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# Global Citizenship Demands New Approaches to Teaching and Learning: AASCU's Global Challenges Initiative

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# GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP DEMANDS NEW APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

## AASCU'S GLOBAL CHALLENGES INITIATIVE

BY JENNIFER SUMMIT

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Today's college graduates are entering an interconnected world in which globalization will affect nearly every facet of their lives. In turn, college and university mission statements increasingly include the intent to educate "global citizens" among their fundamental commitments.

Yet our students' global knowledge and understanding remain strikingly limited—if anything, they appear to be in a state of long-term decline. According to Derek Bok, the United States bears "the dubious distinction of being one of only two countries in which young adults were less informed about world affairs than their fellow citizens from older age groups" (226).

### Note

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Compounding the problem is the complexity of global learning itself: a balance of knowledge (such as world geography and history), skills (the ability to read and understand international news sources), and attitudes (interest in other cultures and a sense of responsibility for our shared planet), it cannot be acquired from a single discipline. Nor can it be taught with traditional expectations of disciplinary mastery, since its subject is constantly changing and as vast as the globe itself.

But the need for globally aware citizens won't wait for our institutions to change and evolve. So how do we meet these challenges and deliver on the promise to prepare students for productive lives and responsible citizenship in an increasingly transnational future?

This question informed the creation of "Global Challenges," a collaborative curricular initiative launched in 2006 by the American Democracy Project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). Produced by a cohort of faculty from eleven affiliated institutions and offered in a variety of forms on more than twenty

campuses, Global Challenges offers a new approach to global teaching and learning that is engaging both students and faculty in promising new ways.

Its creators call Global Challenges a "national blended learning course": Campuses that offer it do so partly or fully online. It pulls together extensive digital resources—including expert lectures, lesson modules, quizzes, assignments, and an online archive of readings, slides, videos and links, all available through public sites or pre-loaded onto the Epsilon learning management system that is the project's platform.

Over the past year—"the year of the MOOC," according to *The New York Times*—the national conversation about online education has been polarized into opposing camps. On the one side are advocates of in-person, campus-based teaching that foregrounds the relationship between individual faculty member and student. On the other are advocates of MOOCs (massive open online courses) that trade the intimacy of on-campus contact for breadth of access and availability.

Global Challenges belongs to a new generation of online teaching and learning, one that could change the paradigm

### What is Global Challenges?

Global Challenges is a not-for-profit, blended-learning course model that can be adopted as a turnkey course or customized to fit a wide range of pedagogical forms and needs. It consists of several elements:

*Course shell.* Currently offered through Epsilon at a cost for students of \$50/student, the course shell includes the following resources:

- sample syllabus
- learning objectives
- lesson modules
- quizzes/exams
- assignments
- discussion forums
- assessment tools
- student guide
- *New York Times* electronic daily edition and digital archives
- content videos
- teaching toolkit

Participating campuses do not need an Epsilon site-license, and course designers plan to make the course shell available as a common cartridge that will be compatible with any learning management platform.

*E-book.* An alternative to the fully loaded course shell, the E-book includes Global Challenges content in an interactive format but without the quizzes, assignments, forums, and other tools included in the shell. The cost to students is \$14.99/student for a "bring-your-own device" or e-book.

*Teaching toolkit.* Directed at "Global Challenges" instructors, *Educating Globally Competent Citizens: A Toolkit* contains contributions from Global Engagement Scholars and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). It discusses the "Seven Revolutions" both individually and as a framework for global understanding, as well as offering sample syllabi, teaching materials and resources, and elaborations of the course learning goals. It is available separately (\$20 to AASCU members; \$25 to non-members) or bundled into the course shell.

*Workshops, institutes, and collaboratives.* Faculty who are teaching, or are considering teaching, Global Challenges on their campuses can attend two annual workshops and institutes offered by the Global Engagement Scholars. In addition, participating faculty share ideas and resources through a web collaborative (<http://groupspaces.com/GlobalChallenges/>).

