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Should metropolitan universities compete for technical assistance grants? What kind of commitment is involved? Can the ethnic population of a metropolitan community be an asset in work abroad? How can a metropolitan university develop a productive partnership with an eastern European university? Should a traditional, research-oriented eastern European university embrace some of the defining criteria of a metropolitan university? These are some of the questions addressed in this article analyzing Central Connecticut State University's and The Technical University of Wroclaw's paths to partnership in the field of technical assistance through training in management and market economics education.

Partners in Progress

The Partners Placed in Context

Should metropolitan universities get involved in international technical assistance projects? How does this fit their mission? When its departments and institutes do not have enough money for basic needs, how can it justify spending money on foreign projects? Why should a university in Connecticut spend money educating Poles—in effect, becoming an instrument of post-Cold War foreign policy—when it has plenty of problems at home? Isn't this a frivolous distraction from our primary responsibilities of teaching, scholarship, and community service? Isn't this type of work more suitable for a traditional research university? What can American "experts" really know about Polish problems? How can a metropolitan university expect to assist Polish people and institutions in their transition to a market economy? Is all the time and effort really worth it?

The answers to these questions reveal a great deal about universities as they carve out new roles, and about the potential and capabilities of metropolitan universities in particular. These answers also compel metropolitan universities to take stock of themselves—their faculties, their foreign partners, their fundamental missions. But to understand the answers to these questions, the whole subject of "Partners in Progress" must first be put in perspective.

The Technical University of Wroclaw (TUWr) was founded on August 24, 1945, by a group of academics, mostly from Lwow in what is now Ukraine. On that day, the city of Wroclaw (Breslau before 1945), located in the Lower Silesian region of southwestern Poland, was still burning from the last siege of World War II. Despite the devastation that destroyed some 75 percent of the city's buildings, the academics found intact in Wroclaw the buildings and equipment left from the Technische Hochschule Breslau, founded in 1910. Classes began on November 15, 1945.

During the ensuing forty-five years, the Technical University of Wroclaw emerged as one of the top-rate engineering schools in eastern Europe. Its faculty developed close ties with other Warsaw Pact colleagues and limited affiliations with western peers. Their emphasis was on theoretical research, on meeting the research and employment needs of Polish heavy industries for engineering talent. The antithesis of a metropolitan or urban university, the TUWr faculty and administrators tended to remain within the confines of their university community, staying largely aloof from the problems and needs of Wroclaw itself.

Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), on the other hand, evolved over the course of nearly a century and a half since 1849, when it was founded as the New Britain Normal School. During that time it added business, technology, and a healthy dose of liberal arts disciplines to its curriculum. Its evolution was not unlike that of other institutions with normal school roots.

While the Technical University of Wroclaw labored under the constraints of communist centralized planning and control, Central Connecticut was free to broaden and expand its activities and to redefine its mission in response to its community's needs. Part of that redefinition eventually involved development of close ties to Connecticut's Polish-American community. This linkage was virtually inevitable because CCSU, for much of its history, has served as a vehicle for upward mobility and access to the mainstreams of American life for large numbers of Polish emigres to Connecticut. Perhaps 25 percent of the university's metropolitan population are of Polish descent. In 1974 the Polish-American community of Connecticut requested, and the state's legislature mandated, establishment of a Polish Studies Program on the CCSU campus. This close university/community tie thus became a fixed element of the university's mission.

Since 1974, under the energetic leadership of Professor Stanislaus Blejwas, professor of history and director of Polish studies, CCSU's Polish Studies Program broadened and strengthened these "town and gown" ties, successfully raising money to attract important Polish and Polish-American lecturers to its New Britain campus and establishing a Polish Book Collection and Polish Archives in the CCSU Library. Long before the term "metropolitan university" became popular in academic circles, CCSU's Polish Studies Program had satisfied many of the defining criteria for the term.

