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# JOINT AND DOUBLE DEGREE PROGRAMS



IN THE TRANSATLANTIC CONTEXT

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A SURVEY REPORT

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**Joint and Double Degree Programs  
in the Transatlantic Context:  
A Survey Report**

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## Executive Summary

This report seeks to expand the knowledge about existing transatlantic degree programs and to address the challenges and opportunities in developing joint or double degree programs – especially in the transatlantic context. The report examines responses from 180 higher education institutions in the United States and the European Union to an extensive survey conducted in spring 2008. The survey was part of a project funded by EU-U.S. Atlantis Program of U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the European Union Commission, and was launched in cooperation with several leading U.S. and European institutions: the Institute of International Education and State University of New York (in the U.S.), and Freie Universität Berlin, the Franco-German University, and the Latvian Rectors' Council (in the E.U.).

The major goals of the survey were to assess the current landscape of transatlantic degree programs and to identify inherent challenges and opportunities of expanding existing or developing new programs.

### **Major Findings:**

- Double degrees appear to be much more common than joint degrees, and European institutions are about twice as likely to offer at least one joint degree as U.S. institutions and offer about twice as many such degrees as U.S. institutions.
- Both EU and U.S. institutions are most likely to have collaborative degree programs with European partners than with institutions in any other region. Top 5 partner countries for European institutions: United States, France, Spain, Germany and the UK. Top 5 partner countries for U.S. institutions: Germany, China, France, Mexico, South Korea/Spain
- U.S. institutions are more likely to offer joint and double degrees at the undergraduate level, whereas European institutions were more likely to offer such degrees at the graduate level.
- The most popular academic disciplines for collaborative degree programs – for both U.S. and European institutions – are Business and Management and Engineering.
- U.S. students are less likely than European students to participate in collaborative degree programs.
- U.S. institutions are more likely to cover costs with student fees than European institutions. EU institutions tend to draw more funding from university budgets and external sources (such as foundations, governments, etc).

- English is by far the most commonly used language of instruction, but the majority of responding institutions indicate that their programs offered language training both at home and abroad.
- A large majority of both U.S. institutions and EU institutions plan to develop more joint and double degrees in the future.
- The key motivations for launching joint and double degree programs appear to revolve largely around advancing the internationalization of the campus and raising international visibility and prestige of the institution.
- The most important challenges for both EU and U.S. institutions appear to be securing adequate funding and ensuring sustainability of the program. U.S. institutions also report challenges in securing institutional support and recruiting students, while EU institutions are more likely to encounter difficulties in designing the curriculum and agreeing on credit transfer recognition.

# Introduction

Cooperation in higher education between the United States and Europe has been based to a great extent on traditional student and faculty exchange programs. These have over decades enabled many students to experience the other side of the Atlantic, thus creating important and long-lasting institutional linkages and a profound understanding of the respective country and culture. In recent years, developments on both sides of the Atlantic have created new opportunities and challenges for transatlantic collaboration in higher education.

One of the more prominent recent developments involves the emergence of transatlantic degree programs, such as dual diplomas, joint degrees, consortia and other forms of curriculum cooperation arrangements. Among European countries the introduction of joint and double degree programs has long been a vital part of internationalization strategies in higher education, helping to create stronger links and flourishing institutional partnerships, as well as preparing students for a global workplace. In the North American context, such programs have been until recently a less common feature of internationalization strategies for higher education institutions. However, the interest in curriculum cooperation is gaining momentum not only in the U.S. but in most countries around the world. In an increasingly global and competitive higher education market, collaborative programs, or “codesharing” as airlines would call it, can offer a set of advantages and are an important asset in the struggle for attracting the best and the brightest.

The emergence of these types of deep institutional linkages and the discussion among educators and policymakers in Europe and the United States on the value of joint and double degree programs have been to a certain extent precipitated by the changes in the higher education system in Europe and their impact on the transatlantic exchange of students and scholars.

In Europe, the higher education reforms related to the Bologna Process have prompted a number of new challenges for transatlantic collaboration. Especially the varying duration of Bachelor’s degrees has been at the core of discussions between European and U.S. universities. With the establishment of BA and MA degrees in Europe, many traditional exchange agreements between European and U.S. universities will have to be retooled. Built on consecutive, intertwined modules, European BA programs are beginning to find new ways of integrating study abroad components into the curriculum. Similarly, it remains to be seen how the two-year MA programs respond to this challenge.

These higher education reforms, along with the incredible success of the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus programs in promoting student exchange within and into Europe, have already had an impact on student mobility between Europe and the United States. According to the most recent statistics from the Institute of International Education’s *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, the number of students from the European Union studying in the United States has declined by 12% since 2001/02 – a trend that has international education professionals worried on both side of Atlantic. Declines from key European sending countries are particularly worrying: students from Germany, the leading sending country from Europe to the U.S., have dropped 7% since 2001/02.

Another challenge to transatlantic academic exchange is the increasing predominance of short-term study abroad programs in the U.S. While Europe still remains the leading destination for U.S. students who study abroad, the length of study abroad sojourns has declined dramatically in the past decade. Currently, only 6% of all U.S. students who study abroad, spend a full academic year in the host country, according to IIE's *Open Doors Report*. The majority of study abroad programs are short-term programs of eight weeks or less, which may have only limited impact on the development of intercultural skills and foreign language immersion. Medium-term and long-term study abroad sojourns, especially if conducted in a structured way in cooperation with local partner institutions and including exposure to local student body and faculty, hold far greater opportunities in this respect.

In order to address these concerns, colleges and universities are beginning to explore new methods of transatlantic academic cooperation, including increased curricular integration, more bi-lateral partnerships, twinning, and consortia. In the context of the two-cycle degree structure in Europe, the development of joint and double degree programs between European and U.S. higher education institutions, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, are particularly appealing because of the profound impact these programs have on the institutions involved.

So far, little or no quantitative and qualitative research exists to inform institutions in Europe and the U.S. on the context in which they operate. Similarly, there have been few opportunities for higher education institutions particularly in the U.S. to engage in dialogue on successful models of curriculum cooperation with foreign countries. One exception in this regard is the EU-U.S. Atlantis Program. Not only has it contributed to the establishment of numerous transatlantic degree programs through the funding it provides. Its annual grantees' meetings have over time also emerged as a central platform for discussing the development and successful implementation of joint and double degree programs. One other notable example is the Transatlantic Degree Programs Project, an initiative by the Freie Universität Berlin and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which over a period of three years offered a series of expert workshops in Europe and North America with the aim of facilitating knowledge transfer and best practice examples in cross-border curriculum cooperation.

The overarching goal of this report is to expand the knowledge about existing transatlantic degree programs and linkages and to address the challenges and opportunities in developing joint and double degree programs – especially in the transatlantic context.

# Methodology, Respondents, Terminology

## Methodology

This survey examines responses from 180 higher education institutions in the United States and the European to an extensive survey conducted in the spring and summer of 2008. The survey was conducted from March 24 to June 27, 2008. Higher education institutions on both sides of the Atlantic were invited to participate in the web-based survey. A call for participation in the survey was announced through numerous higher education newsletters, professional listservs, and other networks that focus particularly on the internationalization of higher education, and to grantees of the EU-U.S. Atlantis Program. In Europe the announcement was also distributed to higher education institutions via the EU National Agencies. A number of higher education associations on both sides of the Atlantic shared the call for participation with their member institutions.

Estimating the response rate in this context is not possible, and the survey does not claim to have produced globally representative results. However, the number of respondents is well sufficient to draw conclusions on current trends and developments in the field of curriculum cooperation in the transatlantic context, and serves as a benchmark for future studies.

## Respondents

The survey received valid responses from 180 higher education institutions from the European Union, the United States, and other non-EU European countries. Fifty-one percent (92) of the respondents represented EU institutions, 45% (81) represented U.S. institutions, and 4% (7) represented non-EU European countries. Because so few responses were received from non-EU European countries, these results have not been considered in the analysis that follows. References to “European” refer to EU institutions.

Most survey respondents were senior administrators within their institutions or departments. They included 15 deans, 66 directors or heads, and more than 30 other senior administrators such as vice provosts, associate provosts, and associate deans.

## Terminology

A multitude of meanings exists behind the term *joint*, *dual* or *double* degree. Often enough, and this is particularly true for the U.S., these terms can be found to refer to programs that combine degrees in two academic disciplines, yet are carried out entirely within one and the same higher education institution. Also, there is oftentimes confusion about the difference between the terms dual and double. While in some countries the term *dual degree* is used more commonly for degree programs that feature structured curriculum cooperation with a foreign partner institution, other countries might prefer the term *double degree*. To avoid further confusion, for the purposes of the survey the definition of what constitutes an (international) *joint/dual/double* degree was brought down to two basic categories.

A joint degree program: students study at (at least) two higher education institutions and receive upon completion of the study program a single degree certificate issued and signed by all the participating institutions jointly.

A dual or double degree program: students study at (at least) two higher education institutions and receive upon completion of the study program a separate degree certificate from each of the participating institutions.

Since according to this classification *dual* and *double* degree programs are synonymous, in this report we will refer to such programs as *double degree programs* to avoid unnecessarily lengthy and complicated sentence structures.

# I. Numbers, Countries, Disciplines, and Funding

This section highlights survey findings related to the number and type of degree programs, partner countries/regions, number of partners, academic disciplines, number of students, and funding sources.

## A. Number and Type of Transnational Degrees

Double degrees appear to be much more common than joint degrees. Among the survey respondents, 13% of U.S. institutions offer joint degrees, while 68% offer double degrees (Table 1). On the European side, 26% of institutions offer joint degrees, and 76% offer double degrees. EU institutions are about twice as likely to offer at least one joint degree as U.S. institutions, and somewhat more likely to offer at least one double degree. Although the percentage of EU and U.S. institutions offering at least one double degree is similar, EU institutions are likely to offer about twice as many such programs as U.S. institutions.