Information about the course and its components is available through the Global Challenges website: <http://www.aascuglobalchallenges.org/>

for both proponents and critics. It uses the online environment both to increase faculty involvement and to enable forms of student engagement that would be impossible in a traditional classroom.

The result is what AASCU's Vice President for Academic Leadership and Change George Mehaffy calls a "Massive, Collaboratively Designed Course" (or MCDC, as opposed to MOOC). The project transforms traditional pedagogy by enabling faculty to expand their disciplinary reach while also introducing students to global perspectives and resources that match the expansiveness of the subject itself.

The success of Global Challenges has encouraged AASCU to develop similarly collaborative, transdisciplinary courses with an emphasis on public service and citizenship. A course on "Stewardship of Public Lands" is currently nearing completion.

### HISTORY OF "GLOBAL CHALLENGES"

The idea for the project emerged when AASCU's Mehaffy attended a 2006 presentation by Erik Peterson, former director of the Global Strategy Institute at the non-partisan Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC, on "The Seven Revolutions." Developed in order to anticipate areas of global tension and transformation that might become flashpoints by 2025, the "Revolutions" identified seven key areas to monitor:

1. population,
2. resource management and environmental stewardship,
3. technological innovation and diffusion,
4. the development and dissemination of information and knowledge,
5. economic integration,
6. conflict and security, and
7. governance.

Peterson hoped that the Seven Revolutions framework would encourage policymakers to undertake long-term strategic thinking on global trends. To Mehaffy, a former provost who is committed to rethinking undergraduate education, the model sounded like the framework for a new kind of teaching and learning experience.

AASCU made a novel but natural site for the curricular project that ensued. With 430 campuses and 3 million students, its affiliated institutions are highly diverse: They range from small, rural campuses with a liberal arts focus to large, urban campuses serving commuters and part-time students.

But across their diversity, AASCU institutions share a commitment to the public mission of higher education. With Global Challenges, Mehaffy saw a possibility to redefine the public purpose of higher education for a global age, while using the resources of online media to rationalize faculty work and engage students.

With the support of CSIS and *The New York Times*, which agreed to provide access to archival and current materials through its Knowledge Network, Mehaffy took the idea to AASCU members. He assembled an initial team of faculty

scholars from eight institutions to develop the framework, materials, and learning activities for a model course springing from the Seven Revolutions model.

### Global Engagement Initiative: Core Members

California State University, Fresno  
Fort Hays State University, Kansas  
Fort Lewis College, Colorado  
Georgia College  
Northern Arizona University  
Richard Stockton College, New Jersey  
San José State University, California  
Southeast Missouri State University  
Western Kentucky University  
University of Minnesota Duluth  
University System of Georgia

Team members met regularly and continued their collaboration. Using the Epsilen platform, they managed documents and created a repository of content that included relevant materials from *The New York Times*, CSIS, and other sources. Then they created teaching modules that could be the basis of a course based on each of Erikson's Seven Revolutions (population, resources, technology, information, economic integration, security, and governance).

In 2007, Fort Hays State University offered the first course following the Seven Revolutions model and was quickly joined by others from among the pilot institutions. The initial group of eight founding institutions expanded to include three more (Richard Stockton College, New Jersey; Georgia College; and San José State University, California), each represented by a faculty scholar on the team.

These faculty members, now called "Global Engagement Scholars," continued to develop and refine the course collaboratively. They produced an e-book and made it available to students at a reasonable price. They also organized the modules to form a course shell that participating faculty could customize to their needs—whether by selectively adapting materials of their choice or adopting it as a turn-key course, using a pre-loaded syllabus and a set of assignments, quizzes, exams, reading materials, videos, and links.

