



Ripples of change in U.S. graduate education, courtesy of Bologna

In 1999, the education ministers of 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration and set in motion a process aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area by 2010. The goal is to enhance Europe's international education success and its economic success.

Forty-five nations have now signed on to this plan, including all 25 members of the European Union. Most of them have adopted a structure that awards a three-year bachelor's degree and two-year master's degrees. While transforming higher education in Europe, these reforms will be serious challenges for graduate admissions professionals in the United States.

Admissions upheaval

According to a 2006 survey by the Council of Graduate Schools, American graduate schools are making strides toward improving their admission and enrollment of Bologna-era students with three-year degrees. Between 2005 and 2006, the percentage of survey respondents who said that the three-year degree was "not an issue" on their campuses rose from 41 percent to 56 percent. The respondents who said they can evaluate these prospective students increased from

71 percent in 2005 to 82 percent in 2006. The percentage who said they would not consider admission of Bologna-era students fell from 29 percent to 18 percent.

U.S. graduate schools are still divided about how to evaluate these credentials. "The traditional approach is that a student must demonstrate the equivalent of a traditional four-year undergraduate degree," says Suzanne Ortega, vice provost and dean of the graduate school at the University of Washington. "But some universities have decided to let academic departments make the decision about the adequacy of students' preparation. Some are trying to use their own knowledge of universities and educational systems to create standards country by country. Others look at each student individually."

It's difficult to craft a Bologna-era admissions policy. "It's an oversimplification to say that there's a single European three-year degree," says Margit Schatzman, president of Educational Credential Evaluators. "All European degrees aren't the same. There are 45 different jurisdictions all implementing the Bologna process in different ways."

Up for debate now is the importance of the traditional undergraduate liberal arts education as a foundation for doctoral study. "I think that conversation will continue for a while," says Ortega.

Will the best and the brightest want to learn in Europe?

"European schools are turning out bachelor's degrees in three years, master's degrees in two more, and Ph.D.s in as few as three years beyond that," says Richard Wheeler, dean of the graduate college at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "That poses a very serious competitive issue for our whole system of education. We feel the pressure."

With a working European credit transfer system and a diploma supplement, Europeans are busy making it easier for students to move from country to country and to bring their credentials with them. Many schools now teach some or all of their pro-

grams in English. Will that entice American students to pack their bags and head for three-year degrees in European universities?

David Ward, president of the American Council on Education, says that the impact of the Bologna reforms has been minimal so far in this country. "We used to attract almost three quarters of all foreign students. That percentage has declined to perhaps two thirds, and I think the decline will continue."

Ward believes it's too soon to know all the consequences. "This is not a one-year story; it's a ten-year story," he says. "We'll have to see how it develops. I think the idea of greater competition in Europe is likely to make American universities

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better. We've got a very competitive, entrepreneurial value system, especially in the top 200 or so American research universities. We're not going to lose out."

The Bologna Process is a prominent feature of the broader picture of increasing international competition for the best students. "For years, there have been three-year degrees all over the world," says Schatzman. "Should we only be talking about the Europeans? Shouldn't we also revisit what they're doing in India, China, and Australia?"

Continued on page 73



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Castagnera, *Continued from page 52*

"Classes average 12 students," he claims. Numerous clinics put students in contact with "patients" early and often. "Even our full-timers still practice," he notes. Tuition hovers around \$13,000 and is raised only "every four to five years." The student body is evenly split between full- and part-timers, and the average age at matriculation is 32. "The students are truly diverse on every level," he adds.

Whom does he hope they'll serve? "It's not true that there are too many lawyers," Coyne explains. "There aren't enough lawyers. That's because a new wave of immigrants are occupying towns like Lowell and Lawrence, which once were among the Commonwealth's most prosper-

ous manufacturing towns, before their industries went offshore. I got a call just today complaining that mortgage companies are preying on Hispanic immigrants."

"There are plenty of lawyers representing corporate interests. But new communities can't afford \$150 an hour and up. My students will make good livings, better than their parents, and not charge those kinds of fees. We see a win-win. Our grads return to their communities and still make a better living," Coyne adds. I ask if the model really works. "We have a few disappointing stories, but nearly all our graduates go into small, local firms," he asserts.

A January *Greentree Gazette* e-news article by Florence Kizza seems to

confirm that Drexel and MSL are marching to very different drummers. Kizza quotes Dean Larry Kramer of the Stanford Law School saying, "International law, particularly law governing private actors in the international arena, has moved from the periphery to the center, and law schools have been scrambling to adapt." As Kizza claims, Stanford too may represent the "The Changing Face of Law School."

If so, then it's a Janus face, with Drexel and MSL forming the face that looks closer to home—at the local businesses and communities. "Mostly though, we still have about 180 law schools, all trying to be Harvard," Coyne says in closing. ■

Feinberg, *Continued from page 54*

Lessons to learn

"We need to address our competitive disadvantages," says Ward. "Europeans charge much lower tuition, whereas in the United States, tuition is growing. After 9/11, there is evidence of a somewhat suspicious attitude towards foreign students. We need to seem more like a fair, friendly country. Some universities do a much better job than others in terms of orientation and connecting international students to American students."

Graduate admissions professionals need to study the Europeans' recruit-

ing strategies. "They go to India, Indonesia, and China and use state money to recruit students," Ward says. "We rely on individual recruitment. Our institutions need to join together to do collective recruiting to reach out to foreign students in their countries of origin."

Ortega, of the University of Washington, suggests that the European focus on reducing barriers to education is noteworthy. "We need an appropriate response to the three-year degree and common guidelines for admission. We must redefine what

kind of preparation a student needs to be successful. We should consider ways to pool our expertise and create robust academic offerings. We may need consortia models of education that are transnational."

Wheeler, of the University of Illinois, says, "It may be that as we look at what's happening in Europe, we'll decide that our way of doing it is better. Or we might regularize our processes and shave some time off the time to degree, especially for doctoral programs in this country. I vote for the latter." ■

Kainz, *Continued from page 58*

or native to the campus network.

Today's learning management system, LMS 1.0, reflects the attempt by campuses to manage the information about students, their courses, and their activity in the classroom. But in the Web 2.0 world where data openly flows between systems and around the globe in order to deliver an interactive experience, the protective reef of the academic institution ceases to exist.

As a result, intellectual property can be a touchy issue. Each of the eight tools employed in the hypothetical environmental studies example is

accompanied by its own license that can potentially lay claim to the intellectual property. Merely by using the tools, the faculty member and students enter into eight different legal agreements. Those licenses free the software provider or service provider of any damages related to material hosted within or processed by the software. Furthermore, tools hosted in different nations, regions, or states involve the laws of that area.

Academic protection of any content in such an open environment is murky at best. Legal questions around Fair Use,

TEACH, FERPA, to name a few, become exponentially more complex.

Framework for discovery and collaboration

Despite legal questions regarding data, the fact is that the web is the social and discovery platform of our students. As LMS 1.0 becomes a legacy system, we'll be wrestling with whether we should remain on the legacy path or re-think what an LMS might be. It's likely we'll decide LMS should be about the learning experience, not the management of data. ■