

THE
FORUM
ON EDUCATION
ABROAD

Constructing Effective Brazilian – U.S. Partnerships

Report on the 2013 Forum Survey to its Members and Subsequent Dialogue with International Officers of Brazilian Institutions at the FAUBAI (Association of Brazilian Higher Education Institutions, Offices for International Relations) Conference

Introduction

In April 2013, the Forum on Education Abroad invited member institutions to complete a survey about their experience and interest in partnering with Brazilian institutions. The goals of the survey were to:

- Identify strengths and challenges
- Explore approaches to tuition and language issues
- Make recommendations to facilitate stronger partnerships

The findings of this survey were then presented at a workshop for international officers of Brazilian higher education institutions at the annual FAUBAI conference on April 27 in Natal, Brazil (<http://www.sri.ufrn.br/faubai/index-ENG.php>). As part of the workshop, participants shared their experience of partnering with U.S. institutions.

The first section of this report presents the Forum survey findings. The second section of this report summarizes the key points made by Brazilian and U.S. presenters and participants¹ on the challenges and successful practices in Brazilian – U.S. Partnerships.

¹ Co-presenting at the workshop were: Arlene Jackson (American Association of State Colleges and Universities); Fanta Aw (NAFSA, American University); Ricardo Alencar (Pontifical Catholic University- Rio de Janeiro); and David Shallenberger (Professor of International Education at SIT Graduate Institute and representing the Forum on Education Abroad).

Part I

Findings from the Forum Survey on U.S. Partnerships with Brazilian Institutions

62 institutional representatives completed the survey, and follow-up interviews were conducted with eleven individuals. The following findings include representative comments from surveys and follow-up interviews, which are shown in *italics*.

Reviewing Experience: Perspectives of U.S.-Based Partnered Institutions

50% of those responding to the survey already partner with Brazilian institutions; of that group, 13 (41%) expressed an interest in contacting potential new partners.

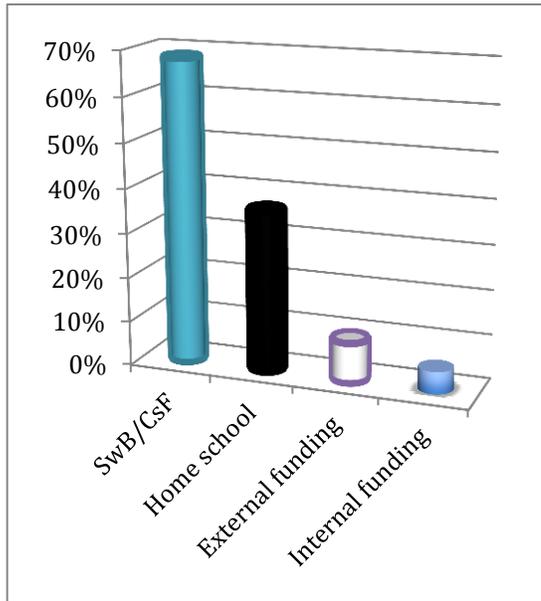
Strengths of Partnership:

- **Collaboration** between faculty on research and other projects – and by extension, institutional collaboration:
 - *Our professors find excellent partners for research projects in their field. Professor X went to grad school with Professor Y of Brazil and they've been working together for years.*
 - *What started out as a limited project between two researchers has expanded, and now there are more professors from other departments from around the region forming a consortium – and graduate students are involved.*
 - *The few faculty who are part of this collaboration are welcoming and enthusiastic – I just wish there were more!*
- Most of the **Brazilian students attending U.S. institutions** are intellectually strong, fun, fluent in English and fully engaged in their university experience.
- **U.S. American students in Brazil** come back with valuable new learning, even if they were nervous about traveling there before leaving the U.S.