**Table 1: Percentage and number of collaborative degree programs as reported by responding institutions**

	<u>Percentage</u>		<u>Total #</u>	
	<b>U.S.</b>	<b>EU</b>	<b>U.S.</b>	<b>EU</b>
<b>Joint Degrees</b>	13%	26%	38	50
<b>Double Degrees</b>	68%	76%	240	613
<b>Joint and/or Dual Degrees in Planning Stage</b>	87%	85%	110	172

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

## B. Nature of Programs

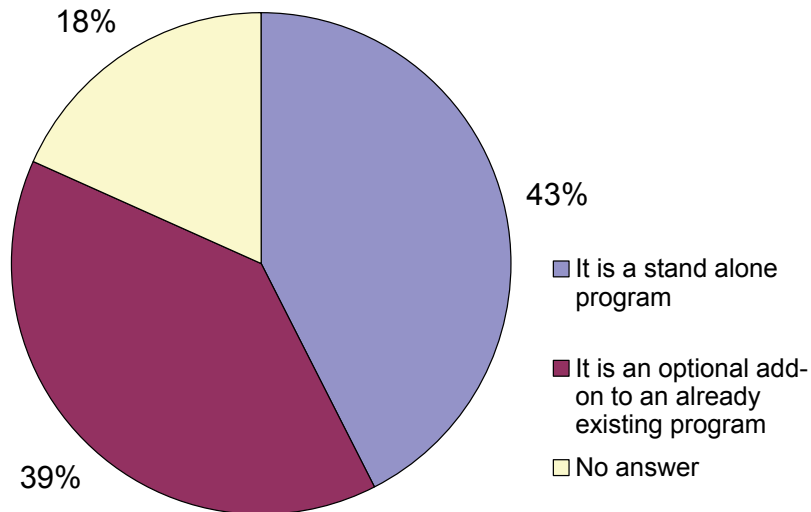
Survey responses suggest that about as many joint and double degree programs are stand alone programs (43%) as add-ons to existing programs (39%). There was a high non-response rate (18%) to this question.

Stand alone programs would typically be programs that were created exclusively for the joint or double degree arrangements and which operate only as a joint venture between two or more higher education institutions. An add-on program, on the contrary, would typically operate as a traditional study program regardless of any cooperation with a foreign partner institution and offer an optional joint or double degree track for some selected students.

While the figures for stand alone and add-on programs seem fairly balanced, the high non-response rate is striking. This could be indicative of the fact that often enough such clear-cut definitions may be difficult to make. Furthermore, reflecting the complexity of joint and double degree programs, detailed knowledge about their structure might sometimes be

found at different levels of administration and faculty, making it challenging for individual respondents to address certain aspects of this very comprehensive survey.

**Figure 1: Nature of joint or double programs**

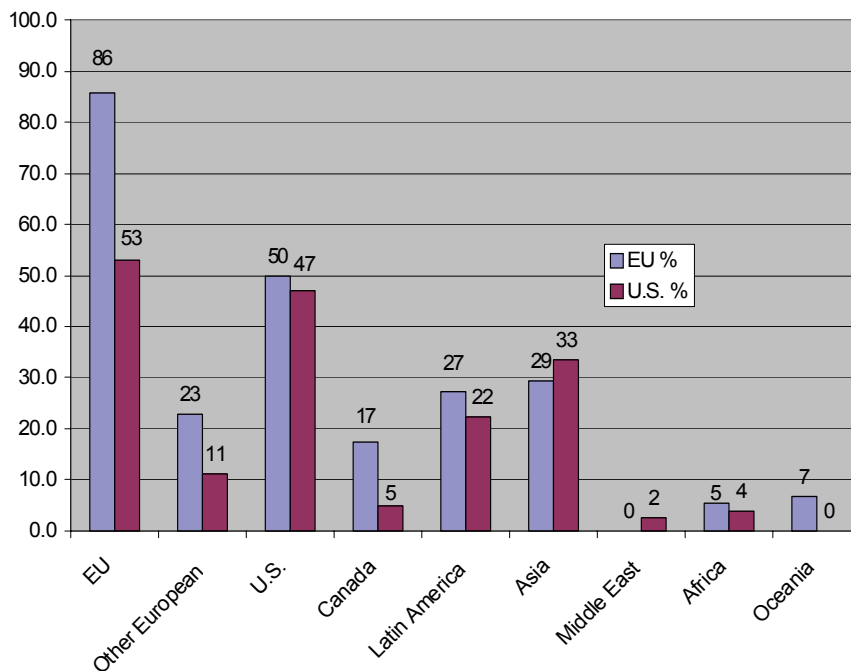


Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### **B. Partner Regions and Countries**

Both European and U.S. universities were most likely to have joint and double degree programs with European partner institutions than with institutions in any other region. Among EU institutions, 86% had programs with other EU institutions, while 53% of U.S. institutions had programs with EU institutions. Very few joint or double degree programs were reported with the Middle East and Africa.

**Figure 2: Percent of responding institutions that have established joint or double degree programs with institutions in specified countries and world regions**



Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

The top five countries where EU respondents had established joint and double degree programs were all in Europe, with the exception of the United States. The top partner country for European respondents was the United States, followed by France, Spain, Germany, and the UK. The top partner country for U.S. institutions was Germany, followed by China, France, Mexico and South Korea/Spain. While European countries also figured prominently in the responses of U.S. institutions, many reported having developed joint or double degree programs with institutions outside Western Europe, in China, South Korea, Mexico and Turkey.

**Table 2: Top five countries where responding institutions have established joint or double degree programs**

Top five for all EU respondents:

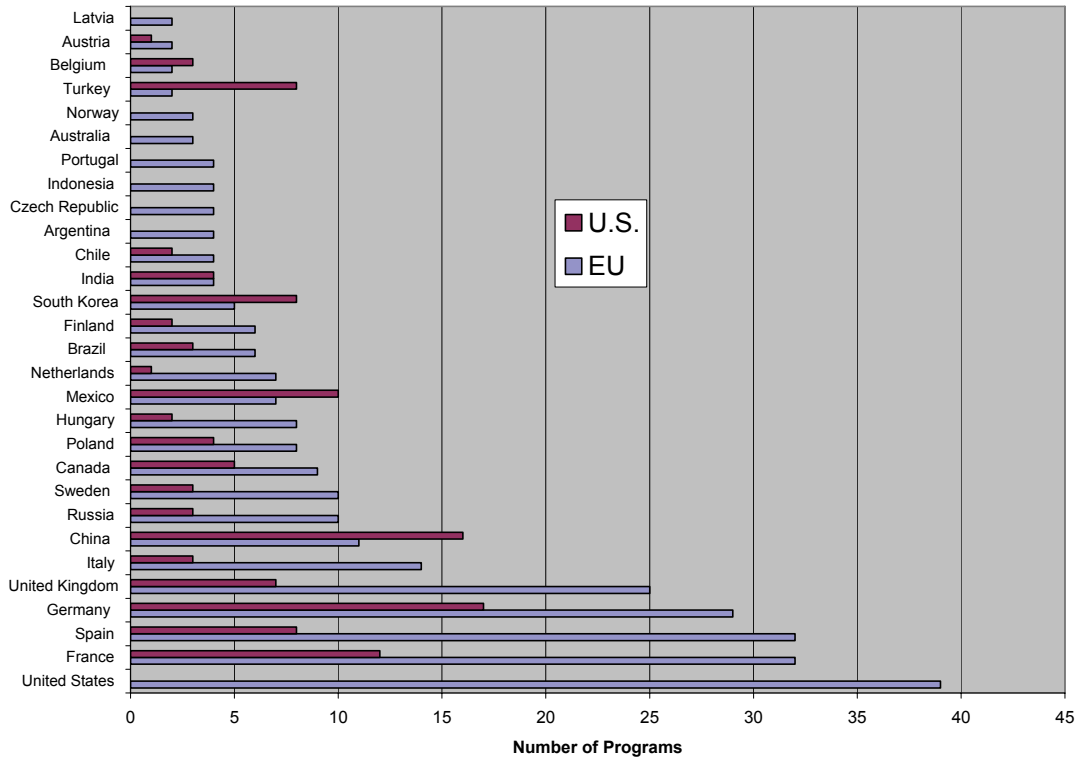
1. United States (39 responses)
2. France (32)
2. Spain (32)
4. Germany (29)
5. United Kingdom (25)

Top five for all U.S. respondents:

1. Germany (17 responses)
2. China (16)
3. France (12)
4. Mexico (10)
5. South Korea (8)
5. Spain (8)

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

**Figure 3: Most frequently cited partner countries**



*Oth*

*Other countries listed by EU institutions:* Albania, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Peru, Romania, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Suriname, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam.  
*Other countries listed by U.S. institutions:* Bahamas, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Honduras, Ireland, Japan, Kuwait, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland. Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### **C. Number of Partner Institutions and Degrees Offered**

About half of all U.S. respondents report having at least one other U.S. partner institution in their programs, while more than two-thirds (71%) report having at least one European partner (Table 4). U.S. respondents rarely had more than two EU partner institutions (16%). Slightly more than half of the EU respondents reported having at least one U.S. partner. The majority of EU respondents reported having two or more EU partners (63%), and many had five or more (29%).

