

**A PROGRAM OF COOPERATION BETWEEN AN AMERICAN AND AN
INDIAN UNIVERSITY: A Case Study**

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ABSTRACT

Partnerships among the business programs of American and Indian universities began in 1959. The first American partners were "mainline" research universities whose business schools still rank in the top 50 within the United States. There are now over 1,200 business programs in the United States and every one must demonstrate relevance in a global economy. Today, there are nearly 800 business programs in India. Among these programs there is great diversity. The process of selecting a partner and building a partnership has become very complex. At the same time, the potential value of collaboration for partners has grown tremendously. This

paper describes the experience of Eastern Michigan University's College of Business in developing and implementing a program of cooperation with Osmania University in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India. The strategic considerations that shaped the approach and commitments of both institutions are discussed and the outlines of the program that resulted are drawn.

INTRODUCTION

While collaboration between American and Indian business educators dates to the 1950's, the rapid changes of the last decade have transformed the context in which this collaboration is taking place. Not the least of these changes is the increasing strength of business ties between India and the United States (e.g., New York Times, June 20, 2003). While these ties are certainly due, in part, to the changing political relationship between the two countries, the increases may have as much to do with the relationships that have resulted from the fact that large numbers of Indians have been educated in the United States (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2002). Many have returned to India to lead businesses but many have also remained in the United States where a goodly number have started business of their own. This situation offers Indian and American business schools a rich set of opportunities and responsibilities. These opportunities come at a time when there are strong calls for change in management education in India and American business educators are looking to internationalize their vision.

In April 2003 the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business-- AACSB International approved new accreditation standards that resulted from AACSB's commitment to broaden its membership to include business schools outside of the United States. The new standards both recognize the differences among business programs throughout the world and acknowledge the common commitments that they share. Furthermore, the standards require member schools to demonstrate that they prepare their graduates for the global marketplace.

In demonstrating, their effectiveness business schools must engage their stakeholders in order to understand the requirements of those who will employ their graduates. For the world-class institutions that first entered partnership with Indian universities this requirement leads to a broad assessment of the global economy. For institutions with more regional missions, this requirement leads to a focus on the peculiar needs of the region from which the institution draws its students. The strategic concerns that drive these institutions to international partnerships will differ from those that shape the objectives of research universities that draw their students from a national marketplace. With respect to globalization there will be major themes that are common to all business programs but the character of an institution's approach to internationalization will differ from its peers as its mission and regional economy differs from those of its peers.

In January 2000 the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India appointed an 18-member commission to develop a Policy/Perspective on Management Education. Five sub-committees of the commission

conducted four research studies as well as a benchmarking study in order to assess the current state of management education in India. In commenting on the outcomes of the report Dayal (2002) noted that the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) which is responsible to promote, develop and supervise technical education including business education had been unable to create adequate machinery for: (1) the development and training of faculty to teach courses with applied bias, (2) monitoring quality standards, (3) development of research to make or adapt educational courses relevant for India, (4) encouraging or commissioning development of teaching material on the scale needed, or (5) create an approach that balanced quality control with flexibility. Dayal argues that there are three important changes that must be made for management education to meet the needs of employers in India: (1) application orientation in courses to link practice with theory, (2) testing theories and practices in terms of their relevance to the Indian social, psychological and cultural milieu, and (3) continuing interaction with work organizations to undertake assignments to better understand and develop meaning/application of classroom teaching.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF PARTNERSHIP

Like many American universities Eastern Michigan University has signed many international agreements. While some of these have produced tangible benefits to the partner universities and their students, others have produced little practical value for either partner. Osmania University in Hyderabad has had the same experience. Both institutions were determined to approach new partnerships with a comprehensive plan for

implementation that avoided the pitfalls of earlier sub-optimal arrangements. Both recognized that international partnerships are difficult to sustain and both had learned that successful partnerships must be founded on the legitimate self-interests of the partners. The Osmania/Eastern Michigan partnership meets this requirement.

Eastern Michigan University (EMU) is a comprehensive, metropolitan university located 40 miles outside of Detroit in Southeastern Michigan. EMU's College of Business is accredited by AACSB International and enrolls about 3,500 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. Osmania University (OU) is a large institution by US standards. It is located in Hyderabad, the capital of the State of Andhra Pradesh and the home of a growing number of high tech companies and institutions. The main campus has an enrollment of 100,000 students. In addition, the university serves as an umbrella to a number of other universities and colleges. In that role, Osmania has the responsibility for staffing and curriculum approval and development for all of these affiliate institutions. The total number of students enrolled under the Osmania umbrella, including the main campus, is 300,000 students. Osmania University is a public institution, which provides education, room and board for a nominal fee in comparison to US institutions. Its business management program ranked 37th in the Outlook survey of 2001 and was given a grade of B+ (just below the top 25) by Business India in 2001.

