

This year marks the eighth annual International Education Week.

This celebration is meant to highlight the crucial role of education in our efforts to secure a more just and human future for all of us -----based on international understanding.

The fact that you are all here probably means that I am speaking to the choir—but bear with me a little as I talk about at least four reasons why internationalizing your education is so important. (there are many reasons—I just have my favorite four)

First reason: there is the excitement that goes with exploration -- stretching our own boundaries and definitions,.

Challenging any illusion we had that our own perspective on the world is the only way to look at that world.

One student, I know, who spent his junior year abroad in Spain came back home with a new appreciation for how to carry on political debate—

He said that more than any of his friends in Ohio, Spanish university students seem to take their political discussions very seriously

He found himself challenged to answer questions about the policies of his own country—

It definitely made him more open to alternate views.

He said to me: Sometimes, in order to think outside the box you have to get outside the box.

Reason number 2-- In a world grown so interdependent—an understanding of other cultures and people is becoming increasingly crucial to success in almost every profession-

In the business world, in engineering, in software development, in nursing, in manufacturing

In my area of social work for example, . . .

A social worker in a child welfare agency meets with a couple to discuss whether they should adopt a child from Romania. What does she know about Romanian culture or socio-political realities?

A social worker at a domestic violence shelter needs to know that some of the principles she learned may not be appropriate for counseling a Cambodian refugee.

This need to be inter-culturally competent is becoming more and more crucial in almost every career you enter.

3) Third reason: there is the sheer joy (and sometimes the worry) of having friends in other parts of the world—viewing world events with these friends in mind.

American friends of a doctoral student from Brazil watched Brazil win the world cup partly through Her eyes.

Friends of a visiting Scholar from Iraq at the start of the first Gulf war— saw that war in part through his lenses. (not just the CNN version)

A few years ago I had the wonderful good fortune to meet a young Tibetan monk. At the end of the afternoon, as we were saying good-bye, he bowed and said simply “after this meeting, all the ground between us will be holy ground.”

When that is the kind of geography we have – our planet is not just continents and oceans and mountains – it is holy ground between friends and co-inhabitants... ground we all need to protect.

4) Finally, (fourth reason) We live in a world where our challenges stretch well beyond national borders

Where together we face a species extinction rate that is the highest in the planet’s history

Where human trafficking in children is problem in New York and in New Delhi; in Moscow and Miami.

Where it is now understood that AIDS cannot be eradicated without a planetary perspective

In short---

A truly International education opens people's eyes, minds and hearts to the realities of the world.

It places issues of diversity, citizenship, and responsible action at the heart of our learning.

And We really need to get this one right--- our future and that of all the people on our shrinking planet depend on us.