**Table 4: Number of partner institutions in joint and double degree programs**

	U.S. Respondents		EU Respondents	
	U.S. Partner Institutions (%)	EU Partner Institutions (%)	U.S. Partner Institutions (%)	EU Partner Institutions (%)
0	51	29	46	8
1	42	34	34	29
2	3	20	8	16
3-4	3	8	7	18
5+	0	8	5	29

Note: In cases where a respondent entered a number for either U.S. or EU institutions but left the other field blank, the blank field was considered to represent zero institutions. In cases where respondents left both fields blank, the response was not used in the calculations. Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

**Table 5: Total number of joint or double degree programs currently offered by responding institutions, by academic level.**

**U.S. Institutions:**

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Doctoral	Other
Mean	2.3	1.7	0.2	0.3
Median	1	1	0	0
Total # of Programs	149	115	10	17

**EU Institutions:**

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Doctoral	Other
Mean	1.4	6.2	1.4	< 0.1
Median	0	2	0	0
Total # of Programs	126	548	127	4

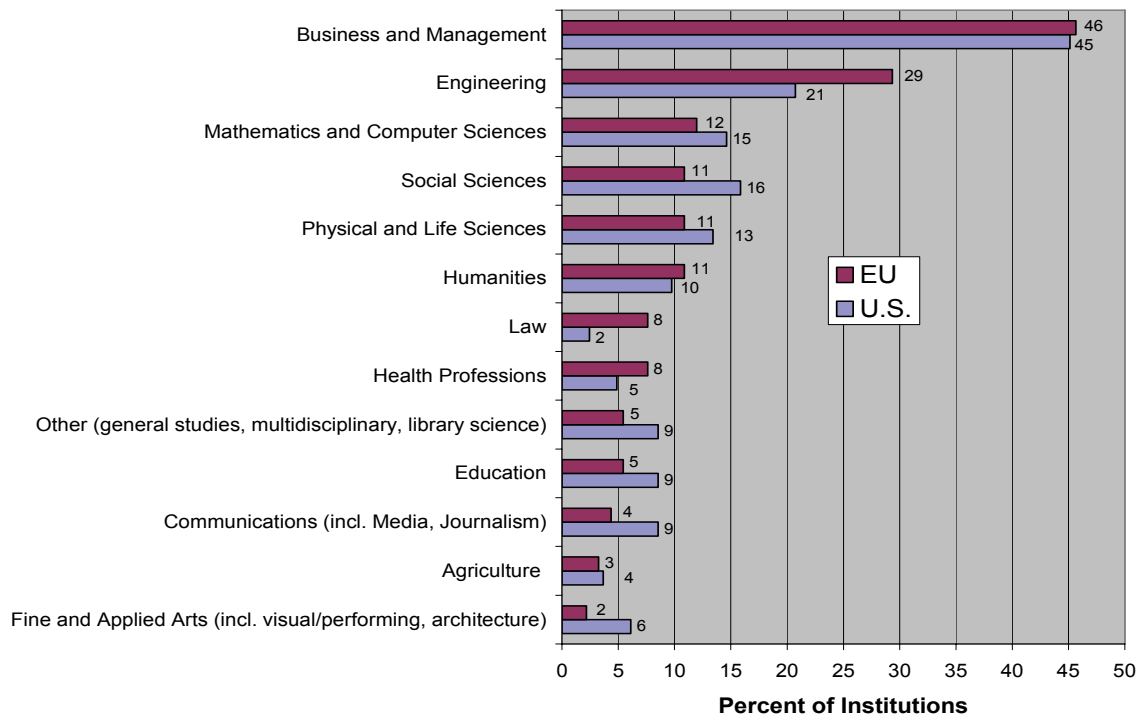
Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

U.S. institutions were more likely to offer joint and double degrees at the undergraduate level, whereas EU institutions were much more likely to offer such degrees at the graduate level and above.

#### **D. Academic Disciplines**

About half of the responding U.S. and European institutions report offering joint and double degrees in the field of business and management, making this by far the most common field of study for these degrees. The second most common academic discipline was engineering, with 29% of EU institutions offering joint and double degrees in the field, compared to 21% of U.S. institutions. U.S. institutions were slightly more likely than EU institutions to offer these degrees in most other fields, such as social sciences (16% U.S.; 11% EU) and communications (9% U.S.; 4% EU). One exception was law, a field in which 8% of EU institutions offered a joint or double degree, versus 2% of U.S. institutions.

**Figure 4: Top academic disciplines in which joint or double degree programs are offered**



Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

## **F. Number of Participating Students**

Both U.S. and European institutions report that more European students participate in their programs than U.S. students. However, that gap is much wider among EU institutions (1.2 U.S. students to 24.2 EU students) than it is for U.S. institutions (4.3 U.S. students to 9.6 EU students), indicating that many of the joint and double degree programs offered by responding EU institutions are done jointly with other EU partner institutions and cater largely to European students.

**Table 6: Number of students who participate annually in joint or double degree programs**

### **U.S. Institutions**

	U.S. Students	EU Students
<b>Mean</b>	4.3	9.6
<b>Median</b>	2	3
<b>Total # of Students</b>	238	530

### **EU Institutions**

	U.S. Students	EU Students
<b>Mean</b>	1.2	24.2
<b>Median</b>	0	10
<b>Total # of Students</b>	101	2032

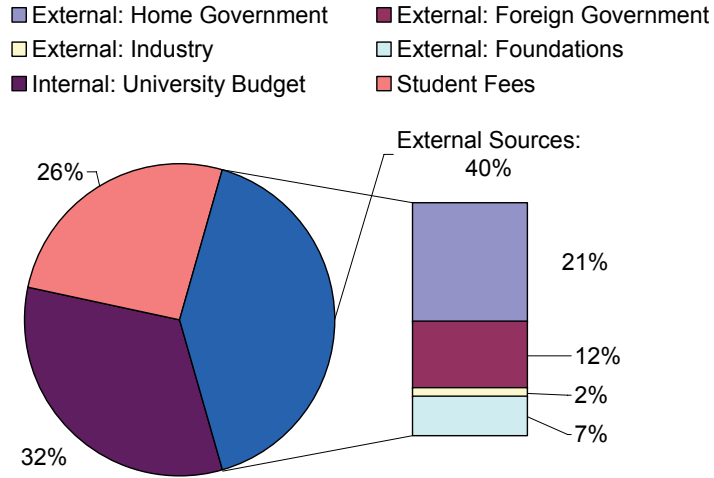
Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

## **G. Funding**

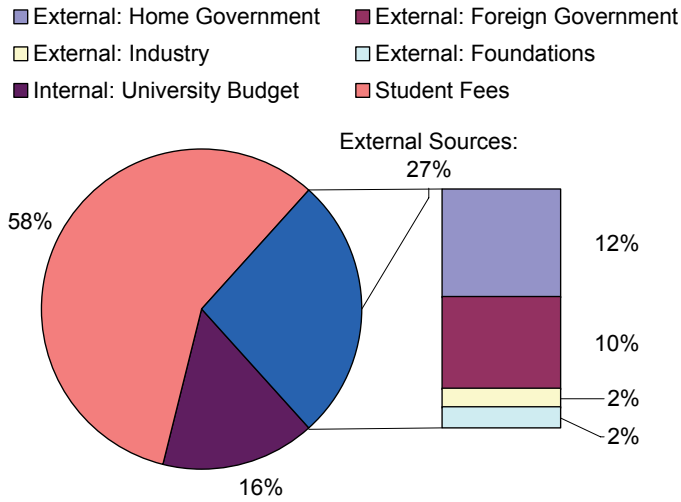
A wide variation in funding structures for joint and double degree programs exists between U.S. and EU institutions. The greatest difference is the percentage of program costs accounted for by student fees between EU institutions (26%) and U.S. institutions (58%). To compensate for low student fees, EU institutions tend to draw more funding from university budgets (32%) and from external sources (40%), which include governments, foundations and industry. U.S. institutions, on the other hand, reported far fewer contributions from university budgets (16%) and external sources (27%). At U.S. institutions, foreign governments accounted for about as much support as the U.S. government, whereas at EU institutions the home government tended to outspend foreign governments by a ratio of 2:1.

Figure 5: Funding sources for joint or double degree programs

**Average Funding Sources for EU Institutions**



**Average Funding Sources for U.S. Institutions**



Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

European institutions listed many more external funding sources than U.S. institutions. In addition to the Atlantis Program, which provides funding to both U.S. and EU institutions, European respondents indicated that the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus Programs were a significant source of external funding. Other sources providing support to EU institutions included the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), national and regional governments and the Deutsch-Französische Hochschule (Franco-German University). Very few U.S. institutions listed U.S. government funding sources other than the Atlantis program.

**Table 7: Most frequently cited external funding sources**

	EU Institutions	U.S. Institutions
Atlantis Program	15	11
Erasmus / Erasmus Mundus / European Commission	27	0
DAAD	7	0
National Governments	5	2
Deutsch-Französische Hochschule	5	0
Regional Governments	4	1

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

## II. Program Language, Mobility, and Academic Activities

This section analyzes the responses from participating institutions on curriculum and foreign language training, student and faculty mobility, and academic activities and course selection.

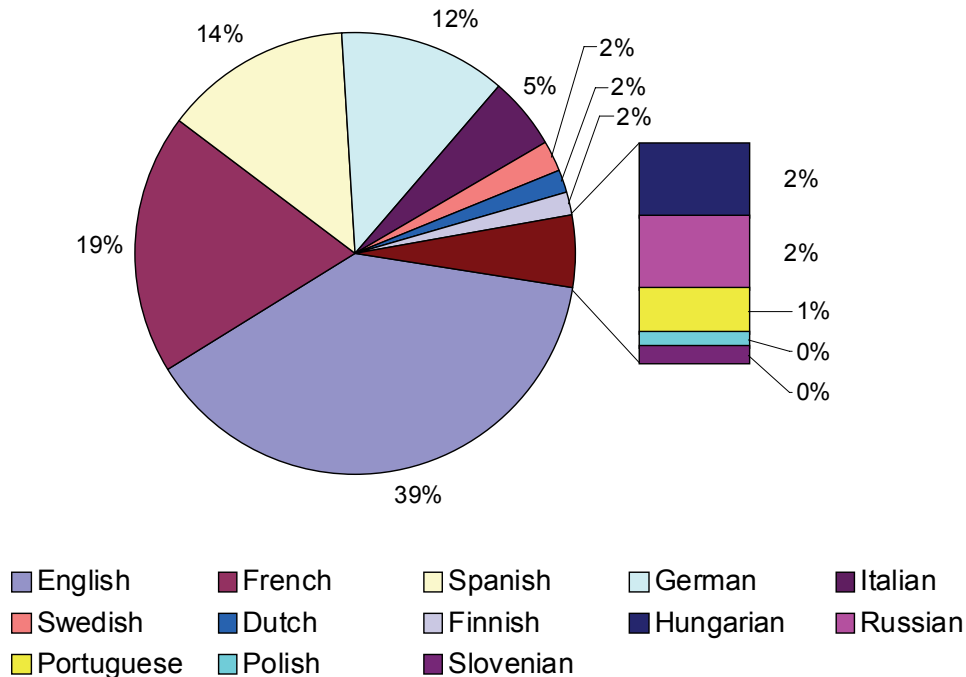
### A. Language of Instruction

According to survey respondents, English is by far the most commonly used language of instruction in joint or double degree programs, both in terms of the highest number of citations as the ‘most important’ language (94 mentions out of a total of 129) and in terms of the most mentions in any position of importance (111 out of 287 total, or 39%), as indicated in figures 6 and 7. French, Spanish, German, and Italian round out the top 5 most widely used languages.