Osmania and Eastern Michigan University have much in common: (1) both serve students who are drawn primarily from a local region, (2) both are public institutions with a mission that includes preparing graduates for employment in businesses within the

region, and (3) neither institution is well-funded in comparison with the leaders in business education, but (4) both must find ways to foster faculty development in international business and increase student exposure to the global economy. Each institution also has different needs that the other can address effectively. Osmania must address the issues identified in the Ministry of Human Resource Development report on management education in India. Eastern Michigan University is committed to the integration of theory and practice in its teaching and has deep experience in designing academic programs in partnership with industry. The majority of EMU's domestic students are the first in their families to attend college; few have traveled outside the United States at all let alone to the developing world. Osmania offers the prospect of a stable partnership in which faculty members from both institutions develop relationships over time. Each partner is working with the other to design programs that are tailored to the needs of students that they have taken the time to get to know. Nevertheless, these traits in common and complementary interests would not be enough to sustain a long-term partnership if it were not for the economic ties between the regions that each institution serves.

The ties between Southeastern Michigan and Andhra Pradesh are strong. Southeastern Michigan is home to one of the largest Non-Resident Indian (NRI) populations in the United States. More Indians enroll at Eastern Michigan University than do so from any other nation outside of the United States. EMU's alums include senior executives at some of India's most prominent companies (e.g., Satyam, India's fourth largest software company) and NRI entrepreneurs who have started businesses in the United States (e.g., Ramsoft). The "Big Three" US automobile manufacturers that

despite diversification still dominate the economy in the Detroit area have increasing ties to India (New York Times, June 20, 2003). It would appear that EMU's graduates need to understand the implications of these ties for their careers and there is a large cadre of EMU, NRI alumni and business leaders in the region who believe that this is true.

THE PATH TO PARTNERSHIP

In January 2000 an EMU alumnus led a delegation from the State of Michigan on a visit to the State of Andhra Pradesh. The delegation included politicians, business leaders and educators. EMU's Vice-President for Enrollment Management was among the members of the delegation. Initial discussions in Hyderabad led to the return visit of Osmania's Vice Chancellor to Eastern Michigan University in the following summer. For EMU's part the initial interest in partnership was driven by the need to grow international student enrollment. Osmania Vice Chancellor D.C. Reddy for his part knew that his business school needed the resources of a US partner to address the challenges in the Ministry of Human Resource Development report. The partnership took root because faculty members in both business-schools recognized the complementary needs and capacities of the other. Still, the partnership never would have begun were it not for the interest and leadership expressed by Southeastern Michigan's NRI community in broadening the ties with the state that was the birth-home for many of them.

In the winter of 2001 the Dean of the College of Business at Eastern Michigan University and the Vice Chancellor of Osmania University signed a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) defining cooperation between the two institutions. This MOU called for faculty exchanges, joint programs of studies, curricular development, and student exchanges across both campuses. EMU has many such agreements in place but this agreement is set apart from the others by the speed at which concrete actions followed the signing of the agreement. The first cohort of students entered a joint program in Computer Information Systems nine months after the agreement was signed. The primary reasons for this speed were the strategic imperatives facing both partners. However, the underlying, driving force was the call for business schools to learn to operate "at the speed of business" in meeting the needs of business.

Starting in the winter of 2001, visits to Osmania by EMU faculty and administrators, have created and continue to create a fertile atmosphere for cooperation to further the development of this partnership. While EMU faculty members who were born in India made the initial contacts, subsequent visits began to include non-Indian members of the faculty. This development kept the program from being seen as a special interest of only the NRI community. It has been true that the inclusion of non-Indian faculty members has complicated the process of seeking understanding. On the other hand, the cultural and political diversity of India can be somewhat of a mystery to Americans who sometimes assume a false homogeneity among Indian immigrants to the United States. Diversity among the participants in the partnership actually simplified some of the more challenging aspects of the relationships among Indian members of EMU's own faculty.