Its developers expect that the subscription fee for participants (at \$50 per student, which secures access to the course shell and resources) and sales of the e-book (at \$14.99) will enable the initiative to become self-sustaining within a non-profit business model—a goal that it is close to meeting. Following the 2012 introduction of the blended model, the number of campuses offering Global Challenges courses has increased to more than twenty in ten US states and two foreign countries.

What differentiates Global Challenges from MOOCs is the flexibility of its template, which can be modified to serve the needs of individual campuses and their students. Participating campuses may opt in through subscription, although some have adapted the Global Challenges model



to create their own courses independently or have selected materials to use in their existing courses and curricula without formally subscribing.

The courses currently offered have adapted Global Challenges materials to fit within a wide range of pedagogical and curricular models: lectures and seminars; in-person, hybrid, or fully-online courses; first-year experiences; learning communities; honors colloquia; and capstones. They are housed in single departments or offered through freshmen programs or interdisciplinary divisions. The course shell's adaptability to such a wide range of possibilities maximizes the likelihood that it will expose significant numbers of students to global learning in at least one course during their collegiate experience.

## A COURSE SAMPLER

### California State University, Fresno

CSU Fresno's "7 Global Revolutions: Creating Globally Competent Citizens" started as an upper-division honors seminar that continues to be taught by Martin Shapiro (psychology) through Fresno's Smitcamp Family Honors College. The course follows the topics established by CSIS and the Global Engagement Scholars—population, resources, technology, information, economic integration, security, and governance—and incorporates guest lectures from faculty experts, as well as visual and reading materials through the Epsilon shell.

A small class composed of advanced, highly motivated undergraduates, the seminar culminates in individual projects that allow students to pursue special interests: e.g., a full-length term paper presented through an e-portfolio and incorporating videos, images, and links, and a book group organized by each student focusing on a readings connected to the class.

In a special project, "Taking Action," students are told to "save the world in your own way" in an activity recorded and discussed in a reflection paper submitted through an e-portfolio. This assignment—which several other Global Challenges faculty have adopted—encourages students to think creatively about the power of individual action.

They have done so through a range of activities, such as producing and analyzing campus surveys on global issues and fundraising or creating publicity for global NGOs. Art major Kristen Roan, for instance, produced an animated public-service announcement called "Plastic Bags are Evil." Posted on YouTube [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i20tw5Gcjfg>], it calls attention to the impact of individual consumer choices on the global environment.

Assignments such as these encourage students' optimism and agency in the face of materials and information about global challenges that could otherwise lead to hopelessness and resignation.

In 2009 CSU Fresno was awarded a grant by Wal-Mart to help first-generation college students. With support from it and Fresno's administration, Shapiro was able to use the "7 Global Revolutions" template to create a first-year-experi-

ence program involving over 200 students and faculty from across the university.

The program is structured as a learning community. Student cohorts take classes clustered around the theme of global engagement, including English, mathematics, reading, biology, communications, political science, and a team-taught course on critical thinking in anthropology. Participating faculty members meet in a four-day workshop before the start of term and collaborate to create complementary assignments and activities.

Shapiro and his colleagues have used the course as the basis of an assessment exercise that is being extended to the broader Global Challenges campus network.

### Fort Hays State University

A public liberal arts college in Hays, Kansas, with 4,300 resident students, 4,500 virtual-college students, and 1,850 international-partnership students, Fort Hays State University offered one of the first undergraduate Global Engagement courses in fall 2007. It plays a significant role in the university's general education program at both the physical campus and the virtual college.

Taught by Shala Mills (political science), who is also National Coordinator for the AACSC Global Challenges Project, the course emphasizes the continuity of global and local concerns. Students consider the global implications of issues they observe locally, while undertaking a civic-engagement project that addresses the problems they have identified.

Called "Global Challenges," the lower-division course brings in guest experts from across the university—representing departments as diverse as philosophy, physics, computer science, finance, sociology, political science, and geosciences—with the aim of introducing students to potential majors while also demonstrating the cross-disciplinary relevance of global learning.