Challenges in Partnerships:

- **Resources and funding were often quite limited**, resulting in lean staff to manage partnerships and inability to offer a home tuition arrangement that would allow Brazilian students from public universities to attend for free (since public universities in Brazil do not charge tuition). For more detail on tuition arrangements see below.
 - *Our resources are limited. We cannot offer free tuition to Brazilian students.*
 - *Budgets have been cut. We are a public university and can offer reduced*

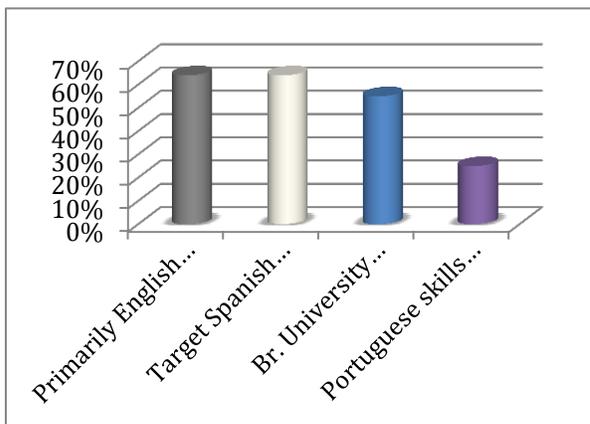
public institutions. Respondents to the survey were asked how they handle the tuition of Brazilian students: through funding from the Science without Borders program; through a “home institution” tuition arrangement for exchange partners; through external funding; or through internal funding. The following chart presents their responses.



It is important to note that, for some schools, the only Brazilian students they have come through the Science without Borders program (that is, they do not have active exchange agreements). Most of those that do have signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) follow home-school tuition policies and seek inbound-outbound parity, which is not always easy given the greater number of potential inbound over outbound students; these schools have often found creative ways to manage these exchanges. U.S. public universities spoke of tuition discounts as their main approach to

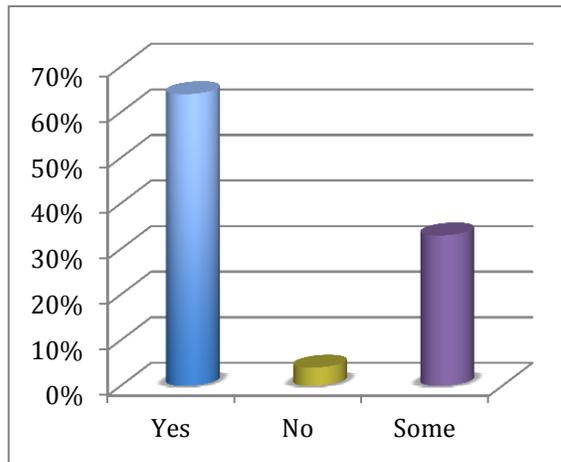
tuition imbalances.

Language: U.S. Students to Brazil: About half of the respondents (44%) that are currently partnering with Brazilian universities do not offer Portuguese classes.



Their students deal with language issues in the following ways: entering one of the few English-language programs in Brazil; building on their Spanish language competence; taking intensive Portuguese language classes at the host Brazilian university, or developing their language skills in another way.

Language: Brazilian Students in the U.S.



In response to the question, “*Have Brazilian students at your institution had sufficient English language competency to enter your classes?*” respondents answered as depicted in the following chart; the options were:

- Generally yes
- Generally no
- Some yes, some no

78% of the institutions have language support for Brazilian students. Of these, two-thirds offer an intensive English

language program; other supports include language partners, bridging courses and intensive programs for students with low TOEFL scores.

Perspectives of Institutions Not Yet Partnering with Brazilian Institutions

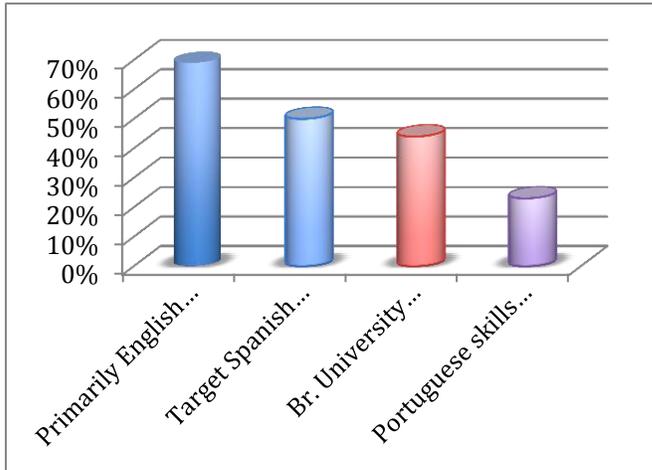
50% of the survey respondents do not yet partner with Brazilian institutions, of which 76% are interested in potential new Brazilian partners, now or in the future.