Laying the Groundwork in the 1980s

In the 1980s in Wroclaw, when martial law was imposed and conditions for ordinary citizens worsened considerably, both the city and the Technical University began to develop new, defining characteristics. Its population, largely relocated by the Soviets from areas known today as Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine (formerly Poland's eastern districts), stimulated Wroclaw to become a hotbed of resistance to the communist regime and an important center for the new Solidarity trade union. "Fighting Solidarity" was born there. During the years of resistance,

Wroclaw Solidarity provided the opposition movement with precious currency that had been withdrawn from state-controlled banks just before Solidarity's bank accounts were frozen nationwide. And the Technical University provided a good number of those who supported, if not led, the resistance. During this troubled decade, when it was illegal to do so, fully one-half of TUWr faculty paid their monthly dues to Solidarity.

Today, in what might loosely be called a Polish version of "metropolitan university," the Rektor of the Technical University, Andrzej Wiszniewski, Department of Electrical Engineering; the Vojevode of Wroclaw, Janusz Zaleski, Department of Mechanical and Power Engineering at TUWr; and Tomasz Wojcik, President of NSZZ Solidarity of Lower Silesia, Department of Chemistry, TUWr, share common academic and political protest roots. They are in the process of developing, slowly but surely, the philosophy of a "metropolitan university" for TUWr in their region of Poland.

During the 1980s, CCSU also underwent significant change. In 1983 it was officially recognized as a university. In 1987 it was designated Connecticut's Center for Excellence in International Education. It began to deepen its involvement in metropolitan life: it established an Entrepreneurial Support Center to assist in small business development and a Center for Industrial and Engineering Technology to bring the latest technological advances to local manufacturers. It became a focal point for discussion and planning for a regional approach to analyzing and solving the serious problems that confronted the citizens and towns of Connecticut's capital region.

At the same time it began to take on the characteristics of a metropolitan university, reflecting the values and principles of its community and using its community as an educational laboratory, classroom, and resource. In its international activities, the university strove to build upon its unique bonds with the Polish-American community—to take careful advantage of it in the positive sense while also giving something positive back in return.

Central Connecticut focused its first international efforts primarily upon matters of curriculum and faculty development. Goals for fund-raising and sponsored funding emphasized projects that would make students more aware of the international scene and enhance or develop the international expertise of faculty. An important secondary effort concentrated on making the university's international resources available to its community—to business, schools, and community organizations. CCSU sought, and won, donations or grants contributing to these primary objectives. It intentionally avoided becoming involved in technical assistance grants and contracts in foreign countries because, as lucrative as these might be, they might quickly become a dominant factor in development efforts and distract—as well as divert precious resources—from CCSU's fundamental mission of teaching, scholarship, and community service.

But CCSU made an exception in the case of Poland. Its strong linkages with the Polish-American community, special expertise in Polish

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Studies, and, above all, the encouragement and support it received from Polish-Americans in Connecticut's capital region—the metropolitan region that it serves—persuaded CCSU to embark upon a major initiative in Poland. This decision placed it in the competitive arena with scores of major research universities, a fact that worried some faculty and administrators.

The Creation of the Partnership

Prior to 1989, CCSU faculty and members of Connecticut's Polish-American community provided significant personal support both to Solidarity in Poland and to individual Poles. This commitment to support Polish people continues in the region. Visitors to Polish-owned travel agencies in New Britain will be struck by the huge piles of boxes ready to be shipped "home." But, even in those difficult days, the community and the university decided not to support existing political institutions in Poland because they did not reflect our country's democratic values and principles. Poland was Communist-led, Soviet-directed, and governed under the strictures of martial law and its authoritarian aftermath. CCSU and the community supported people and families there with ties to the community but held the Polish government at arm's length and were wary of establishing close ties to major Polish universities.

Then came the historic Roundtable Discussions of 1989, which paved the way for democratic elections and market reforms in Poland. Coming at nearly the same time as the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the crumbling of the Soviet empire, the discussions offered hope for fundamental changes, ones that were consistent with TUWr's aspirations and the values and principles of both CCSU and Connecticut's Polish-American community. With the dawn of hope came a significant community desire to "help" Polish people as well.

Both TUWr and CCSU were poised and uniquely suited for partnership despite their separate, independent evolutions in the 1980s. The process by which they found each other began in the spring of 1990 when a London industrial consultant, impressed by the CCSU Polish Studies Program, urged CCSU to initiate and fund a western business studies program in Wroclaw. It culminated, in May of 1990, in the visits of CCSU delegations to Wroclaw and TUWr, among other local universities. During these visits the decision was made to focus on Wroclaw and to establish a partnership with TUWr.