### Kennesaw State University

With 21,600 undergraduates and 1,900 graduate students, Kennesaw State University (KSU) is one of Georgia's largest public universities. Its multi-tiered program in global challenges, offered through KSU's interdisciplinary University College, advances the university's signature emphasis on global learning across the curriculum.

A first-year seminar, "Tomorrow's World Today," is open to 500 entering students, who enroll in sections of 25 taught by faculty drawn from across the university. Besides meeting general education requirements, the seminars incorporate modules on academic integrity, time management, and college success strategies as part of the university's retention and graduation initiative.

"Tomorrow's World Today" is also linked to a number of the university's global-themed learning communities, which bring together courses from multiple disciplines and feature community-service projects on issues of global concern. Students report that they find the material challenging but

engaging, and assessment data on the program indicates a 10 to 12 percent rise in the retention rate of students who pursue the combined learning community and first-year seminar.

In addition to its lower-division seminars, KSU offers an advanced Seven Revolutions colloquium to honors students through the President's Emerging Global Scholars Program (PEGS). While adapting many of the materials used in the lower-division courses, the honors colloquium requires students to design and conduct research projects in teams of three. The students also travel to Brazil every year to continue their study of global challenges with UNIFACS University (Salvador, Brazil).

Lecturer of Education and Global Scholar Ken Hill remarks that the course has caused him to rethink his role as a teacher of Global Challenges: "Increasingly I believe it's my role to create learning opportunities and experiences for students—innovative pedagogies that are experiential, facilitative, and collaborative."

### University of Minnesota, Duluth

Dennis Falk, a professor of social work, has participated in the project since its inception, serving as a visiting fellow at CSIS in 2006-2007 and chair of the Global Engagement national consortium. He also developed University of Minnesota Duluth's extensive global-issues curriculum.

When the university (10,000 undergraduates, 800 graduate students) revised its liberal education requirements in 2012, a new requirement emphasized the importance of students' "understanding contemporary global issues," heightening the importance of the global-issues curriculum. Offered through introductory lower-division lecture courses, honors seminars, and fully online and blended courses, this curriculum adapts the template course on the Epsilon platform and makes its resources available to students at all levels.

While developing the curriculum, Falk created an activity that faculty at many other campuses have adopted for Global Challenges courses. The "Global Village" exercise represents the global population within the microcosm of a course roster, in a way that demonstrates the proportional distribution of nationality, race, income, and age.

The in-class exercise assigns students identities that are drawn from the representative sample, which they maintain throughout the course: One may be a 54-year-old woman from Hong Kong, another an 18-year-old male from Kolkata, a third a 78-year-old man from Amsterdam, yet another a 5-year-old girl from Medellin, and so on. Students are always surprised to discover the relatively small proportion of US citizens within the global population.

They are then required to research their global villager, using sources such as the CIA *World Factbook*, *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, and *The Economist*, and to answer questions about his or her language, religion, ethnicity, life expectancy, primary modes of transportation, and communication. Students complete regular blog posts from the global villager's perspective; in these, they reflect on the implications of each of the seven revolutions for the individuals they represent.

The exercise—which students report to be one of the most engaging and memorable they encounter as undergraduates—stimulates deep understanding of how global change both shapes and is registered in individual experience.

### San José State University

The Global Engagement initiative gained its newest member, San José State University, when William Reckmeyer (a professor of leadership and systems in the Department of Anthropology) joined the Global Engagement scholars in 2012. SJSU already had a global-learning initiative in place—the SJSU Salzburg Program, which Reckmeyer heads—that established the foundation for a unique set of courses on global citizenship.

Launched in spring 2013, Global Citizenship clusters four interrelated courses taught by five faculty from different disciplines that share a common core of lectures. Aimed at lower-division students, Global Citizenship is also fully online, which facilitates the multidisciplinary collaboration at its heart.

