



“Internationalisation and Global Citizenship Opportunities in Bi-regional Academic Cooperation”.

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Building bi-regional academic cooperation involves the development of meaningful and ethical engagement between partners with shared agendas that coincide on bi-regional priorities. Projects where partners come together to add value, strengths and experiences to find innovative creative solutions to challenges are the most successful. From experience, the inclusion of non-academic partners and stakeholders, such as diplomatic missions, government agencies, community organisations, local authorities and industry, provide opportunities for internationalisation and building global citizenship in higher education institutions (HEIs) as well as the communities they serve.

I have had the opportunity to work with Universidad Veracruzana ([UV](#)) in Mexico and University College Cork ([UCC](#)) in Ireland. Both hold Internationalisation, Global Citizenship and Community Engagement at the core of their institutional agendas. Both are active members of the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities; and have been awarded the Network’s [Prize for Global Citizenship](#), UV in 2012 for their community engagement and UCC in 2019 for their University of Sanctuary programme.

Cooperation projects I have worked on with a variety of bi-regional stakeholders in recent years, include projects in sustainable development and green campus; food security, innovation and cooperatives for the agricultural sector; environmental research and capacity building for biotech start-ups for climate action; internationalisation of higher education (HE); eco-cos-

mologies, memory and peace process; migration and refugees; community engagement; and cities of learning, culture and arts. These are two Examples:

Refugee and Migration Crisis: UCC and UV joined forces to explore innovative efforts to address challenges posed by this current global crisis, from interdisciplinary and international perspectives in the wider context of the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), to how initiatives can enrich both internationalisation and global citizenship in our formal and non-formal curriculums and our communities and local partners.

Academic and administrative staff involved in Internationalisation, Community Engagement, Access for vulnerable groups, Migration and Applied Social Studies are working together on topics that include exploring university of sanctuary models for access, cultural and social integration of migrants and refugees into HE; Internationalisation at Home and Global Citizenship; and Staff training and professional development.

UV created a Programme to Assist Returning Migrants (PAMIR), to address access challenges faced by deported youth, born in the US to Mexican parents, returning to Veracruz with little or no Spanish and increasing Central American displaced migrants in Mexico. PAMIR is an integral part of internationalisation, provides Spanish language, orientation and administrative support to access UV and involves creative ways to engage returnees into the classroom and community to make the most of their specific experience and capacities.



UCC became a University of Sanctuary and Cork, a City of Sanctuary, hosting the highest number of asylum seekers in Ireland. UCC has been pursuing policies that assist with access for immigrants and refugees, that includes a scholarship scheme, designing and implementing an annual 'awareness week' with local community partners, and developing social networks of support among its staff and students. Students in UCC have developed creative student led initiatives that foster awareness for all, well-being and integration of asylum seekers and refugees into Irish society.

Activities have included a Summer School on Migration, staff workshops on creating Sanctuary Spaces in Latin America, research seminars and innovative online interactions between staff, students and community partners to share inspiring student activism and initiatives in response to challenges with wider communities during awareness events. They co-developed and co-taught modules on Internationalisation that incorporates global citizenship, open to staff from all disciplines and administrative departments at both HEIs.

Learning City Partnerships for SDGs: The [National University of Colombia](#) and UCC, Ireland, commenced cooperation to share best practices and develop collaborative research and agendas on Embedding Sustainability into Higher Education (HE) bi-regionally. Projects include Green Campus development and capacity building, urban and rural development and food security, multidisciplinary research in Engineering, Sciences and Humanities, including eco-cosmologies, peace-process and memory. Delegations visited to meet each other's community partners and give workshops on best practices with community partners in Amazonas 2017, Cork 2018, and Medellin, Bogota and Manizales in 2019.

Cork in Ireland and Medellin in Colombia are UNESCO Learning Cities programme leaders and have hosted the global conference. HEIs can play a key role in learning cities and Cork mentored Manizales to become a UNESCO Learning City in 2019. Embedding SDGs and projects to convert urban areas into green cities together with local producers have evolved.

Colombia and Ireland recently opened reciprocal Embassies and the Diplomatic missions have joined forces to support

cultural events and the exchange of artists between cities in Colombia and Ireland, where local communities also benefit from Internationalisation at Home and community engagement activities, such as concerts and workshops with visiting musicians and muralists.

As these examples demonstrate, bi-regional academic cooperation provides opportunities for internationalisation and global citizenship, not just for students and staff at HEIs but for local communities we serve.