**Figure 6: Number of Times Language is Mentioned in Any Position**

Top five languages mentioned in any position of importance (from “most widely used” to “4<sup>th</sup> most widely used”):

1. English (39%; 111 total responses)
2. French (19%; 55)
3. Spanish (14%; 40)
4. German (12%; 35)
5. Italian (5%; 15)

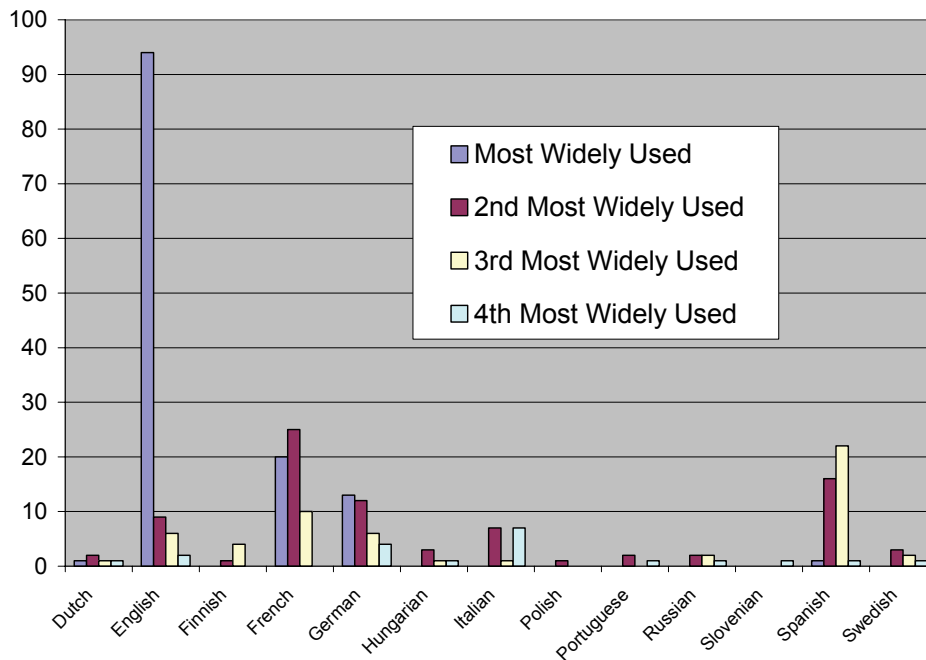


Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

However, when looking more closely at the number of survey respondents citing English as the “most widely used” language of instruction, it becomes clear that English is, indeed, the lingua franca of joint and double degree programs, at least in the transatlantic context. However, it is important to note that a number of respondents cited other languages as secondary (or 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, or 4<sup>th</sup> most widely used) language.

Other interesting findings show that French and German are the only languages other than English that are widely used as the principal language of instruction (Figure 7). Spanish and Italian, if used as languages of instruction, are almost always secondary languages in these programs.

**Figure 7: Top four languages used in joint or double degree programs**

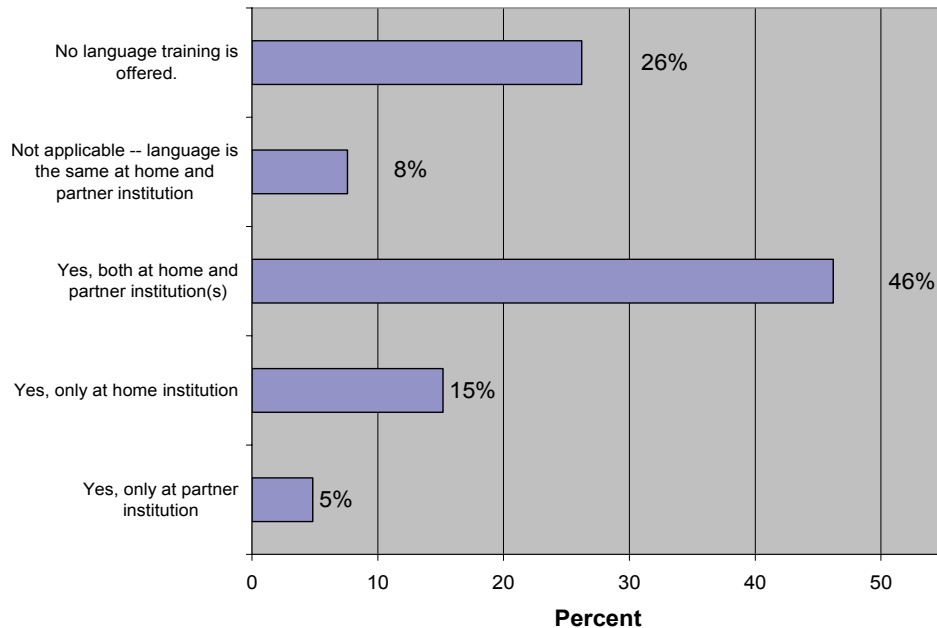


Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### C. Foreign Language Training

Nearly half of all programs (46%) included mandatory foreign language training at both the home and the partner institution. Fifteen percent offered training only at the home institution and 5% offered training only at the partner institution. Eight percent of responding institutions said that the language of instruction was the same at the home and partner institution, and therefore did not require foreign language training. About a quarter (26%) did not offer any training in language at all.

**Figure 8: Mandatory foreign language training in program curricula**



Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### D. Assessing Language Acquisition

The majority of responding institutions have ways of formally assessing foreign language acquisition, however European institutions were more likely to formally assess language acquisition (73%) than U.S. institutions (58%). The higher percentage among EU institutions may partly be a result of a requirement by the EU Commission that mandates Atlantis Program grantees to assess language acquisition. On the U.S. side, formal language assessment is not currently required for Atlantis Program institutions, but will be in future years.

**Table 8: Institutions with ways to assess the amount of language learned**

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

	U.S.	EU
<b>Yes</b>	30	56
<b>No</b>	22	21
<b>% with Assessment</b>	57.7	72.7

## **E. Student and Faculty Mobility**

A majority of both U.S. (49%) and EU (77%) respondents report that students begin their studies at the home institution and then transfer to one (or more) participating institution(s) (Table 9). While this is the preference for both U.S. and EU institutions, the model is unquestionably the prevalent one in the EU, whereas in the U.S. it exists alongside other models to a greater extent.

Cohort models were the second most common, accounting for 26% of U.S. and 15% of EU responses. Other models were far less common, with very few respondents reporting that their programs enroll individual students who begin their studies at the foreign institution and then transfer to the home institution.

**Table 9: Patterns of student mobility**

	<b>U.S. Respondents (%)</b>	<b>EU Respondents (%)</b>
Students study at home institution first, then transfer to one (or more) participating institution(s).	49	77
All study as a cohort (they start in one location and then transfer together to other institutions).	26	15
All move back and forth as a national/institutional cohort (they start at different participating locations and do not form a global “program cohort”).	14	5
Students study at participating (foreign) institution first, then transfer to the home institution.	11	4

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

Respondents were asked the minimum, maximum and average length of time spent at the institution abroad on their joint and double degree programs. The average response for minimum length abroad was 38% for U.S. respondents and 35% for EU respondents. The average maximum percentage of time spent abroad was 53% for U.S. respondents and 52% for EU respondents. These responses are very similar and indicate that in general programs on both sides of the Atlantic tend to send students abroad for between one-third and one-half of the total length of the program. However, when we look at a measure of how likely a program is to fall in this average range (the last row in Table 10), we see that U.S. respondents indicated a wider range of program lengths than EU respondents. Thus, while the averages are similar, there is greater variation in the length of time spent abroad for U.S. respondents than for EU respondents.

**Table 10: Period of study spent at the institution(s) abroad**

	<b>U.S. Respondents</b>	<b>EU Respondents</b>
<b>Min %</b>	38.3	34.9
<b>Max %</b>	52.5	52.0
<b>Percent of respondents whose average program length falls in this range</b>	47.6	65.2

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### Faculty Mobility:

Responses indicate a substantially higher level of faculty mobility between partner institutions for EU respondents (62%) than for U.S. respondents (46%).

**Table 11: Faculty mobility between participating partner institutions**

	U.S.	EU
Yes	27	51
No	32	31
Total Responses	59	82
% Moving between Institutions	45.8	62.2

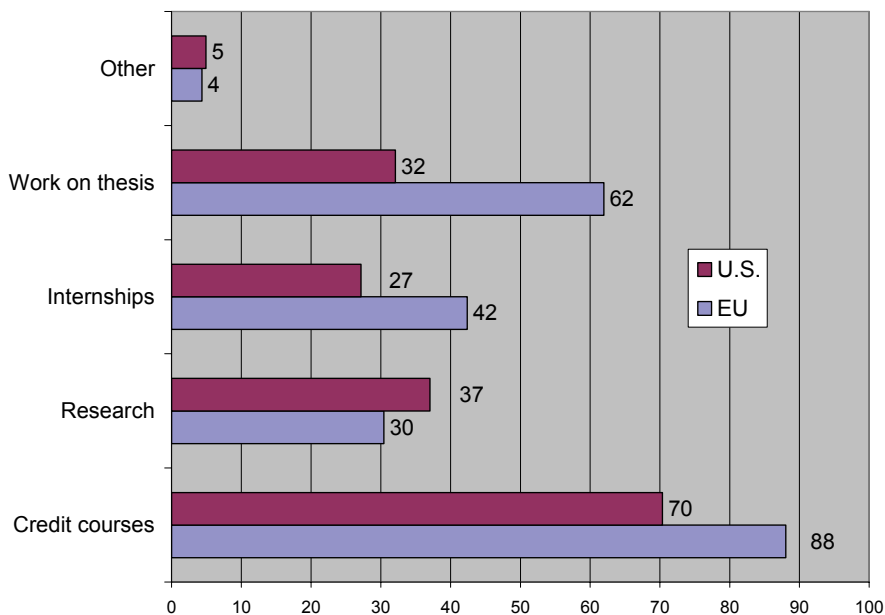
Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### **F. Academic Activities and Course Selection**

The most common activity during the stay abroad for students enrolled in joint and double degree programs was taking courses for credit. This is true for both U.S. respondents (70%) and EU respondents (88%).