THE JOINT DEGREE PROGRAM

The partnership is now entering its third year. A web site (www.cob.emich.edu) at the College of Business provides a variety of information including academic program specifics, admission information, visa, and housing information for Osmania students and links to detailed and general information about each institution. Frequent news articles in internal outlets as well as in the regional and national press build the program's identity. Despite the impact of the events of 9/11 2001 and changes in college leadership commitment to the program remains strong. In fact, the events of 9/11 that resulted in the approval of many fewer applications from Indian students for study in the United States have increased support for the partnership the cornerstone of which is still the first joint degree offering...the Master of Commerce/Master of Science in Information Systems.

Program Structure and Content

In shaping a joint program Osmania and EMU have been attentive to Dyal's (2002) notice that theories and practices taken from the United States must be adapted for use in India. While this may be true, it is also true the joint US/Indian business partnerships in India and the US are creating a common culture for doing business. It is in this culture that EMU's and Osmania's graduates will work. The best evidence for this position is the structure of the advisory committee to EMU's Computer Information Systems (CIS) Department. The committee has included NRI entrepreneurs who do business in Hyderabad as well as Michigan, the Manager of Satyam's US office in

Michigan and Anglo-American entrepreneurs whose companies outsource business operations to Indian companies in Andhra Pradesh.

In shaping this program both partners have also been mindful of the rapidly changing environment for business education in India. Osmania's programs are approved by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and subject to oversight by the AICTE. Eastern Michigan University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges and its business school is accredited by AACSB. AACSB's standards are changing; the NCA is moving towards a continuous improvement model for re-accreditation and the AICTE is strengthening its oversight of international partnerships with Indian institutions. All of these interests must be taken into account as plans are made and implemented and it is not uncommon for the rules to change in the midst of planning.

The MCom/IS program structure and course content is based on the content and structure of the MSIS (Masters of Science in Information Systems) at EMU. The model that is in use in the United States is very different from the typical approach to information systems education for business in India. In India it has been the practice to separate IT management and business management. Often these two fields are housed in entirely different institutions. The Osmania MCom/IS program has been perceived as both unusual and potentially valuable to business (Rajagopalan, 2003). The degree is strongly practical and, in accordance with the advice of the CIS Advisory Board, integrates business strategy and IT management skills. It might seem that such a radical

shift in approach flies in the face of Dyal's (2002) caution. However, the design also follows his advice to make sure that business has a strong voice in shaping new programs.

Osmania and Eastern Michigan Universities chose an approach to a joint program that kept the offerings of both institutions intact thus requiring minimal approvals for new programs. The program design was driven by EMU's existing program, which had been developed with the advice of its business advisors. Classroom experience was to be based on the American model of a strongly interactive and applied focus. Students who participated in the program would begin the program at Osmania and have the choice of completing the program in Hyderabad or the United States. As the post-9/11 world unfolded, this feature of the design has proved to be essential. While the US Embassy in India reports that visa approval rates remained near 75% for the last two years, only 33% of students admitted to EMU from Osmania in 2002 got visas. The design of the program allowed them to complete a degree that was substantially the same at OU.

EMU's MSIS program requires the completion of 32 semester hours of study. Twelve of these hours are business foundation courses that can be waived by students who have an undergraduate business degree. The structure and course contents of Osmania's MCom/IS program mirror those that EMU's MSIS students are expected to complete. The courses taken during the first semester are the business foundation courses: Finance, Accounting, Management, and Operation Management. The courses taken during the remaining three semesters are the core courses of the program: Data

Communications, Systems Analysis and Design, Database Management, Project management, Programming, Information Systems Projects, Web Based programming, and E-business. The courses have different titles at the two institutions; however, the contents are comparable.

Whenever the MSIS program is changed in terms of structure and/or course content, these changes are communicated to Osmania so they can change their program at the earliest opportunity. This relationship addresses one of the chief concerns voiced in the Ministry of Human Resource Development report on management education--the concern that Indian institutions did not have the resources to keep their programs current. Because of the tight coupling between these two programs, it is essential that the coordinators of the program on both sides of the globe keep in constant communication and that visits take place at least once a year. This allows for constructive discussion, explanation of program changes, and coming to consensus on issues related to the program. In addition, the visits allow the EMU faculty to observe the available infrastructure (computers and communications facilities) for the MCom/IS.

The MSIS program at EMU is structured around applying computer information systems to solving business problems. This program prepares its graduates to assume jobs in systems analysis, design, systems implementation, database analysis and administration, data communications, and management of information systems and technology. Osmania's objective for the MCom/IS is to prepare students to become systems analysts and produce future managers of IT who can handle the challenges of

global business (Rajagopalan, 2003). The applied nature of the MSIS/MCom/IS program addresses the charge of the Indian Government to design programs that emphasize project work that involves implementing solutions to real-life business problems (Dayal, 2002; Rajagopalan, 2003).