The goal of the Polish side was to obtain practical, not theoretical, training in management, marketing, and human relations. On the American side, the goal was to provide training in the operations of market economies with an emphasis on practical programs of immediate impact. Through extensive discussions, and after hurdling numerous cultural barriers, the new partners agreed upon an initial introductory program called the Institute for Business Studies (IBS). Originally funded by contributions from Connecticut's Polish-American community and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, IBS is now a regular, ongoing program of the CCSU School of Business and the TUWr.

The IBS, important though it is, was just a beginning. In the fall of 1990 the Agency for International Development issued its Management Training and Economics Education Request for Proposals. With no assurance for success, CCSU sent a five-person delegation to Wroclaw in December of 1990 to work on a grant application. This is the moment when "help" was defined and both institutions had to face important questions.

For TUWr, such an activity would force it to look beyond its campus confines to institutions and people in the city of Wroclaw and in the region of Lower Silesia. It would have to strike up new partnerships beyond the walls of its campus. It would take up valuable time of key faculty, especially those fluent in English. It entailed moving beyond theoretical research to practical applications in everyday life. It would inevitably identify TUWr with the market economic reforms just beginning in Poland.

TUWr's decision, interestingly, began a slow process of institutional change as well. Many of the activities in which metropolitan universities like CCSU are involved—indeed, take for granted—are quite new to more tradition-bound, insular eastern European universities. As the partnership developed, TUWr, of necessity, began to look beyond its campus boundaries, to reach out to members of its own community, to become increasingly involved in joint activities of the kind routinely done by American metropolitan universities. TUWr also had the luxury of adopting those practices and community-oriented activities that could be used in Poland and of ignoring those which were inapplicable.

At the Technical University there was no hesitation. Already it had established branch campuses in the three main cities of Lower Silesia; already it was identified with the market economic reforms in Poland by its strong support of Solidarity. Its professors were eager to adapt practical applications to their course offerings. They would benefit from new initiatives with American professors. And as an institution, TUWr was eager to contribute to the monumental changes just beginning in Poland.

For CCSU there was no hesitation either. As a metropolitan university with an emphatic international dimension, undertaking practical work in Poland made sense. In many ways, the project was a natural outgrowth of its Polish Studies Program and its close work with the Polish-American community. Indeed, that community provided a significant reservoir of management and manufacturing talent on which its business programs could draw. And the program certainly encouraged the spread of market economic knowledge and practice in Poland, one of the goals the university shared with its Polish-American community.

More insistent were the questions. "Why are we doing this?" "Would it be a distraction?" "Should we, a medium-sized metropolitan university, even compete for technical assistance grants?" "How could we afford to do this when our budget was shrinking and we could not adequately fund basic library enhancements and academic needs?" The answers to these

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questions required CCSU to take a hard look at the role of international education at a metropolitan university.

In fact, CCSU knew from prior international activities that its faculty benefited tremendously from experiences abroad. They brought these experiences and associations back to their classrooms, infusing their academic programs with fresh perspectives and new insights that benefited students profoundly. Rather than a distraction, projects abroad had a direct and clear benefit to students in Connecticut. The matter of affordability, of spending Connecticut tax dollars to educate people abroad, was mooted by the funds provided by U.S. A.I.D.'s grant. Those dollars covered the university's costs and reimbursed faculty for their academic contribution. The obvious response to the question of "dare we compete?" was "why not?" Of course there were risks, and there was no assurance of success, but the potential benefits made the risks worth taking.

The die was cast. The December 1990 visit produced five additional projects: in-house Executive Training at KGHM Copper Mining and Smelting Industrial Group, a 38,600-employee holding company in Lubin with nineteen subsidiaries; short courses in Fundamentals of Banking for Polish bankers servicing some three million people in Lower Silesia; Small Business Development for would-be Polish entrepreneurs and enterprise managers; Proposal Writing and Grantsmanship for Wroclaw universities and artistic and cultural organizations; and Economics Education for up to 1400 NSZZ Solidarity workers' council heads. These projects, as well as the IBS, were funded by the successful AID grant application. In the past two years these projects have received, through grants and donations, over two million dollars of support.