For U.S. respondents, the second most common activity was research (37%), followed by thesis work (32%) and internships (27%). Among EU respondents, the second most commonly cited student activity was thesis work (62%), followed by internships (42%) and research (30%).

**Figure 9: Students' academic activities during their stay abroad**



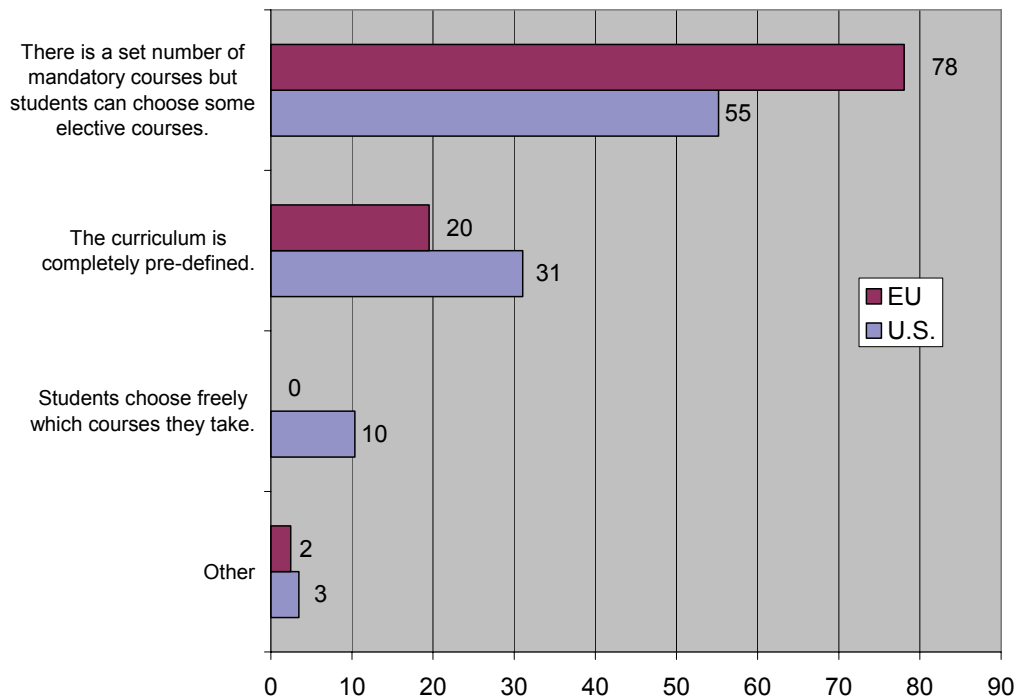
Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey

The responses from EU institutions are higher in most categories, indicating that their programs are more of a mixture of these activities than the programs of U.S. institutions. Other types of activities include service learning, assistantships, work on group projects and independent study.

Course Selection:

Survey responses indicate that the majority of institutions have a set number of mandatory courses but allow students to choose some elective courses. Less than one-third of the respondents indicated that the curriculum is completely pre-defined.

**Figure 10: Course selection at partner institutions (percentages)**



Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

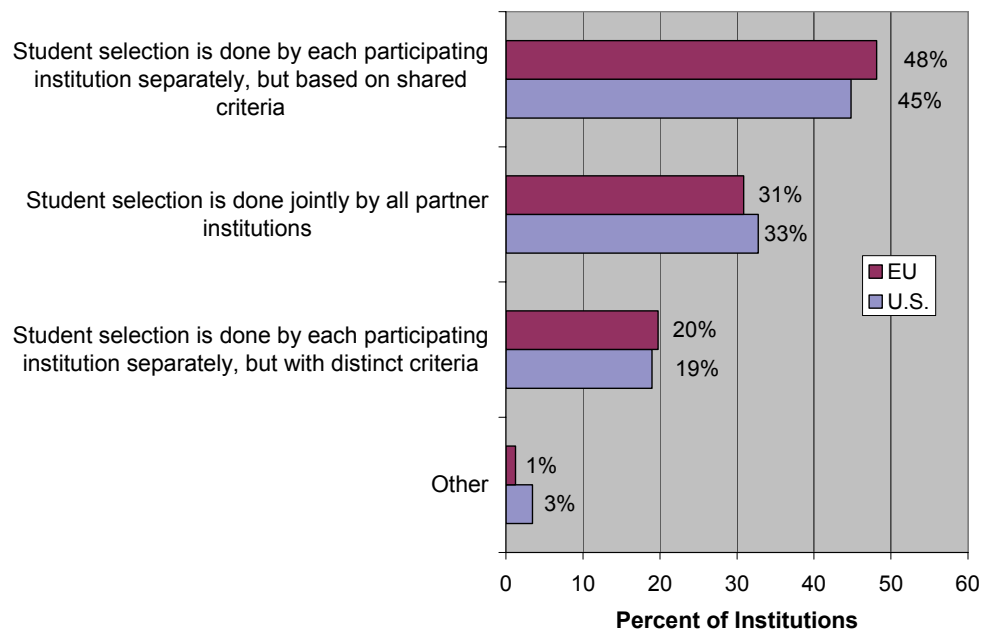
### III. Recruitment, Admission, Fees, and Accreditation

This section discusses student selection and recruitment, tuition and fees, financial assistance, as well as quality assurance and accreditation issues.

#### A. Selection Process

The basic method of student selection does not appear to vary between EU and U.S. institutions. Slightly less than half of all institutions select students separately but with shared criteria (48% EU; 45% U.S.), about one-third indicate that their programs use joint selection processes with all participating institutions (31% EU; 33% U.S.), and about one-fifth of respondents selected students separately from their partner institutions using different criteria (20% EU; 19% U.S.).

Figure 11: Student selection process

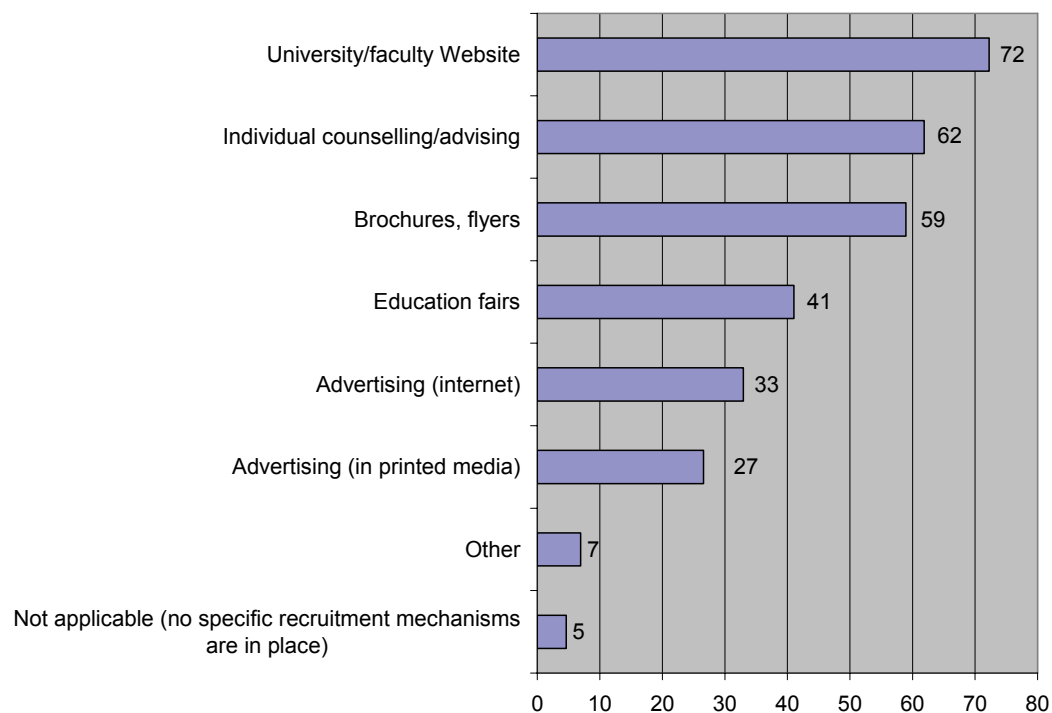


Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

#### B. Recruitment

The most common way to recruit students to joint or double degree programs appears to be through the university/faculty website (72%), individual counseling and advising (62%), and brochures and flyers (59%). Several respondents indicated other effective outreach mechanisms, including information sessions and classroom visits, professional listservs and journals, and through word of mouth.

**Figure 12: Most common ways to recruit students to joint and double degree programs (percentages)**



Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### Recruitment Challenges:

Survey respondents were asked to elaborate on some of the key challenges in recruiting students. Most of the responding U.S. institutions commented on three central issues: Language requirements (lack of foreign language proficiency), cost (program fees, limited availability of financial aid, instability in the dollar/euro exchange rate), and U.S. students' attitudes towards study abroad (According to comments from survey respondents, U.S. students are less likely to study abroad for a full semester or academic year, students do not see tangible value in studying abroad, and study abroad is not an integrated element in most academic disciplines, especially in the sciences).

Less frequently mentioned were structural issues. However, several respondents noted challenges related to mismatched academic calendars, the need to ensure that students meet the stringent academic requirements, and articulating degree requirements and curricula.

Responses from European survey participants were quite similar and also revolved around high costs and the lack of required language skills (mostly among the American students they seek to attract). European respondents also frequently mentioned that a particular challenge was to find high quality, motivated students, who can meet the stringent pre-requisites and high academic standards required for success in the program. Very few respondents specifically commented on issues related to the Bologna process. Only two respondents

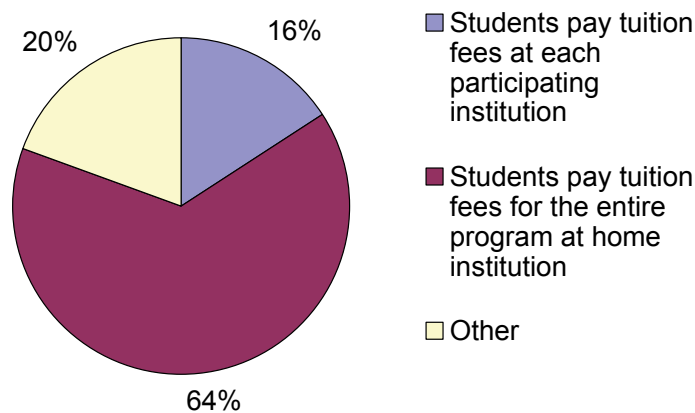
commented that the number of students participating in study abroad has been declining, largely related to the shorter Bologna-compliant undergraduate degrees.

