Nearly two years ago, the Provost charged the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee with exploring the implications of the Global Network University (GNU) for undergraduate education. The committee consulted with Ulrich Baer, Vice Provost for Globalization and Multicultural Affairs, and also formed a subcommittee to study the subject. The subcommittee members also took into consideration President Sexton’s reflections of December 2010 on the GNU. The recommendations that follow draw on the subcommittee’s discussions, as well as on discussions of the full committee in plenary session.

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The GNU presents great opportunities but also some challenges for the pursuit of excellence in undergraduate education. Indeed, a single set of features—such as student and faculty mobility, a multi-centered organization, and an even more diverse student body and faculty—is likely to be the source of both challenges and opportunities.

Over the last few decades, even before the advent of the GNU, NYU—with its large size, organizational complexity, and diversity (on all fronts)—had been grappling with a number of questions related to ensuring excellence in undergraduate education: How do we provide first-rate advising and mentoring to our undergraduates? How do we promote the kind of long-term and in-depth student-faculty relationships that lead to meaningful undergraduate research? How do we foster a sense of community and interconnectedness among our undergraduates while they are students, as well as a sense of belonging that will keep them active as alumni? How can NYU sites (both in New York and overseas) be conceived of as places that promote involvement with local communities and local forms of knowledge?

These questions have occupied us for many years here in New York; they will likely become even more complex and important now that we are envisioning a GNU model with both portal and study-away campuses and with ever increasing flexibility and mobility for faculty and undergraduates.

The committee recognizes that discussions about the GNU are animated by two, very different impulses. On the one hand, the level of mobility that is envisioned will rely on a high degree of interoperability and can therefore only be achieved through a standardization and articulation of a variety of support services across the network. On the other hand, it is crucial that all of our sites be integrated with their local community, and that our students and faculty experience them as such. There is a fundamental tension here, one that we think the University
should not lose sight of as it continues to expand. With these considerations in mind, we make
the following recommendations:

1. **CULTURAL IMMERSION:** Immersion and the experience of difference should be at the
core of a student’s study-abroad experience. The way in which many Global programs are
structured, however, can sometimes lead to a sense of an “NYU bubble.” As it stands, often
only the most enterprising students are able to take courses at local universities, to do
internships at a local organization, or to participate in public service. There should be means
in place, both academic and student affairs-based, to facilitate this immersion experience.

2. **LEARNING TECHNOLOGY AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES:** The
various Global sites should use compatible technology in order to facilitate and encourage
the development of meaningful academic connections across the GNU. Ideally, all of our
GNU sites should use a common course management system (e.g. Blackboard, Sakai); at the
very least, systems used by the various sites should be compatible. Faculty and students at all
sites should have adequate training in the use of instructional and/or course-management
technology, and they should also be able to expect a minimum level of technological support.
Faculty should also be incentivized to explore ways of bringing the GNU together through
the appropriate use of instructional technology (e.g., connecting courses taught at several
different sites through a variety of synchronous and asynchronous means). Finally,
administrative systems at the different sites should be sufficiently similar, to allow students
and faculty to move around the GNU without having to learn site-specific ways of accessing
registrar, bursar, and other administrative services.

3. **ADVISING:** All academic departments and schools should review their advising materials
and communications strategies to ensure that they meet the specific needs of students while
they are at our Global sites. Although staff at Global sites are trained to provide basic
advising about programs on the Square during registration periods, they cannot be expected
to have the same expertise or to provide the more specialized and customized service that
departments offer their students in New York. Thus, information posted on departmental
websites (e.g. FAQ lists) and e-mail communications to students from their DUGSes should
take into account that many majors are studying abroad and are therefore unable to visit the
department in person. Departments and school advising centers should be urged to review
their current ways of staying in touch with students while abroad, and, in particular, should
consider how technology might enable them to communicate more effectively with these
majors. The Wasserman Center, for example, already uses Skype to offer one-on-one career
counseling, as well as webinars that students can attend from multiple sites. Other Student
Affairs offices, such as the Student Health Center and the Center for Student Activities,
Leadership, and Service have also significantly expanded their services to ensure coverage of
students throughout the GNU. Finally, Student Affairs is now accepting nominations for the
President’s Service Award from across the GNU.

