UNDERGRADUATE INITIATIVE  
of the  
COMMITTEE ON GLOBAL THOUGHT  
Columbia University  

REPORT 2006-07  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Goals and Process

Goals:

• To explore what every student graduating from any university in any country needs to know about the world in the 21st century.
• To suggest ways to acquire this knowledge without upending or overburdening existing curricula.
• To make concrete proposals for pilot programs to create Global Columbia models that can be tested here and at universities in the US and elsewhere.

The proposals offered here were developed over the course of a year through broad consultative discussions with more than 120 students and alumni, 40 Columbia faculty and administrators, and 40 faculty from other East Coast schools, as well as through an examination of what Columbia and other universities are already doing to globalize undergraduate education.

A quickly reached consensus on the goals of global thinking stressed that it is essential to:

• Learn about real people in real places
• Link societies by their connections and commonalities as much as by their differences
• Integrate general issues of globalization, past and present, into the study of specific people and places in the world
• Define the world to include one’s own country, in our case, the United States
• Take advantage of cross-disciplinary approaches to break down conventional academic barriers
• Emphasize experiential as well as classroom learning
• Foster communication and contact through language training, internships, and international collaboration, both here and abroad.
Summary of the proposals

I. Global Columbia, a Clearinghouse of Information: connect, magnify, and enhance the existing resources at Columbia, so as not to waste time reinventing the global wheel.

1. Create a virtual curriculum in global thought for undergraduates, which would first list all relevant courses, regardless of department or school, on a single web site; then work to enhance and magnify intellectual links among them.

2. Develop a network of communication that reaches out to undergraduates by multiple means to let them know that information about global courses and related activities can be found on the unified web site.

II. Global Thinking Across the Curriculum: emphasize pedagogical strategies rather than specific content in order to incorporate global material in the widest possible contexts.

1. Develop and disseminate pedagogical strategies to incorporate the world into existing courses. These include expanding global perspective through student assignments, developing substantive units for instructors to use in disciplinary courses, and other such “incorporative” strategies.

2. Create a network of faculty and graduate and postdoctoral instructors as Global Teaching Fellows to take advantage of the teaching talent on campus and maximize the effect of their interest and experience in teaching global thought.

3. Consider creating a small number of specially designed courses that promote global thinking, both as experiments in themselves and also to develop units and approaches that might be exported to other contexts.

4. Increase opportunities for virtual and actual collaboration in research and learning, especially for students whose fields of study do not easily accommodate the incorporation of additional material on global topics.

5. Provide better and earlier advising on language study for undergraduates, particularly for the lesser taught languages for which Columbia’s programs are justly famous.

III. Experiential Learning: support a range of opportunities for direct engagement with people and societies different from our own, both internationally and in global New York.

1. Encourage opportunities to learn, work, and act in the world through study abroad, internships, and research.
2. **Expand and enhance international experience on campus**, substantially increasing the number of international undergraduates, diversifying their countries of origin, and greatly expanding the financial aid for scholarships.

IV. **Undergraduate Global Scholars**: develop a pilot program for a small cohort of American and international students as an experiment in blending existing requirements with intensified global content and experience across their undergraduate career.

**Implementation**

1. Establish a faculty-student **Undergraduate Committee on Global Thinking Across the Curriculum** to consider the intellectual and pedagogical aspects of global education, with responsibility for implementing such proposals as the virtual curriculum, the curricular workshops with the Global Teaching Fellows, pedagogical strategies, innovative courses, etc.

2. Facilitate collaboration and cooperation among the relevant offices of the university responsible for experiential learning, such as study abroad, internships, international students, campus activities, and other aspects related to the globalization of undergraduate experience. When appropriate, the Undergraduate Committee could be called on to contribute to this coordination.

3. Develop plans for fundraising and evaluation to support and assess the projects undertaken to produce a *Global Columbia* model for learning and thinking about the world. Here again the university would lead the effort, with the cooperation of the Undergraduate Committee.