The kinds of institutions represented included research universities, large public universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges, with and without 4-year partners. They were interested in a wide variety of disciplines, and in both undergraduate and graduate exchange with one institution interested in solely graduate exchange).

The type of institution sought for partnership varied widely: public or private, large or small, liberal arts or vocational; in addition, some schools were looking for partners outside of Rio and São Paulo, or in rural locations, while others looked to the traditional locations.

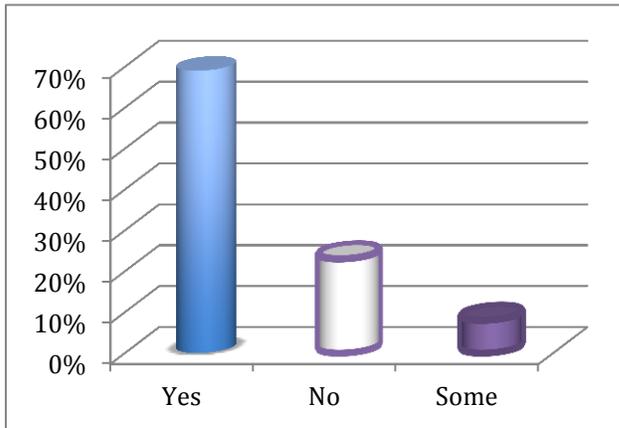
Tuition Imbalance. While not currently partnering with Brazilian institutions, these schools do have international students and partners, and 95% expect that their current practices regarding tuition for international students will apply to Brazilian students.

Language: U.S. Students Studying in Brazil.



Only 17% of these institutions offer Portuguese language classes. The other 83% anticipate that their students will meet potential language needs in the ways shown on the chart.

Language: Brazilian Students in the U.S. While these schools do not have active partnerships with Brazilian institutions, they have had experience with Brazilian students. Their experience of these students' English language fluency has been largely positive, and quite similar to the experience of those schools already partnering with Brazilian institutions.



In response to the question: *"If you have had Brazilian students at your institution, have they sufficient English language competency to enter your classes?"* respondents chose one of the following answers in the proportion displayed on the chart:

- Generally yes
- Generally no
- Some yes, some no

Three-quarters of these institutions have language support for international students; of that group, 83% have intensive English language programs on or near the campus. Other supports include language buddies and English Composition classes.

Moving On From Here: New Partnerships, New Practices

Of those who do not yet partner with Brazilian institutions, 76% would like to build such a partnership. Those who are not currently interested had a variety of reasons specific to their institutional context, such as not having administrative capacity, not teaching Portuguese, or having a focus elsewhere.

Lessons and Conclusions:

- There is much interest in developing partnerships with Brazilian institutions.
 - Science without Borders has given impetus to partnerships, but this program is not the only way to work together. U.S. institutions that have not had any connection to Brazil are now enjoying having Brazilian students and are interested in exploring more partnership options.
- There are concerns among U.S. institutions, some of which are more easily addressed than others.
 - Some issues are out of institutional control: visas, strikes, the particular interests or politics of potential partners (resources, location, discipline area, type of institution, etc.), the elections of rectors.
 - The language and communication issues are easier to address, perhaps in collaboration with other Brazilian and U.S. institutions.
- There are excellent institutions in both countries that are relatively less well known.
 - Private and public institutions have very different characteristics in the two countries. Sometimes, the best partner for a Brazilian public university is a U.S. private one.
 - If you each fit each other's desired profiles, a great partnership can emerge.
 - Exchange is not the only way to partner. There are excellent examples of "internationalization at home" that involve global partnerships. These shared activities can often be an important first step, possibly leading to full exchange.
 - Shared research projects
 - Training of faculty
 - Paired courses
 - Guest lectures on campus
 - Study abroad site

Part II

Workshop Summary: “Um Guia para a Construção de Parcerias com Universidades Norte-Americanas”

This report synthesizes the challenges identified during the workshop by Brazilian and U.S. universities in developing and maintaining bilateral partnerships, and suggestions for dealing with those challenges.