Scheduling

An Osmania student enrolled in this program completes the first two semesters at Osmania. If he/she elects to join the MSIS program at EMU, the business foundation courses, as well as, the Database Management and Programming and Data Structures courses are waived for the student. The student completes the rest of the required courses for the MSIS degree at EMU and earns an MSIS degree from EMU. Such a student must have completed a 4-Year Undergraduate Education. For students with 3-Year Undergraduate Education, a bridge program is necessary to bring their status up to EMU requirements. The bridge program requires that students complete 12 credit hours. The bridge program may be taken at Osmania or EMU and both undergraduate and graduate courses may be used to satisfy this requirement.

Students who elect to stay at Osmania complete their third and fourth semesters and gain an MCom/IS degree from Osmania. In addition, EMU's College of Business issues certificates to each graduate indicating that the program that they completed at Osmania is equivalent to the MSIS program at EMU.

Admissions

In the first year of the program 3,000 students indicated an interest in applying for the 40 available positions. Admission to the program occurs in two stages. Students are first admitted to Osmania then students who want to attend EMU must satisfy EMU admissions criteria as well. All students must have 16 years of education in order to be admitted to the program. Admission to the program at Osmania is based on an entrance test designed by the Osmania faculty and endorsed by EMU. Only students with a bachelor's degree in commerce and with a first division standing are allowed to take this entrance test. Students who want to go on to EMU must take the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The minima for entrance are a GMAT of 475 and TOEFL of 550.

Scholarships

The Osmania partnership has a high value to EMU; thus, the University has been willing to commit resources to support Osmania students who wish to come to Eastern Michigan University. EMU allocated 10 in-state tuition “scholarships” for Osmania students. The selection of scholarship recipients is based upon a set of criteria that was developed by Osmania and EMU that include:

a. Objective Criteria

The objective criteria are based on student’s GMAT Score, TOFEL Score, GPA (BS Commerce and M.Com IS first Semester Marks). These scores are

used to rank order the students in terms of their eligibility to receive one of the 10 scholarships. Subjective criteria are used to break these ties.

b. Subjective Criteria

The subjective criteria include factors classroom involvement, communication skills, leadership skills, and initiative. Students are expected to get recommendation letters from the faculty and administrators to include in their application for scholarship.

The evaluations are finalized after consultation between Osmania and EMU program managers and the EMU College of Business has the final decision as to who gets a scholarship.

Career Advising

Eastern Michigan University's College of Business holds a career fair each fall that is part recruiting event and part educational event. In the morning faculty and business representatives conduct educational seminars that explore career opportunities in a changing economy. In the afternoon, recruiters meet with potential employees. Osmania, on the other hand has had no history of bringing students and potential employers together. The partnership has changed this. Contacts with industry are expanding as the new degree model attracts attention. For the first time, Osmania has produced a brochure that presents each of its graduates to perspective employers. In March 2003 Osmania organized an interactive session between the MCom/IS students and the heads prominent companies and organizations that followed the EMU career day

model. The EMU team that participated in these activities witnessed first hand the importance of this program to the Indian business and organizations.

Academic Program Results

Fifteen of the 40 students enrolled in the first program cohort applied to join the program at EMU in fall 2002 in order to complete their MSIS degree. However, due to post 9/11 restrictions in the granting of visas, only five students arrived at the EMU campus in time for classes. The five students who joined the MSIS program in the fall semester of 2002 proved to be successful students at EMU. All completed their first two semesters of coursework with B+ or better grades. Each Osmania student also obtained employment on campus in positions ranging from hourly work for dining services to Graduate Assistant positions in CIS. Although these students could have completed their program of study by taking courses in the spring semester, all opted to take training in special software packages to enhance their chances in gaining employment. They will be back in the classroom in the fall semester of 2003 to complete their final semester.

The post 9/11 environment for study in the United States has been discouraging to many Osmania students. This has been especially so because the "success factors" have been hard for them to understand. In order to better advise Osmania students, the Dean of the College of Business met with consular officers in Chennai (the Office of the US Consul that handles visa applications for Andhra Pradesh) in March 2003. At this writing student visas are being approved but it remains unclear how many will be approved for the semester that will start in fall 2003. Nevertheless, more students are planning on

joining the program this coming fall. In addition, students interest in other programs such as the Master's programs in business administration, accounting and human resources management. EMU and Osmania are now working on establishing equivalencies in these areas.