### **C. Tuition, Fees, and Financial Assistance**

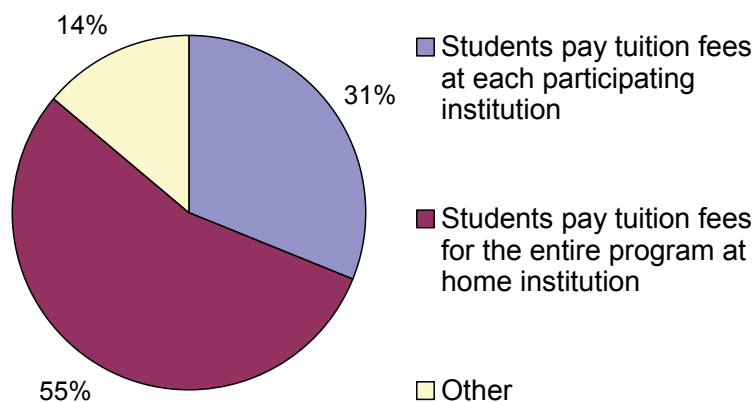
The majority of European respondents (64%) indicated that students paid all fees for the entire program to the home institution, with slightly less U.S. respondents indicating the same (55%). U.S. respondents were more likely to have programs in which the student paid separate tuition fees at each participating institution (31%) than EU respondents (16%).

**Figure 13: Tuition and fee structure**

#### **EU Respondents:**



#### **U.S. Respondents:**



Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

Many respondents on both the U.S. and EU side indicated that in many cases, both schemes apply, or that fees and fee structures vary for each program, often depending on the

memorandum of understanding between partner institutions. Several respondents indicated that fees are paid to the “coordinating” institution, which then divides tuition revenues among partner institutions. Others have noted different approaches depending on the academic level. At the graduate level, students pay at each institution, whereas at the undergraduate level, students only pay at home institution.

Financial Assistance:

In general, EU respondents were more likely than U.S. institutions to indicate financial assistance from either tuition fee waivers or mobility scholarships, a finding which is consistent with the funding models described in Figure 5. A majority of EU respondents (57%) said that EU institutions offered mobility scholarships for outgoing (EU) students, while very few (14%) said that no assistance was available. Even U.S. institutions indicated that more funding was available for EU students than for U.S. students, with 25% of U.S. respondents indicating that U.S. institutions offered tuition fee waivers to participating EU students. More U.S. respondents indicated that no assistance was available (25%).

**Table 12: Financial assistance structure**

	<b>U.S. Respondents (%)</b>	<b>EU Respondents (%)</b>
U.S. institutions offer tuition fee waivers for participating EU students	25	27
EU institutions offer tuition fee waivers for participating U.S. students	14	32
U.S. institutions offer mobility scholarships for outgoing students	22	16
EU institutions offer mobility scholarships for outgoing students	17	57
No assistance available	25	14

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

**D. Program Accreditation**

U.S. regional accrediting agencies were the most common method of accreditation for U.S. respondents (54%), followed by U.S. national accrediting agencies (36%). EU respondents were much more likely to be accredited by a Ministry of Education (51%) or an accrediting agency in an EU member state (45%). Somewhat more EU programs were not accredited (10%) compared to U.S. programs (2%).

**Table 13: Degree program accreditation**

	<b>U.S. Respondents (%)</b>	<b>EU Respondents (%)</b>
Accredited by U.S. regional accrediting agency	54	7
Accredited by U.S. national accrediting agency	36	13
Accredited by an agency in an EU member state	16	45
Professional accreditation/discipline-specific	23	20
Accredited by a Ministry of Education	17	51
Not accredited	2	10

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### **E. Program Evaluation**

Nearly all respondents indicated that they offer some form of program or faculty evaluation. EU respondents were about as likely to be regularly evaluated by internal experts (52%) as external experts (50%), whereas U.S. respondents were more likely to be evaluated by internal experts (51%) versus external experts (26%). Students were more likely to evaluate faculty members according to EU respondents (62%) than to U.S. respondents (44%).

**Table 14: Degree program evaluation**

	<b>U.S. Respondents (%)</b>	<b>EU Respondents (%)</b>
Regularly evaluated by internal experts	51	52
Regularly evaluated by external experts	26	50
Faculty members are evaluated by students	44	62
No internal or external evaluation	6	3

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

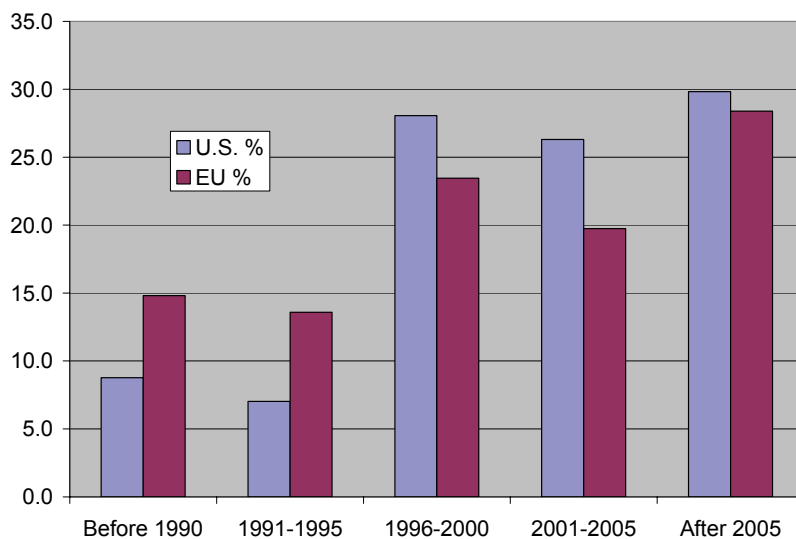
## IV: Program Development, Motivations, and Impact

This section addresses the more qualitative aspects of developing joint and double degree programs, including motivations for initiating a degree program and choosing partner institutions. This section also explores the key challenges in setting up collaborative degree programs and future plans.

### A. Program Development

EU institutions were likely to have started their first joint and double degree programs earlier than U.S. institutions. More EU institutions launched their first programs prior to 1996. U.S. institutions were more likely to have begun their first programs in the decade from 1996 to 2005. Since 2005, EU institutions and U.S. institutions have entered the field of joint and double degrees at comparable rates.

**Figure 14: Year in which respondents launched first joint or double degree program**

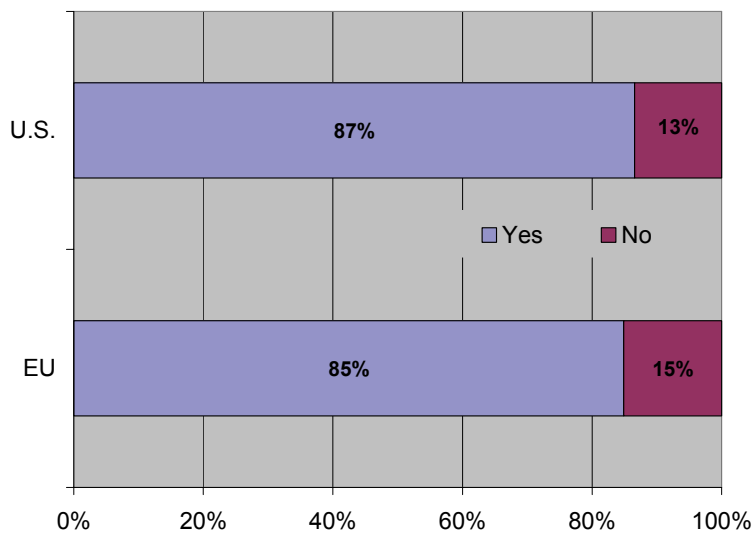


Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

## **B. Future Plans**

A large majority of both U.S. institutions (87%) and EU institutions (85%) plan to continue to develop more joint and double degrees. The institutions that indicated that they are not planning to develop more degree programs generally cited that the institution currently had different priorities, and that international alliances would be expanded based on particular strategic goals. Several also noted the lack of resources, administrative burdens involved in setting up collaborative degree programs and the lack of institutional support.