Challenges (from greatest to lowest impact)

Each institution is unique, with its own context, limitations, needs and perceptions. The points below are presented in the order of how frequently they were mentioned by institutions, but may not be equally applicable across all institutions.

From the Perspectives of U.S. Institutions	From the Perspectives of Brazilian Institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficult communication.• Limited institutional resources.• Language limitations.• The Science without Borders program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language limitations.• Limited student and institutional resources.• Infrastructure.• Lack of U.S. student interest.• Limited knowledge in the U.S. regarding quality of Brazilian institutions.• Credit transfer complications.• Lack of engagement in distance education options. Primary focus on money.

The table above shows similarities in these two perspectives of challenges around such issues as language and resources. From the U.S. institutional perspective, the main challenge noted was difficulty in communication. U.S. institutions have sometimes found that Brazilian partners will not respond to email, or will be slow with follow-up information. U.S. institutions may feel unsure of Brazilian commitment. Brazilian institutions noted most frequently that language limitations were a main challenge to partnerships. Few Brazilian students and professors speak English. Few U.S. students and professors speak Portuguese. These limitations necessarily limit the possibilities. Language limitations were also noted as a challenge by U.S. institutions. Few U.S. students speaking Portuguese and few Brazilian institutions offering classes in English results in relatively fewer U.S. students opting to study at Brazilian universities.

Both U.S. and Brazilian institutions found limited resources to be problematic. For U.S. institutions, small staff, tightened budgets, and multiple responsibilities and priorities limit the time and energy that can be put into developing and maintaining partnerships, particularly when they are complicated by these other factors. Brazilian institutions find that partner institutions in other countries (in Europe, for example) have no tuition fees, and that tuition at U.S. institutions makes them too expensive for Brazilian students. In addition, Brazilian international offices have limited resources. Related to this, Brazilian institutions have limited housing resources for incoming international students. Finding adequate housing in Brazil for international students is challenging. Very few Brazilian institutions have dormitories.

U.S. institutions find that the Science without Border program offers its own set of complications, such as administrative glitches, students wishing to transfer to another college or university upon arrival in Brazil, and finding courses that fit the student and his or her degree area. For example, undergraduate medical or dental students from Brazil, attending a U.S. university find that related courses are only available at the graduate level. It should be noted that, while Science without Borders is highly influential at the moment, Brazilian institutional representatives noted that they were looking to exchanges that moved beyond Science without Borders; many U.S. universities agree, though they have found the Science without Borders program to be a valuable entry point into U.S.-Brazilian exchanges.

Brazilian institutions noted other challenges. For example, they find a lack of interest among U.S. students. Relatively fewer U.S. students want to come to Brazil than vice versa, threatening reciprocal and balanced exchanges. Limited knowledge in the U.S. of the quality of Brazilian institutions means that potential U.S. partners may not be able to assess Brazilian institutions in order to find the right match.

Brazilian institutions noted complications in transferring credit. Students returning to Brazil have difficulty getting credit for their studies in U.S. institutions for a variety of reasons. These reasons include a lack of explicit articulation agreements, changes in student plans (from those that were pre-approved) after arrival at the host institution.

Another challenge noted by Brazilian institutions was a lack of engagement in distance education options. While distance education might help (and some institutions are exploring these options), creative solutions are generally not being pursued.

Finally, Brazilian institutions noted that many U.S. institutions seem to be focusing on international students as a source of income, and not for the other benefits of exchange, such as the development of international competencies of faculty and students. This is disheartening to potential Brazilian partners.

