing and not at all designed in ways to maximize accessibility," she said. "I would say that the majority of schools in this country are not seriously considering the problems encountered by international students who try to use their web pages."

### Bonanza or Bust?

Experts predict that, by the end of 1999, at least three out of four colleges in the United States will provide Web-based education in some capacity. In addition to the traditional academic institutions that currently offer these programs on the side, there are also a number of so-called "virtual colleges" (Western Governors' University and Jones International University, for example) specializing exclusively in distance education. All of these schools, along with a number of for-profit educational companies and private corporations, are currently jockeying for position in a market that few people really understand.

Jonathan Levy, executive director for the Office of Distance Learning at Cornell University, feels that what the market is missing right now is a unified vision. "It lacks an orchestra conductor," he explained. "At the moment, everything is still shifting around. There's no coherent plan yet. If you look at what all these schools are doing, it's a bit like the story of the blind men and the elephant. Everyone has a different idea of what the market looks like and where it's going. They understand bits and pieces of it, but no one's getting the whole picture."

Many college and university administrators struggling with budgetary woes have greeted the advent of online education with much enthusiasm.

For one thing, there are fewer facilities to maintain because the electronic classroom circumvents the need for campus infrastruc-

*Continued on page 11*

**"Everyone has a different idea of what the market looks like and where it's going. They understand bits and pieces of it, but no one's getting the whole picture."**

— Jonathan Levy

about \$34,000. However, for only \$14,880, a student can earn the same degree over the Internet from anywhere in the world.

Moreover, foreign students can spare themselves a lot of bureaucratic hassle by choosing online education over traditional degree programs. There are no visas, diplomatic red tape, or restrictive immigration policies to worry about, and the only borders to cross exist in cyber-space.

By simply using a computer and modem, students living in some of the most remote areas of the world can potentially plug in

Ruth Sylte, assistant director of LEXIA International and a consultant with the Manitou Group, is dissatisfied with the level of accessibility afforded by many of the Web sites designed by American universities that are supposed to appeal to foreign students.

"I am appalled at the way some of these Web sites have been set up," said Sylte, who recently returned from India, where she participated in a series of workshops aimed at training administrators and faculty how to find information about American colleges and universities over the Internet.

## Admissions Officers Will Find Asian Guide Helpful

### *Book Review: Asian Higher Education: An International Handbook and Reference Guide*

by Roshelle Filart  
WES Senior Area Specialist

Given the fact that higher education is said to have played such an important role in fueling the Asian miracle, it is ironic that this book came out in 1997 — the year when so many of the region's economies began to unravel.

The view that posits a strong correlation between expanding student enrollments and economic prosperity gained popularity throughout Asia during the earlier part of the decade when it appeared to account for the rise in per-capita GNP. However, those who question this "functionalist view" maintain that the link between higher education and economic development in these countries is less straightforward and needs to be looked at more carefully.

*Asian Higher Education: An International Handbook and Reference Guide* (edited by Gerard Postiglione and Grace Mak; Greenwood Press; 1997) is an insightful study of the changing dynamics that have shaped the region's colleges and universities over the years.

It is a welcome contribution to the field — especially given the dearth of current and reliable information on some of the countries dealt with here (Iran, Mongolia, Laos and Cambodia, for example).

In part, the book focuses on common trends and developments that have emerged throughout the region as a whole since World War II. The expansion of college campuses to meet the rising demand for higher education, for example, is something that all 20 of the Asian nations featured in the book

have experienced in some form or another.

The stampede into the universities throughout much of Asia has resulted in a glut of college graduates — many of whom can't find work due largely to the region's floundering economies.

In an underdeveloped country

### Another common element found in Asian countries is diminishing state support for existing institutions.

like Bangladesh then, it is no surprise that young people, in increasing numbers, are leaving to study and look for jobs in the West. Likewise, Iran is also experiencing a mass exodus of students, faculty and college graduates who opt for greener pastures in Western Europe, Canada, India and Australia.

Another common element found in Asian countries is diminishing state support for existing institutions and the overall trend towards the privatization of higher education.

As more and more governments disengage themselves from the higher education business, universities are forced to look for new sources of funding and, in the process, are enjoying greater autonomy than ever before.

Furthermore, Asia is witnessing the proliferation of private schools, which in some cases, serves to take up the slack when state universities are unable to cope with the overflow of college applicants.

In India, for instance, about three-quarters of all colleges offer-

ing general education are privately run. The percentage is slightly higher for South Korea, and even China — which has for many years resisted this trend — is allowing the private sector to play a greater role in higher education.

Another issue discussed at length in the book is increased student mobility in the region. Asia is currently the world's largest exporter of students. Globalization of labor and economics, among other factors, has to a large extent en-

couraged the international exchange of students. Asians who go abroad to earn degrees and gain proficiency in English have an edge

over the competition when they return home in search of jobs.

Yet while Asian systems of higher education have to some degree developed along parallel lines, the authors emphasize that each country presents its own unique case study in how it addresses the various challenges resulting from rapid economic modernization and socio-political changes.

Moreover, the evolution of higher education throughout the region has largely been determined by social, political and cultural imperatives, which vary significantly from one country to the next.

In many Asian societies (India and Indonesia, for instance), contentious national issues such as language and ethnicity have been played out on the educational front. Meanwhile in countries like Iran, religion continues to occupy a prominent position within the structure of higher learning.