**Figure 15: Institutions that plan to develop more international joint or double degree programs**

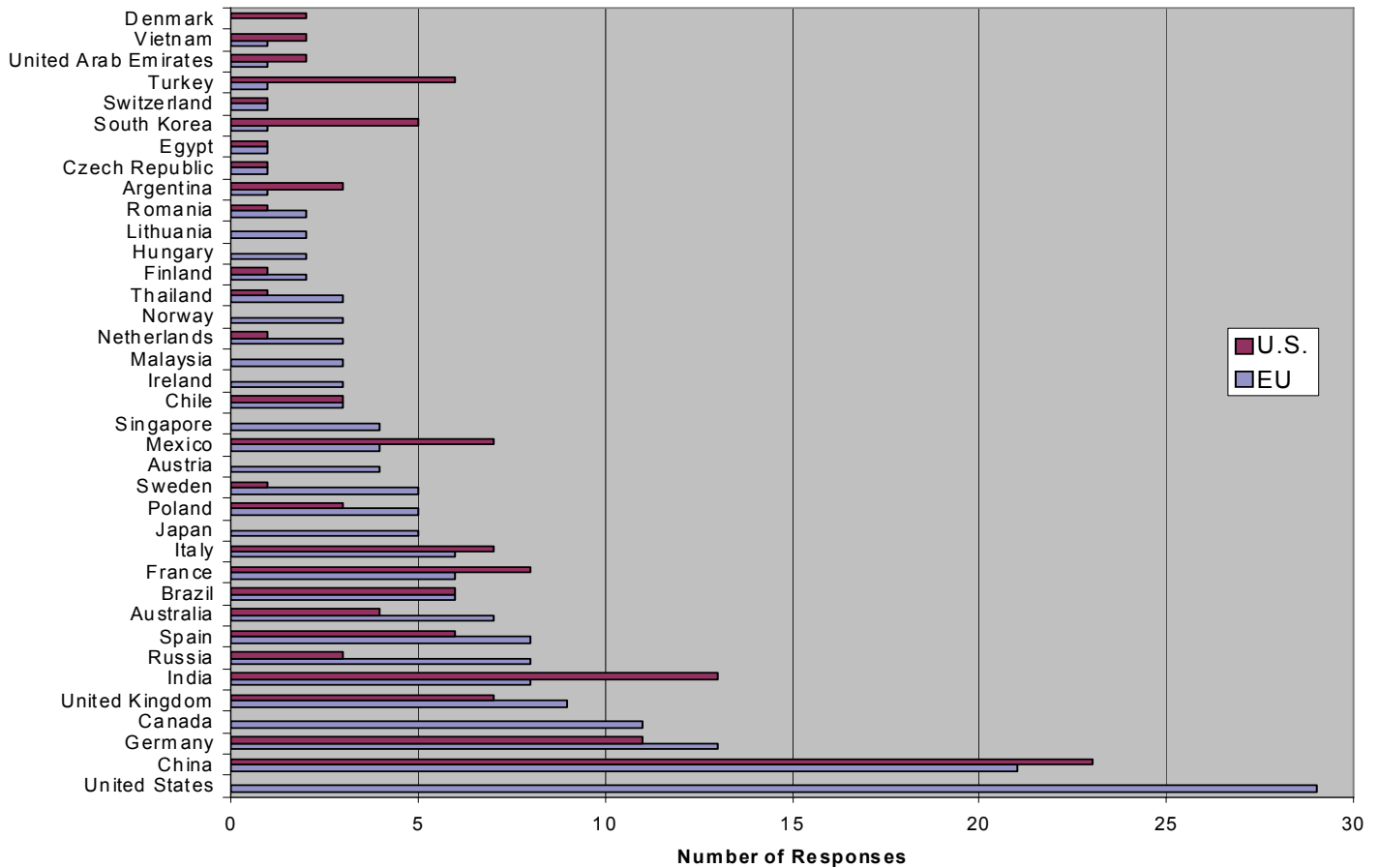


Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

Desired Partner Countries:

Surveyed institutions are very interested in developing further programs in countries in Europe, North America, Latin America and East Asia. There appears to be less interest in developing programs with institutions in the Middle East or Africa. The most desired partner countries for EU institutions were: United States, China, Germany, Canada and the United Kingdom. Preferred partner countries for U.S. institutions were: China, India, Germany, and France.

**Figure 16: Desired partner countries for future joint or double degree programs**



Others listed once by EU institutions: Antigua and Barbuda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Latvia, Malta, Morocco, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Portugal, Serbia and Slovakia. Others listed once by U.S. institutions: Cameroon, Israel, Luxembourg, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and Ukraine.

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### Academic Disciplines:

The two fields in which surveyed institutions most want to develop new joint and double degree programs are the same fields that are most common in existing programs: business and management (21%) and engineering (15%). Hard sciences are next, followed by social sciences and humanities.

**Table 15: Most popular disciplines for future joint or double degree programs**

	U.S. Percentage	EU Percentage	Overall Percentage
Business and Management	39	36	21
Engineering	20	32	15
Physical and Life Sciences	18	12	9
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	15	14	9
Social Sciences	15	13	8
Humanities	12	12	7
Health Professions	9	10	6
Education	10	8	5
Fine and Applied Arts	11	5	5
Communications	9	7	5
Other (General studies, multidisciplinary, library sciences)	9	5	4
Law	1	8	3
Agriculture	7	3	3

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### **C. Motivations**

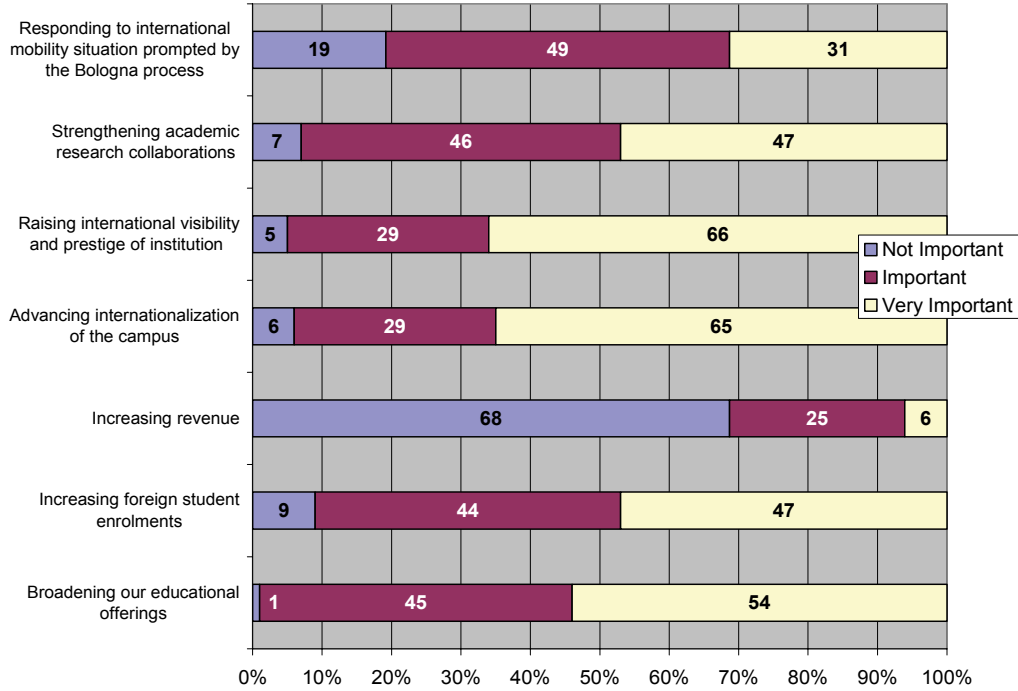
Motivations for launching a joint or double degree program can be placed in the following rough order, from most important to least important:

1. Advancing internationalization of the campus
2. Raising international visibility and prestige of the institution
3. Broadening the institution's educational offerings
4. Strengthening academic research collaborations
5. Increasing foreign student enrollments

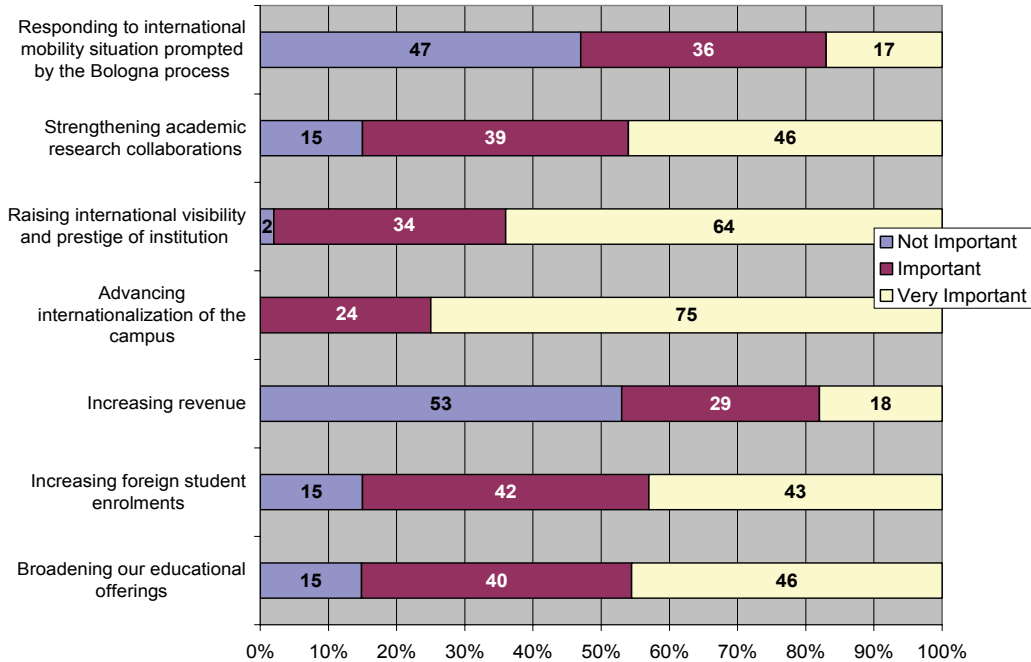
These motivating factors are generally the same for EU and U.S. institutions; however, it is interesting to note two cases where motivations vary slightly. As might be expected, EU institutions were more concerned about the Bologna process, with 80% of institutions saying it was either an "important" or "very important" factor, compared with 53% of U.S. institutions. Another interesting case was "increasing revenue," which 68% of EU respondents judged to be "not important," versus only 53% of U.S. respondents.

**Figure 17: Relative importance of motivating factors to launch a joint or double degree program**

EU Institutions



U.S. Institutions



Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008. Numbers refer to percentages.

### Choosing Partner Institutions:

Partner institutions are most often selected on the basis of existing institutional linkages, either through existing exchange partnerships (43% for EU respondents and 31% for U.S. respondents) or faculty contacts and partnerships (28% for EU respondents and 36% for U.S. respondents). Some new partners are also chosen as part of a larger strategic decision to focus on a particular world region or field of study (23% for EU respondents and 24% for U.S. respondents). Nearly all responses for “Other” indicated that a combination of all three factors was considered.

**Table 16: Choosing a partner institution**

	EU Respondents (%)	U.S. Respondents (%)
Existing exchange partner through an already established program	43	31
Known contacts among faculty/existing faculty partnerships	28	36
Strategic decision to pick new partner	23	24
Other	6	9

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

### Program Initiation:

About half of all respondents indicated that initiating a joint degree program requires for all levels to be involved, an opinion shared by slightly more U.S. respondents (57%) than EU respondents (48%). The second most common scenario for all respondents was the bottom-up approach, with 29% of U.S. respondents and 33% of EU respondents indicating that programs were mainly initiated through individual professors’ activities with some institutional support. Few respondents said that programs were initiated through a top-down approach — 14% of U.S. respondents and 19% of EU respondents, respectively.

