



## US, UK varsities may merge to counter India threat

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As India and China make major investments in higher education, British and American universities are considering merging to maintain their pre-eminent position in the global education market.

A report commissioned by Prime Minister Gordon Brown suggests that instead of competing among themselves for international students, British and American universities should cooperate, and consider merging.

The report, titled Higher Education and Collaboration in a Global Context, has been released after consultations between leading educationists in the US and the UK, including Eric Thomas, vice-chancellor of the University of Bristol, and Katherine Fleming, vice-chancellor of New York University.

The report said: "Within both the UK and the USA, the higher education sector has long held a position of prominence and prestige — even though there are signs that this position is under threat."

"Globalisation represents the latest, and likely most transformative, competitive arena that our countries face. It is unclear what a deepening of the collaborative relationship would mean within the confines of the current framework. There is a need to think radically — even mergers between UK and US institutions might be a goal."

Stating that US and UK universities should jointly build on their 'primacy' in world higher education to lead the development of a 'global civil society', the report said the focus should now be to extend the US-UK model to third country locations.

"This will enrich immensely the universities of both countries, foster the growth of an open, competitive and accessible higher education sector in other nations, and constitutes a vitally important form of soft diplomacy and power", the report said.

Rick Trainor, president of Universities UK and principal of King's College London, said: "Now, more than ever, collaboration across borders among our leading universities is absolutely necessary."

"The strength of the UK/US partnership, the longstanding pre-eminence of the two countries in the higher education sector and more recently the crisis in the global economy validate the case for deepened and internationalised collaboration."

John Sexton, president of New York University, said: "In the future, the UK/US higher education agenda must go beyond seeking simply greater mobility and partnership between the two. Instead, universities must focus on ways to expand the strengths of the UK/US model in multilateral ways to create a worldwide network of co-operation and excellence."

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