Moreover, the development of Asian higher education has largely been determined by past and

present relations with the West and with the United States, in particular. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, for instance, have readily adopted American and European models.

On the other hand, Iran, Indonesia and Sri Lanka have taken a more defensive stance against the influences of creeping westernization, which they see as undermining indigenous cultures and identities. In some cases, colonialism played a pivotal role in westernizing Asian universities, while in others (such as Japan and Thai-

land) there was a self-motivated effort to develop educational systems along American lines.

Further distinctions in the structures of Asian higher learning arise from the fact that these countries operate under disparate economic systems — capitalist, communist, transitional — and have all reached various stages of socioeconomic development.

The book also provides a good overview of the governing bodies and policies that regulate the structures of education in each of the countries presented. There is a fair

amount of current data here pertaining to student enrollments, faculty appointments and rates of graduation.

In short, anyone with an interest in comparative education or wishing to acquire some background knowledge on systems of higher education in Asia will find this book useful and informative.

Although it may be a bit broad and generalized for specialists of the region, admissions officers will no doubt appreciate its value as a handy reference guide to the region.

## ONLINE EDUCATION, *continued from page 9*

tures. Secondly, online education reduces the number of personnel required to teach and support college courses and programs. Why hire three professors when one can teach the same number of students — if not more — online? In essence, the Internet could do for higher education what the ATM machine did for banking 20 years ago.

But according to Mike Lambert, executive director of the Distance Education and Training Council, this view is just too good to be true. In actuality, he says, online education is a capital-intensive industry that requires support networks, communication-technology infrastructures, marketing experts, graphic designers and consultants.

“A lot of college administrators see [online education] as a get-rich-quick scheme, but it’s just not that easy,” he cautioned. “In reality, it takes time. We’re talking about one-and-a-half years to develop a good course and get it up on the Web. Colleges will find that these programs are going to chew up a lot of money, and there’s not going to be a big return on the initial investment.”

Moreover, the competition for online students will be fierce, and not everybody is going to survive the onslaught. What happens, for

instance, when a small regional college in Oklahoma, which was founded specifically to meet the needs of the local community, suddenly finds Harvard or Duke in its back yard competing for students?

Colleges that lack large endowments depend heavily on tuition and the revenues generated by their continuing-education programs. Inevitably these are the schools that stand to lose the most in the long run.

“After the initial stampede, I predict a falling out where a lot of

and elsewhere have acknowledged its impact on higher education — and have adapted accordingly. What is less clear, though, is how the virtual classroom will affect the future of overseas student recruitment.

If the strategy aimed at bringing students to the university is changed to include bringing the university to the students via the Internet, then it is certainly possible to contemplate expanding foreign enrollments at American institutions of higher education in the

**“After the initial stampede, I predict a falling out where a lot of these smaller colleges will lose money and become disillusioned.”**

— Mike Lambert

these smaller colleges will lose money and become disillusioned,” said Lambert. “Then there will be a period of consolidation, when institutions come together to form consortia.”

Although the online-learning industry is currently fraught with controversy, most colleges and universities in the United States

years to come.

However, by the same token, it is also possible to imagine a significant drop in the number of foreigners who actually come to the United States each year to study. Such implications suggest far-reaching changes in the nature and infrastructure of international education.

## REGIONAL NEWS, continued from page 7

Lebanon. Many fear that universities defined and run by religious organizations will erode national unity and give rise to the kind of sectarian strife that ripped the country to pieces in the 1970s and 1980s.

Others claim that it is the deterioration of educational standards — not confessionalism — that threatens the country's system of higher education. According to this group, the government is legitimizing universities that do not meet the national standards.

— *Independent Online,  
Higher Education  
www.inc.co.za/online/hero/  
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### ISRAEL

Many universities in Israel are currently experimenting with curriculum changes aimed at providing students with a broader education. Israel's system of higher education, based largely on the German model, exempts undergraduates from taking core requirements and allows them to concentrate instead on their chosen field of study.

Reinforcing this system is the

proclivity among Israelis to eschew general-education studies in favor of professional programs that will help them land jobs in such fields as business, law and high-tech industry. With job markets in Israel becoming increasingly competitive, few students have time to take courses in the humanities.

Recently however, some Israeli institutions have been offering students more elective courses, while imposing distribution requirements along the lines of the American system of higher education. Emek Yezreel College, formally a branch of Haifa University, endeavors to provide its students with a broad-based education requiring undergraduates to take courses from several "clusters" before choosing a major.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem also reports increasing enrollments in its general-studies program. The program was created largely in response to concerns among faculty members that students were not receiving a well-rounded education.

But while many educators would like to see more colleges in Israel emulating the American

model, others don't see much of a market in it. According to the country's top higher-education official, Nehemia Levtzion, most students in Israel don't want a broad-based education. He recently stated that higher education is rapidly becoming a commodity, and colleges and universities have to offer students the kind of product they're looking for.

To increase enrollments, many newer colleges offer programs that provide students with marketable skills once they graduate. Israel's Open University reports that the majority of its students choose courses in practical fields like behavioral sciences, business and computers, while shunning the humanities.

Levtzion hopes to promote the development of a two-track educational system in Israel whereby practical and professional programs would be shifted to the newer colleges. Universities would then devote themselves largely to academics and research.

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