**Table 17: Approach for program initiation**

	EU	U.S.
Top-down approach; joint or double degree programs are mainly initiated as a strategic choice made by the institution’s management	19%	14%
Bottom-up approach: joint or double degree programs are mainly initiated through individual professors’ activities with some institutional support	33%	29%
All levels are actively involved	48%	57%

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

EU institutions were more likely to initiate additional structures to handle the administration of joint and double degree programs compared to U.S. respondents.

**Table 18: Institutions that initiated additional structures to handle the administration of joint or double degree programs**

	EU	U.S.
Yes	51%	42%
No	49%	58%

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

#### **D. Challenges**

EU respondents and U.S. respondents met with similar challenges in attempting to establish successful joint and double degree programs. Topping the list for both EU and U.S. institutions was a) securing adequate funding, and b) ensuring sustainability of the program. Precise order of challenges varies after this, but remains similar in most cases. Notable divergences include:

- Securing institutional support and deciding on the fee structure appear to be more challenging for U.S. institutions than for EU institutions
- EU institutions consider curriculum design to be more challenging than do U.S. institutions

Notably, both U.S. and EU institutions consider negotiating a memorandum of understanding to be one of their least difficult tasks when designing a joint or double degree program.

**Table 19: Potential challenges in setting up joint or double degree programs (1 being not challenging at all, and 5 being very challenging)**

	EU	U.S.
Securing adequate funding	3.5	3.9
Ensuring sustainability of the program	3.5	3.7
Different requirements for general education	3.3	3.2
Designing the curriculum	3.3	3
Agreeing on credit transfer recognition	3.2	3
Resolving differences in academic calendars	3.1	2.9
Communicating with partner institution(s)	3	3.1
Recruiting students	3	3.3
Determining durations of degrees in each country	2.8	2.8
Getting the program accredited	2.8	2.6
Securing institutional support	2.7	3.3
Resolving language issues	2.6	2.9
Negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding	2.6	2.2
Deciding on the fee structure	2.4	3

Source: Transatlantic Degree Programs Survey 2008

Survey respondents were asked to elaborate on the key challenges in establishing joint or double degree programs, which are summarized below:

*Recruiting students:* Many respondents pointed to the difficulties they face in recruiting students to joint or double degree programs. The majority indicated that it is particularly problematic to find U.S. students interested in such programs. According to the survey respondents, this student flow imbalance, which is also well-known among more traditional student exchange programs, is likely caused by the fact that U.S. students are generally less inclined to study abroad than European students, and oftentimes do not meet the required levels of language proficiency. As one of the survey respondents commented: “The key challenge is to recruit students with good linguistic competencies and the will to go abroad.”

*Securing institutional support:* Challenges with securing institutional support figured very prominently among the responses. As some survey respondents pointed out, personal commitment by individual faculty is oftentimes the starting point of a joint or double degree program, but without institutional support on all levels, most such endeavors will be short lived. “Sustainability”, as one respondent comments, “must be based on long-term institutional commitment.” Or, as another respondent recalls: “Overall things went pretty smoothly, once the institutional support was given.”

*Resolving differences:* In the context of institutional support, a number of participants also commented that they encountered major problems with their home institution’s administration. In the words of one U.S. respondent: “Generally EU and U.S. partners are very eager to cooperate and collaborate but they sometimes insist about taking into account only their rules.” Lack of understanding for a partner institution’s own realities and needs constitutes a serious challenge, according to several respondents. Reaching a win-win situation for two (or more) institutions might be impossible if the partners aren’t prepared to be flexible on some issues and if there is no real institutional vision to encourage such flexibility on all levels.

*Accreditation and quality assurance:* Numerous comments suggested major challenges with quality assurance and accreditation. While a relationship of mutual trust remains the single most important ingredient for successful joint or double degree programs according to the respondents, “a clear legal framework upon which to build these programs - including accreditation system guidelines – is also needed.” One of the respondents puts it almost as a plea: “We are interested in having a large number of joint and dual degrees, but we are constantly turning down opportunities because the quality assurance burden is so great.” In cases where formal accreditation of joint or double degrees is possible, it usually comes with increased costs both in terms of time and funding.

Some survey respondents criticized accreditation authorities on both sides of the Atlantic for their slow response and sometimes even unwillingness to acknowledge the realities of novel forms of international higher education cooperation such as joint or double degree programs. In addition, challenges can derive from differences in accreditation cultures. One respondent points out: “Accreditation systems vary because quality is defined with rigor but based on different approaches and perspectives.”

*Funding:* Many respondents discussed challenges related to funding, both in terms of support for student mobility and overall program costs. Some responses suggest that without additional funding for a coordinator or program assistant it was difficult to meet the additional workload that joint or double degree programs usually generate. Funding for students, in form of scholarships or travel grants, was another issue frequently mentioned by survey participants from both Europe and the U.S. In particular, many noted that few funding opportunities existed for U.S. students going abroad. For European students, respondents largely agreed, that the main challenge in terms of costs was the issue of tuition fees at U.S. partner institutions, unless agreements for tuition waivers were in place.

#### Overcoming challenges:

Asked to provide suggestions about how challenges could be overcome, most respondents agreed that building up and maintaining good lines of communication both with the partner and with the home institution is crucial. As one respondent puts it: “Good advance planning and good ongoing communication between the partners are both key,” as well as “closely working with academic departments and university administration.” A number of respondents also mentioned that flexibility from both sides is essential to overcoming challenges, adding that it all starts with a relationship of trust. According to one European respondent, it was largely “learning by doing - it goes easier and easier every time. Find out your institutions and your academics priorities - as well as your partners’ priorities and then find the best possible solution. Everyone has to give up on something.”

With regard to student recruitment challenges, respondents suggest that they need a clear understanding of who the potential students are and where these can be found. Since many joint and double degree programs are designed for the best and brightest only, institutions must develop a comprehensive strategy how to target and successfully recruit these students.

## Conclusion

The survey results presented in this report do not claim to be representative of all existing joint or double degree programs in the transatlantic context, let alone similar programs between partner institutions in other world regions. Each and every collaborative degree program is unique. Naturally, all programs exist in specific academic and administrative settings, with a variety of institutional provisions and legal realities that may enhance or discourage their development. Hence, the challenges they face will be equally diverse, making it difficult to offer advice on best practices and guidelines.

However, as the survey results clearly indicate, certain tendencies and overarching commonalities can be identified. These observations are intended to help facilitate a better understanding of the dynamics of such programs and their respective environments. With the completion of the survey analysis and the publication of the results, the project consortium will issue a call for papers in Europe and the U.S. in order to invite experts in joint and double degree program development to submit articles featuring recommendations on overcoming challenges. Both the survey report and the individual articles will be then made available online at [www.iej.org](http://www.iej.org) and at [www.tdp-project.de](http://www.tdp-project.de).

With regard to the transatlantic context, despite numerous challenges articulated by survey participants, it is very unlikely that the next years will see less development of collaborative degree programs between European and U.S. institutions. Other countries and regions are also seeing growth: China for instance ranked number one when U.S. respondents were asked with which countries they wanted to develop more collaborative programs in the future, and ranked number two among EU respondents. Similar developments, albeit on a different scale, can also be observed for other world regions, in particular other parts of Asia and South America. Nonetheless, at present the transatlantic link prevails as the dominant connection in the realm of collaborative joint or double degree programs, in large part thanks to key funding initiatives such as the EU-US Atlantis Program, which support the development of such programs.

In general, the question then is not so much whether the number of collaborative programs will increase. The survey participants answered this question very clearly, and a growing number of conferences and initiatives are also addressing the phenomenon of collaborative degree programs on both sides of the Atlantic, telling the story of a clear future trend. Rather, the most pressing need at the current time is to identify the most successful models and good practices for such endeavors. The data available suggest that programs with a double degree structure will be more common than joint degrees, mostly due to legal issues. Similarly, the figures indicate that collaborative programs on the graduate level will be more common than on the undergraduate level, although the current situation in the U.S. seems to be more balanced in this respect.

Notwithstanding some prominent exceptions, it seems plausible to say that such programs – regardless of their individual structural features, academic discipline or regional context – will not attract and move large numbers of students. Indeed, the results of the survey suggest that the average student enrollment figures of these programs are relatively low. Yet administrators should not necessarily see the limited potential applicant pool as a negative

feature of these degree programs, since the programs are capable of attracting groups of very bright students. Nevertheless, some aspects of the programs may be in need of more immediate attention, such as their tendency to draw disproportionately from one side of the Atlantic: while students from European countries by and large readily participate in collaborative degree programs, student recruitment efforts in the U.S. tend to be more challenging.

This survey did not attempt to focus on student preferences or to address their specific concerns. Its goal was rather to paint an initial picture of the current landscape of collaborative degree programs in the transatlantic context, which will be expanded in the future. As we attempt to understand further aspects of these programs, the student perspective should receive more attention. For example, future research could include a survey of alumni of joint and double degree programs addressing their employment opportunities upon the completion of their degree. Addressing the students' perspective in turn might prove crucial for developing successful recruitment strategies.

# Appendices

## **A. About the Atlantis Program**

### *Program Description*

The program, jointly administered and funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture, provides grants for up to four years to add a European Community-United States dimension to international curriculum development and related student exchange.

### *Types of Projects*

The program supports projects that develop organizational frameworks for transatlantic student mobility, including work placements and internships that will provide adequate language preparation and full academic credit. Also supported are innovative curricula; teaching materials, methods, and modules; research internships; and teaching assignments.

### *Additional Information*

The European Union-United States Atlantis Program is a grant competition conducted cooperatively by the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC). The purpose of this competition is to promote a student-centered, transatlantic dimension to higher education and training in a wide range of academic and professional disciplines. The Atlantis Program will fund collaborative efforts to develop programs of study leading to joint or dual undergraduate or graduate degrees. The program will also fund a small number of policy-oriented grants and one-team mobility grants.

More information is available at:

[www.ed.gov/programs/fipseec/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/fipseec/index.html)

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/eu-usa/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/eu-usa/index_en.html)

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