

“Benchmarking Collaboration” by Dwight F. Burlingame, Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

There are many practical and theoretical challenges that demand multi-approaches and various strategic partnerships for those engaged in nonprofit and philanthropic studies education. As the lines between and among civil society organizations blur and the relationships with government, corporations and other societal actors change; development of collaborative educational models also require innovation.

How do home institutional structures help or hinder exchange and development of international civil society education? As philanthropic and civil society studies education responds to the increasingly global nature of our work, understanding the nature of national and international practices demands the kinds of international and cross-cultural perspectives that is evidenced in many other fields. Through four papers we explore how two multi-institutional collaborations (AIM & BENPHE) have begun to address these issues.

AIM(Arizona, Indiana, Michigan) is a cross US institutional collaboration project between three research and educational Centers with a mission of “working together to unleash new resources and increase understanding of philanthropy across race and cultures.”

BENPHE(Benchmarking Nonprofit Organizations and Philanthropy Educational Programs) has as its goal to “analyze an educational framework that can enhance collaboration between U.S. and European institutions in building integrated educational programs in NPOs, NGOs, and philanthropy.”

This paper explores the work of the AIM Alliance. First, where all the universities programs share and implement work that has been agreed upon under the project; and at the point where each university implements programs that increase and release new resources related to the understanding of philanthropy across cultures and race are explored. Second, successes of programs that are implemented drive the ability to work toward greater collaboration are reviewed. The following logic model will be reviewed as the force that guides sustainability of the AIM collaboration and ways in which the



AIM Alliance Logic  
Model final.doc

model is changing as the Alliance works together . (See attached model)

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Giving and volunteering are core topics in philanthropic and civil society education and as such, are the subject of a significant portion of the research that informs that field. Topics of the research include such questions as who participates with a civil society as a donor or volunteer, in what ways do they participate, what motivates them to do so, and what is the relationship between donors/volunteers and nonprofits. Answering these questions not only builds the theory and literature of philanthropic and civil society studies but also quantifies the state of practice in philanthropy and civil society and supports strategic and sustainable development for the sector and the communities it is committed to build.

The AIM partners (Arizona State University/Indiana University/Grand Valley State University-Michigan) recognize the significance of giving and volunteering research to both the study and the practice of philanthropy and civil society, selecting this topic as the focus of the AIM research agenda. Working within their cross-institutional relationship, three research teams with varied experience with the topic and representing three different geographic areas of the United States reviewed the giving and volunteering literature, assessed the need for a standardized protocol, conducted the research, documented the institutional compromises required for the effort to be successful, and assessed the contribution such collaboration can have to the field.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the collaborative research process through both a review of the literature on this topic and then to apply it to the AIM Giving and Volunteering project. The research was designed to test for the significance of differences in giving and volunteering across the three states. A standard methodology was used. To participate in the standard method, each partner at some level had to adjust their traditional methods. The paper will discuss the adjustments within the context of the methodology using that context to frame the value of the research's rigor and the findings it produced. The methodology included the following:

- Standardized interview protocol by agreeing on one survey instrument, simultaneous survey administration
- Standardized sampling using one telephone call center and having one process for over-sampling, call backs and survey instrument translation
- Standardized procedure for cleaning the data and for creating weights by having all AIM partners adopt the IU data cleaning procedure and by having one organization create the weights
- Collective analysis by IU staff with particular expertise in preferred statistical tests

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In the definition of the research framework the European team of the BENPHE project, which includes the University of Bologna, Oxford Brookes University and ERSTA College in Stockholm - has taken into account the big divide between the long-term rooted American traditions of scientific philanthropy and the differentiated European traditions deeply rooted in the framework of national civil societies, in which philanthropy has different denotative and connotative meanings. A first evidence is that in the European countries- in the last 15-20 years - the growth in nonprofit and non-governmental organizations has been accompanied by growth in the number of higher education and training programs. By choosing to focus on structured training programs, offered mainly by universities, the partners recognized the opportunity to consolidate the current consortium, including non academic institutions as well. The goal is to identify the best-practices already existent in the field and integrate both European and US partners' experiences with the aim of creating a transatlantic joint academic program. The main activities and outcomes of the European research team have been

- 1) the production of data collected through on-line surveys, interviews, exploration of Web sites, and analysis of evaluative materials. We have produced a data base which is now available on line. We are planning to extend this data base to other countries in the perspective of a larger frame that includes the Mediterranean region and Middle East
- 2) the production of reports on the growth of academic programs, seeking to understand the variations in program types adopted in different contexts both national and regional
- 3) a comparative study at macro level (contrast of contexts from the point of view of the institutional, educational and socio-anthropological framework at European level as well as in the two continents).