4. **ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES:** Learning assistance should be extended throughout
the GNU, both through faculty on site (since most classes are small) and through technology.
Advice and some coordination could be provided by the College Learning Center and the
Writing Center, both of which have expertise in these areas.
5. **SCIENCE MAJORS ABROAD:** While NYU is a national leader in terms of the number of science courses that it offers abroad (at NYU in London, which rents laboratory space for the teaching of introductory-level courses in biology, chemistry, and physics), most students who take advantage of these opportunities are in the pre-health track but major in non-science fields. Given both the large number of required courses and the vertical structure of NYU’s various science curricula, most science majors have difficulty finding a window of time in which to study at one of our Global sites. As FAS Dean for Science Daniel Stein recently proposed in a memo to science chairs (dated December 15, 2010), these departments should identify reasonable action plans for their majors who wish to study abroad. Such plans could involve taking a semester break from science courses while abroad; or using the time abroad early in one’s college career to complete core science requirements (e.g., at NYU in London); or offering at selective sites science courses for upper-year majors (either our own courses or courses at local institutions, in which our students could enroll directly), possibly coupling these courses with a research opportunity (e.g. at NYU in Tel Aviv, when that site offers the possibility of science courses). The development of these departmental strategies should be facilitated by the FAS Dean for Science and then their implementation should be coordinated with the Office of the Vice Provost for Globalization and Multicultural Affairs, working closely with the individual departments and the relevant site directors.

6. **INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DIVERSITY:** The University should be mindful of the ways in which the GNU will affect the diversity of our undergraduate student body. Since undergraduate admissions at the University will necessarily be conducted from now on at a more international level (in part because of our portal campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai), we should recognize the increasingly international nature of the student population and how it will present faculty with instructional challenges and opportunities. But to realize fully the capacities of the GNU to create “new cosmopolitans”—persons who have a sense of themselves as being of particular places, ethnicities, religions and cultures, while “embracing, respecting, learning from, and adapting to global diversity” (as President Sexton articulated in his December 2010 reflections on the GNU)—we must not limit our recruitment efforts to those predicated on a notion of difference centered on national boundaries. Creating international student bodies is important, but so too is ensuring that we recognize the variety of ethnic/linguistic/cultural differences within nations, including when considering recruitment of US-based students.

7. **SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:** International students are projected to reach 20 percent of the NYU undergraduate student body very soon. It is essential that this increase be accompanied by an expansion of student services through the Office of International Students and Scholars. Such an expansion should take into account not only these students’ needs in New York but also the specific issues they face when participating in the GNU. At present, US citizens and permanent residents receive assistance (through the Office of Global Programs) in securing visas and other necessary documentation to study at NYU sites abroad. International students who are based in New York also require appropriate support services for their study at other GNU sites (e.g., to facilitate their re-entry into the US). Finally, these students also have the right to clear, accessible information about whether the national or international examinations (e.g. the A-Levels and the International...
Baccalaureate) that they have taken in high school qualify them for advanced standing. (Members of the CAS deanery, the Office of the University Registrar, and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions have been meeting to discuss how to handle the increasing number of requests for college credit based on work or tests taken by international students.) This is important not only to the recruitment but also to the retention of international students, some of whom have expressed feeling disadvantaged in relation to their US-based classmates.

8. **FOREIGN-LANGUAGE STUDY:** The University should explore ways of using GNU sites to offer different modalities of foreign-language instruction. NYU students have different aspirations in learning foreign languages, and language programs at Global sites are uniquely positioned to address these varying needs. Global sites should also consider ways of using winter intersession courses and summer intensive courses to deliver different types of language instruction. To take just one example: the CAS Dean is currently meeting with a committee of language faculty to explore the possibility of creating summer language institutes both at selected sites abroad and perhaps also on the Square.

9. **ALUMNI AND THE GLOBAL NETWORK UNIVERSITY:** Our alumni have a potentially important role to play in building the GNU. Those who are based near our Global sites could be engaged to serve as mentors to undergraduates studying abroad. Additionally, through technology, our alumni may choose to mentor undergraduates at any NYU site. There are doubtless other ways in which alumni might be involved in the development of Global programs. The Office of Global Programs and Multicultural Affairs and the Office of Alumni Relations should work together to explore possible synergies in this area.