Fruits of the Partnership

This partnership has changed and helped both universities. The management training and economics education project has brought Central Connecticut even closer to its Polish-American community. Some one dozen Polish-American business people, manufacturers, and public officials have participated in training sessions in Wroclaw. The effort has permitted Central Connecticut to reach out to an increasing number of Connecticut corporations and firms interested in doing business in Poland. Twenty-five per cent of CCSU's School of Business faculty have been involved in this project. Three of the university's undergraduate schools—Arts and Sciences, Business, and Technology—contribute faculty expertise. The project has helped to establish Central Connecticut's reputation in its community as a dynamic metropolitan university of recognized quality. It has made CCSU students and faculty alike more aware of the daunting problems of people in transition from a command to a demand economy and from the absolutes of a totalitarian regime to the challenges and untidiness of democracy.

In Wroclaw the project has encouraged TUWr to accelerate its activities in Lower Silesia and to develop new, close ties with local government officials, enterprises, banks, and business people. It has

increased greatly student and faculty interest in learning English. With AID funds, it has provided a new microcomputer laboratory for faculty and students and led to the dedication of an impressive TUWr facility to continuing education-type workshops and short courses in market economics, communication, and western business studies. The TUWr is beginning to be viewed by its own community as a regional training resource of quality. According to a recent independent evaluation, TUWr faculty have been energized as western attitudes toward work and "results" have taken root. It has begun to develop ties to outside funding sources. It has established a record of competence and efficiency as it plans aggressively for its future. And the partnership has helped to transplant the values and philosophy of metropolitan universities into fertile soil in Poland. The seeds have taken root, and higher education in Wroclaw is experiencing dramatic changes as a result.

Conclusion

At the outset of this article, we raised a number of questions about whether metropolitan universities should become involved in the technical assistance "grants game." To us the answer is clear, and it is in the affirmative in the case of Central Connecticut State University.

Metropolitan universities should get involved in international technical assistance projects only if they are willing to make a complete commitment to the project; if they have the requisite faculty and community talent to do the job well; and if they have an institutional commitment to international education. CCSU's Center for Excellence in International Education is an excellent example of this kind of commitment. Involvement does not mean spending university money on foreign partners, other than the initial investment it must make to compete effectively for grants.

As for the question of whether a university should become an instrument of American foreign policy, the answer depends upon whether the principles and values of the university and its metropolitan community are consistent with the aims and thrust of the foreign policy. In post-Communist Poland, the project, which supported the American foreign policy of encouraging democratic practices and a market economy, was not a frivolous distraction. In fact, it was something encouraged and supported by CCSU's metropolitan community.

Metropolitan universities that shrink from competition with research universities may sell themselves short. In the case of Poland, the need and, indeed, the demand was for practical, not theoretical, training. Applied research and "how you do it in the real world" should be the bailiwick of metropolitan universities. Contemporary Polish problems circa 1990 ff. were largely caused by the failures of the command system and the effects of the "shock therapy" of economic reforms then being introduced. Since the goal was introduction of a market economy, Americans should have a great deal to offer.

Is all the time and effort really worth it? There is no quick and easy answer to this question. Since such projects are large and involve many things that have not been done before, challenges to the state "system" are

inevitable. Stresses and strains are placed on business officers. Inordinate demands can be placed on some few individuals. The commitment of time and effort is considerable if metropolitan universities do not have full-blown grants offices as part of their ongoing operation. However, the rewards are great. The appreciation of one's foreign partners is tremendous. The effect on teaching faculty is palpable. The pride one finds in the metropolitan community is genuine. All in all, the project can be one of those important endeavors that can make a university distinctive; it can provide a new niche and significant opportunities for broader activities. Because it can be overwhelming, the project can also challenge one's prudence and sense of proportion.

Reflecting upon two years of partnership, we have found that institutional differences and distinctiveness are strengths rather than weaknesses. CCSU, as a metropolitan university with a strong international dimension and a tradition of quality instruction and applied research, is not the Technical University of Wroclaw. TUWr, with a strong tradition of theoretical research and commitment to the "pure" sciences and technologies, is not Central Connecticut. One's weaknesses are the other's strengths. The partnership works. It is sure to continue and to grow, and to benefit faculty and students from both countries.