The research outcomes have stressed out some difficulties in terms of different interpretations mainly about what could fall under the concept "philanthropy" and "non profit", and especially about what differences arise from national educational systems. For example the Nordic partners emphasized some negative connotations with terms such as "charity" or "philanthropy" for their resemblance of old-style top-down individual assistance, while other areas of study such as "civil society" and "complementary social service provision" changed in recent years, with a growing interest for the non-profit sector. Similar observations from other countries explain the plethora of synonyms or umbrella concepts in different languages. This aspect has slowed down the identification of common criteria for the micro-level analysis. Nonetheless, we came up with a broad spectrum of programs in non profit and philanthropy, looking at different subject areas represented in the database by the following taxonomy:

- Cultural, Leisure or Sport Studies
- Economics, Business Administration and Management Studies
- Education or Pedagogy
- Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies
- International Cooperation and Development Studies
- Public Administration
- Social work, Health Care

- Voluntary and Civil Society

- Others

The survey identified more than 300 academic programs with heterogeneous approaches to the non profit sector and philanthropy, even though some common trends amongst country could be drawn.

- a large majority of academic and training courses focusing on management (both from an economical or public administration perspective)
- most of the courses have an strong “operative” aim, and are often offered as a professional qualification only in few cases with links to previous undergraduate degrees, generally in economics or political sciences
- for the previous reason, short graduate programs (professional masters and Masters of Art) with concentration of subjects pertinent to non profit issues prevail, and are frequently based on non academic organizations
- **existing undergraduate programs do not seem to adequately shape specific professional profiles**

The main goal of the research team has been set up a “storage” of best practices which could be the “asset” for the definition of a graduate program. This outcome implies critical factors such as

- o Challenges (uniform the different educational systems and conceptions of philanthropy, civil society and non profit organizations)
- o Added value of the project (identify an international graduate programme that overtakes the current differences in terms of complexities rather than homologation to standards, such as business/management case studies, standardised module on social entrepreneurship )
- o The main risk in the near future is, in fact, the “mesmerization” of philanthropic and of social entrepreneurship studies, under the model of business schools’ homologation of the case study approach instead of developing an approach based on the study of social change in a trans-disciplinary, complex system framework of analysis)

“Social Change and Philanthropic Studies Education Programs: A Case Study within one University Collaborative” by Robert F. Ashcraft, Ph.D.  
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ABSTRACT

Within international philanthropic and nonprofit studies education programs affiliated with universities are found selected programs that are designed to create sustainable social change. There are challenges and opportunities associated with nurturing and implementing such programs whether they are embedded within a single institution or developed collaboratively among multiple institutions.

This paper provides an overview of the institutional environment that supports a specific social change program, called Public Allies Arizona, that is nurtured and implemented within a U.S. based nonprofit and philanthropic studies educational program affiliated with the Arizona-Indiana-Michigan Alliance (AIM). The AIM Alliance is a cross US institutional collaboration project among three research and educational Centers with a mission of, “working together to unleash new resources and increase understanding of philanthropy across race and cultures.” The Public Allies Arizona program is being incubated within one of the AIM university partners. The paper examines the theory of change and evaluation logic model developed for the Public Allies program that informs the way in which the education, experiential and action components are designed. Additionally, the paper presents a case study of the social change objectives of this leadership development program that reveals those conditions that may result in scalability to AIM partner universities and beyond. Lastly, the paper considers implications for educators and researchers interested in the subject of philanthropic and nonprofit studies educational collaborations involved in social change programming.