The course adapts the Global Challenges template but alters the order and subjects of the original Seven Revolutions to emphasize global diversity as an additional revolution and flashpoint. The faculty team—drawn from English, child and adolescent development, biology, global studies, and anthropology—jointly developed the syllabus to allow students to enroll in one of four general education areas: science, humanities, social sciences, and human development.

Maintaining a balance between the central core and area-specific lectures, the course combines global breadth and disciplinary depth while emphasizing the connections that cut across the disciplines. By watching the faculty team deliver the course together, students witness the integrative nature of global learning.

As Reckmeyer remarks,

The most innovative feature of what we're doing isn't the online format but the way we've built a team of five faculty from different disciplines to collaboratively develop an integrated set of courses that collectively satisfy four different lower-division GE requirements through a shared focus on global citizenship.

### COLLABORATIVE CURRICULAR DESIGN

Both on campus and in the larger project, collaboration is a driving ethos of the Global Challenges project. Throughout the year, the Global Engagement scholars continue to meet and communicate with one another and with the expanding network of faculty offering versions of the course on different campuses. The scholars also hold in-person workshops at the annual American Democracy Project's national meeting each summer, as well as at a two-day institute in Washington, DC, every fall.

The discussion continues throughout the year through virtual platforms: a Facebook group, Wiki, Diigo network, and Groupspaces web collaborative enable faculty to share

resources, present and answer questions, try out new ideas for lessons and assignments, and support one another in real time.

Given the constantly changing nature of their global subjects, faculty involved in the course face unusual challenges in managing and updating their syllabi and materials. The crucial support of the broad community of involved faculty saves individual faculty time while also pooling the strengths of a highly informed and engaged faculty cohort.

By bringing faculty into an active community of fellow specialists, this high-level collaboration invests the teaching enterprise with intellectual and collegial rewards that faculty more commonly find through their research networks. In the process, Global Challenges is helping to redefine faculty work in ways that Mehaffy finds productive and overdue.

“Currently, the dominant course model in the United States is the cottage-industry model,” he observes:

Each instructor designs his or her own course from scratch, alone, every semester. By not interacting with other instructors, none of these faculty members learn anything about the most-effective course content or most-effective teaching practices outside their own course. (Mehaffy, 30)

Moreover, courses designed and delivered by a single faculty member are often limited to the scope of an individual field.

But a course with as expansive a scope as Global Challenges requires the breadth of vision that collaborative course design can provide, particularly with the aid of networked communication. And where some online teaching models have been criticized for taking agency away from faculty, Global Challenges represents the opposite: a model in which faculty expertise is crucial and its impact heightened beyond what a single faculty member could achieve alone.

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Most valuable of all, the faculty collaboration models an ideal of shared learning and intellectual inquiry for the project’s students. The ability to work and learn in groups has been singled out as an essential attribute of 21<sup>st</sup> century education, and many campuses are finding ways to incorporate group work into their classrooms and curricula. But a team-taught course—or one whose faculty make visible their collaborations with other teacher-scholars—delivers a powerful message in form as well as content.

In a course taught by a single expert, group work may be the means, but individual mastery and expertise—modeled by the faculty member—remain the implicit ideal and end. In contrast, students in Global Challenges courses come to appreciate an alternative model of knowledge, seeing it less as an individual possession to be owned and hoarded than as a shared resource and dynamic network. Larry Gould, provost of Ft. Hays State, observes that Global Challenges

represents a “‘wikinomics’ learning paradigm,” a step away from the atomistic model of industrial-age teaching and learning toward a more interactive one for both faculty and students.