Practices and Suggested Solutions to Challenges

In spite of these challenges, institutions in both countries have considered or found solutions for some of the concerns raised. In addition, workshop participants, and survey respondents who were surveyed before the conference identified possible approaches.

- **Institutional representatives on both sides should seek to understand the other's culture.** Brazil, as a large and diverse country, has a range of cultural practices and understanding. Cultural values around time, negotiations, and communication may reflect differences between a high-context, collectivist orientation and low-context, individualist values. One cannot, however, make the leap to assume that all Brazilian (or U.S.) institutions fall into these broad categories.

When asked about their suggestions regarding concerns about difficulties in communication and uncertainty about the commitment of the Brazilian partner, workshop participants mentioned the following indicators:

- When physically present, notice the body language of the Brazilian partner; even if she or he will not directly tell you of lack of interest, their facial expressions will carry the true message.
 - If the Brazilian institution is actively reaching out to you and making time for your visit on their campus, you can assume there is real interest.
 - A conversation about the specific areas of expertise of the two institutions implies a willingness to continue the negotiations.
 - Clarification of expectations regarding these factors (and following through on the clarified and agreed upon norms) can help build strong relationships.
- **Brazilian institutions can increase their visibility and presence.** Several actions were identified that can mitigate the lack of understanding by U.S. institutions of the quality of Brazilian institutions:
 - Have websites in English and better marketing material.
 - Understand the resources that are available (through EducationUSA, AASCU, CAPES, CNPq, the Forum on Education Abroad and other organizations).
 - Be present at annual conferences offered by the Forum and NAFSA, and be active in these organizations.
 - Organize across institutions to share information with potential partners.
 - **In addition, U.S. institutions can avail themselves of information on the CAPES website** (www.capes.gov.br/avaliacao/resultados-de-avaliacao-de-programas) that rates Brazilian programs within universities. Suggestions for

foreign institutions interested in partnering with Brazilian universities can be found on various websites, as well.

- **While having dormitories is very rare in Brazil, several institutions have come up with positive solutions, such as:**
 - The tracking of “sharing houses” in the vicinity.
 - Help by the international office to find housing.
 - Creation of a homestay program, such as the program at PUC-Rio (<http://www.puc-rio.br/ensinopesq/ccci/housing.html>)
 - Matching the vacancies of outgoing students with the needs of incoming students through a “Housing Anywhere” program. (<http://www.housinganywhere.com>)
 - The building of a dorm on a new campus (as at the Universidade do Estado do Amazonas).

- **Tuition imbalances and related financial concerns have been addressed by such approaches as:**
 - The use of a home tuition model in exchanges; based on balance and reciprocity, in this model, students pay their home institution tuition. Brazilian students attending a public university would only need to pay for room and board in the U.S.-based university, since tuition is free to them at their home school. This approach is typically incumbent upon balanced flow, inbound and outbound, but institutions can be flexible, by including faculty exchange or using a three-year window, for example. Most U.S. institutions participating in the Forum survey use this flexible model.
 - With respect to some U.S. institutions being primarily motivated by revenue, it was noted that this is not the principal concern or motivation for many. Again, seeking the best fit is crucial, and one aspect of that fit is financial considerations.

- **Language challenges can be addressed in the following ways, as practiced by some of the universities present:**
 - Offering an intensive “Portuguese for Foreigners” course before foreign students begin their studies. Some universities are even offering this via online methods. Some institutions have created a “Portuguese for Spanish-Speakers” program, allowing more intensive learning.
 - Brazilian universities should consider requiring English for certain Brazilian students (such as those studying International Relations), thereby increasing the overall English competency of the students and faculty of that institution.
 - Using exchange students to teach their languages to each other: Brazilian students teach Portuguese to English-speaking students before their program begins, and vice versa.

- The new “English without Borders” program (www.brasil.gov.br/news/history/2013/03/06/two-million-students-now-have-access-to-the-english-without-borders-program/newsitem_view?set_language=en)
 - Content courses created in English that are linked to both undergraduate and graduate programs.
 - **Enter into linkages carefully, with full consideration of the needs of both institutions.** Making connections can be a complex process that can take time to work through.
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