



## An Atlantic Trust

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A [new report](#) commissioned by Prime Minister Gordon Brown calls for the creation of an "Atlantic Trust" that would, by awarding scholarships, funding research, and promoting service, seek to build on longstanding ties between universities in the United Kingdom and the United States, and broaden those connections to involve work in and with third nations.

"The group's proposal rests on the premise that an important new trajectory of UK/US collaboration is engagement with universities in third countries and the creation of networks encompassing countries and universities. It also rests on the view that among the most potent of economic stimulus ideas -- the quickest, broadest, most beneficial and long-lasting -- would be a serious investment in [higher education]," states the report, "Higher Education and Collaboration in Global Context: Building a Global Civil Society."

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The report is based on the deliberations of a "study group" of university leaders convened and co-chaired by John Sexton, president of New York University, and Rick Trainor, president of Universities UK and principal of King's College London. Those representing American institutions in the UK/US Study Group were Robert Berdahl, president of the Association of American Universities, Molly Corbett Broad, president of the American Council on Education, Jane D. McAuliffe, president of Bryn Mawr College, and Shirley Tilghman, president of Princeton University.

The proposed Atlantic Trust is ambitious and multifaceted. Among the group's recommendations:

- "The creation of a prestigious Atlantic Scholarship programme both to target students from third countries for study at a UK and a US university and to promote the flow of UK and U.S. students across the Atlantic." The report envisions a scholarship program supporting up to 12,000 students per year. Half the recipients would come from countries outside the United Kingdom or the U.S.; these students would receive scholarships to spend three years at a US university and one year at a UK university, or vice versa. The other half of recipients would come from the UK and the U.S. (a quarter from each), and as a condition of their scholarship for study in the UK or U.S., would commit to spending "significant time" in another country.
- The creation of the Atlantic Researchers program, which would fund research conducted by "international, multidisciplinary teams. It is expected that all teams would involve at least one UK and one U.S. institution, and at least one from a third country. It is also expected that the research supported through the Atlantic Trust's Atlantic Researchers programme would involve researchers from more than one discipline working together."
- The creation of an Atlantic Partners program, which would fund students to participate in summer- or semester-long service opportunities in developing countries. (The report notes: "Not every undergraduate in the UK or the USA wants to undertake a full year of study or work abroad, but there is considerable unrealised demand for shorter periods of international experience.") The proposed Atlantic Partners program would also involve year-long service on the part of faculty and staff, with a particular focus on new Ph.D.s. and senior administrators -- "that is, those on the cusps of their university careers, be it at the start or nearer the end.... Thus the Atlantic Partners programme would encompass all parts of the university community."

The proposed program would be funded by governments, the private sector, foundations and philanthropists, and universities -- with governments being the primary source. Right now, however, the Atlantic Trust is but an unfunded proposal.

"We think it's a powerful set of ideas," said Trainor, of King's College. "It probably won't happen all at once and of course the public finances of the two principal countries we're talking about are each under some strain."

"It needn't happen all at once to provide some momentum," he continued, adding that the multilateral nature of the proposed Atlantic Trust program would complement established bilateral programs like the Fulbright.

"I think the key here is to keep referring back to this notion of a world networked by ideas and creativity," said Sexton, who at NYU has championed the idea of a ["Global Network University"](#) and is overseeing the development of [a full-fledged branch campus](#) in Abu Dhabi.

"We're very conscious of the fact that the idea is to network in, and I think the UK and U.S. universities will benefit from that as well as help by doing that."

Indeed, in addition to stressing the role the two countries can play in, per the report's title, "building a global civil society," the study group's members likewise stress more self-interested motivations on the part of American and British universities. Amid [incredible global expansion in higher education](#) and major investments to create new "idea capitals" (like Abu Dhabi), "In this context, it is no surprise that the UK and the USA are concerned with maintaining their primacy in the world of [higher education]," the report states. "But if the UK and the USA are to continue to assert their primacy in the realm of [higher education] within this increasingly competitive global scene, they will best do so collaboratively."

The report notes, too, that "The UK and the USA, each and in tandem, are well positioned to influence the emergence of future 'idea capitals' around the world -- and if they do not, they likely will fall prey to the competition that these new centres of thought will present."

— Elizabeth Redden