FACULTY EXCHANGE

Faculty exchanges are essential to the partnership. There are many reasons that this is so including the needs to:

- Establish rapport and exchange of ideas between the faculty of OU and EMU.
- Understand teaching methodologies followed by the faculty.
- Provide faculty from one institution the opportunity to teach at the other.
- Share the research experience and areas of research.
- Participate in seminars, panels, and other research dissemination formats.
- Establish the possible uniform standards of teaching.

These reasons are essential for the COB globalization of its programs, as well as, for Osmania's objectives in developing its programs in management education (Dayal, 2002).

Thusfar, faculty members from EMU have participated in a seminar offered by the Department of Commerce at Osmania. In addition, some faculty members have lectured to students at Osmania as well as participated in dialogues with industry leaders in Hyderabad and surrounding communities. The EMU faculty members who have participated specialize in strategic management, strategic marketing, and information

systems. While the partnership was initiated by EMU faculty members of Indian origin, the shift to leadership by non-Indian faculty has been essential. The inclusion of non-Indian faculty members has been seen as a sign of “true commitment” on the part of EMU. In addition, EMU brings a degree of diversity to the partnership that has had a positive impact on the partnership. The participation of a female faculty member was greeted with great enthusiasm from everyone especially the large number of female students.

The faculty exchange includes identifying certain areas of mutual interest where intensive short-term courses could be undertaken. The details of faculty exchanges relating to time, availability, compensation, lodging, transportation, and meals were negotiated between EMU and Osmania. People from EMU visited the guesthouses at Osmania that will be used to house faculty from EMU for the purpose of faculty exchange. In addition, convenient time slots for faculty exchange for both Osmania and EMU have been identified. The criteria in this case were to minimize disturbing the normal faculty schedule at their home institution. The faculty exchange includes provision of free accommodation in the university guesthouse, food and local transportation on reciprocal basis.

CHALLENGES

The opportunities and impacts that have emerged as the partnership has developed were not all expected. Efforts could be made to offer training programs for the

professionals in the industry. Such programs could support the airfare and honoraria paid to visiting faculty. However, these efforts might also detract from the primary focus on meeting the needs of EMU and Osmania students seeking degrees. In this regard, EMU's engagement has had a significant impact on how seriously Osmania students are taking the MCom/IS program compared to attitudes prior to the OU/EMU partnership. In addition, the two-day seminar in which EMU participated significantly raised the profile of the Department of Commerce within the University, the city of Hyderabad and India's professional education community. The importance of these "second order" effects was not considered when EMU began the partnership but these effects have become a significant influence in establishing an enduring foundation for the partnership.

In fact, one of the main challenges we have faced is keeping opportunities in perspective. Some opportunities that have emerged do offer the possibility of enhancing the partnership. Others might be characterized as serving legitimate but private agendas that would add less value to the partnership. For example, EMU/OU faculty members are in discussions about putting on a business case competition and possibly, timed with celebrating commemorating the anniversary of the OU/EMU partnership. This activity would directly benefit the students we intend to serve while also raising the profile of the partnership. On the other hand, proposals to offer contract training to local companies would raise the profile of the partnership but have only a very limited impact on the students for whom the partnership was created.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Eastern Michigan University's strategic plan includes a commitment to globalization and a commitment to serve Southeastern Michigan. For the College of Business these two objectives are complementary. Business in Michigan is international. To serve the region the College of Business must have strong international programs and those programs must first relate to the regions of the world where Michigan does business. Among these regions is India. Southeastern Michigan has one of the largest non-resident Indian populations in North America and business ties between Michigan and India are very strong. Thus, a university partnership that links a public Michigan university to a public Indian university with a similar mission has strong support from the business community.

Such partnerships work best when there is mutual benefit. For EMU the benefits include faculty development, program development and opportunities for students to experience business as it happens between the US and a developing economy. For Osmania University the advantages include the acceleration of program development and opportunities for its students to experience US-style education in India.

The key to the success of this partnership has been the recognition by both partners that this partnership is a strategic enterprise that can have far-reaching implications for our students, our institutions, the businesses that we serve and our communities if not our nations. The strategic factors that shape the nature of partnerships will differ for other universities in other regions. The importance of building partnerships

that take into account the strategic conditions that surround each university is the same for all who would create a successful partnership.

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