Global learning also requires the ability to move across domains of knowledge. As University of Minnesota, Duluth’s Dennis Falk explains to his students:

Everything is inter-connected and related with everything else. In order to understand an issue or situation, one must not only seek a holistic understanding of a system itself, but must simultaneously understand its component parts and its context or environment. (Toolkit, 126)

Students in Global Challenges courses quickly learn that it is impossible to discuss the topic of global resources (Revolution 2) without appreciating the roles played by population, governance, and conflict as well (Revolutions 1, 7, and 6). In the student guide, they are encouraged to create concept maps that represent these interconnections visually and thereby demonstrate their complex and delicate balance.

Such an exercise demonstrates the importance of disciplinary approaches within broader conceptual frameworks. It facilitates what Nancy Budwig has identified in a prior issue of *Change* (May/June 2013) as deep learning. “Deep learning requires rich opportunities for students to look for patterns and underlying principles,” she observes. “It is most likely to happen when learners actively relate new ideas to prior ones, integrating pieces of knowledge into larger conceptual wholes.”

## ASSESSMENT

The wide variety of courses offered under the Global Challenges rubric resists systematic assessment efforts, but the team is developing mechanisms that make it possible to measure and track the project’s overall success. In 2010-11 the Global Engagement Scholars created a two-section survey that asked respondents to assess their knowledge, skills, and attitudes before and after they took the class. The Global Engagement scholars are now creating more sophisticated assessment measures that will help them further improve the course template and our collective understanding of global learning.

In the survey, students reported significant gains in their understanding of current and future issues, their confidence in predicting future trends, and their familiarity with and curiosity about the experiences of those living outside the US. Moreover, they reported a stronger sense of connection with people and events in other parts of the world, one of the course’s important affective outcomes (Toolkit, 139, 141; Mills and Shapiro)

Individual campuses such as KSU also found that, when used as part of an interlinked freshman-seminar and learning-community program, the course contributed to a boost in retention and graduation rates. It should not be surprising to



find similar results on other campuses, given the regular and natural integration of high-impact practices—from freshman seminars to senior capstones, civic engagement to writing-intensive activities—into Global Challenges syllabi.

These findings are consistent with qualitative reports confirming that students value the relevance of the course materials, which cause them to rethink many of their previous assumptions, ideas, and even personal goals in light of a global perspective. In the words of one male freshman who took it, “This class has taught me more than I ever could’ve imagined about the world in which we live but especially about myself and who I want to see myself become and the dreams I want to accomplish in my lifetime” (Toolkit).

The student guide, which is included in the course shell, delineates the knowledge, skills, and attitude goals for both the course as a whole and for the individual lessons. Many of these overlap significantly with universities’ general education goals. For example, the expectation for each lesson is that students will develop and demonstrate information-literacy skills when they “employ credible resources in learning about and evaluate the integrity of available information, data and research” about each of the seven broad topics (*Student Guide*).

Moreover, the guide encourages students to reflect on their own development and progress as learners by tying the course goals to Bloom’s taxonomy of learning. Students learn not only what actions they will be expected to perform—to identify, explain, employ, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize a variety of issues, sources, and approaches—but why they are expected to do so, as well as how these activities map onto their broader development.

The online course shell will eventually include a built-in data analytics package that will enhance student engagement—pop-up quizzes or polls, for example, will allow students to compare their responses with those of other students—while enabling individual faculty to monitor student progress and identify those who need extra help. The analytics tool will also make it possible to aggregate anonymized data across institutions in order to assess and improve the course over time.

Given the success that faculty such as CSU Fresno’s Martin Shapiro have had with e-portfolios, the group further hopes to create a repository or collaborative site in which students enrolled in Global Challenges courses at multiple institutions can share and discuss their work with one another—creating, in effect, an online, multi-campus learning community.

Most important of all, the Global Engagement scholars are finding value in discovering and employing the new forms of learning that global citizenship both requires and enables. To students as well as faculty, the course offers a new model of the university by demonstrating the interconnection of the disciplines and the rich vein of relevance that joins campus with community and academic work with individual hopes and goals. As Shapiro remarks, “This is the course that reminds students why they’re in college” ☐

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