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The Tourism Education Futures Initiative

The world faces many challenges, of which one of the most important is creating the leaders of tomorrow. With an explicit charge of universities to take a leading role in educating society, many have suggested that that we need to take a new approach in teaching our students values that will lead to a sustainable future. Indeed, innovative scholars and industry leaders throughout the world have begun to recognize the fundamental importance of values at the university and in the workplace.

The Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI) was born out of a concern for the future of tourism education by a number of truly innovative, thoughtful and committed scholars and industry leaders. This Initiative represents the collective effort of over 70 persons over the past three years to begin a process of rebuilding the education process so that tomorrow will be shaped by people that are committed to a sustainable world.

Specifically TEFI has the following mission:

TEFI seeks to provide vision, knowledge and a framework for tourism education programs to promote global citizenship and optimism for a better world.

Therefore, the vision of TEFI is to not only work to reshape tourism education worldwide, but to help the leaders of the tourism industry follow practices that are rooted in basic values.

Institutions and People Involved

The TEFI initiative has benefitted from the participation of educators and industry members from around the world. Working Groups have been led by various individuals who

have played a key role in bringing the initiative to this point. Three meetings have been held to date which have been financially sponsored by universities from around the world with strong tourism programs: Temple University, University of Hawaii, and Virginia Tech University, USA, University of Queensland, La Trobe University and University of Victoria, Australia, Bocconi University, Italy, Modul University, Austria and University of Lugano, Switzerland. They have also been sponsored by the International Academy for the Study of Tourism and the BEST Education Network. We are indebted to them for their support. The Steering Committee that has guided this initiative consists of Daniel Fesenmaier, Pauline Sheldon, John Tribe, Leo Jago, Janne Liburd and Karl Woeber.

The TEFI Process

The seeds of TEFI are based upon the general recognition that higher education and more particularly, tourism education must change in order to meet the various challenges. Additionally, it was recognized that many people (including academicians, teachers, industry professionals, and government leaders) throughout the world have voiced their concerns regarding the future. Led by these voices, a number of innovators concerned about the future of tourism education met in Vienna, Austria to discuss the status of tourism education and to assess the degree to which there was an agreement concerning the need to develop alternative models for tourism education. During this meeting, a process emerged that provides a framework for the growth and development of TEFI. That is, TEFI is largely organized around a process which is both proactive and action oriented, focusing on translating the core values articulated by the membership to implementation so that there can be a fundamental change in tourism education.

The TEFI process includes two important action settings: 1. An annual Summit, which brings together innovators from around the world to consider issues related to tourism education; and, 2. Working Groups, which throughout the year seek to develop tools that can be used to affect tourism education. The Annual Summit is generally comprised of 30 – 40 leading scholars and industry professionals and includes both lectures and breakout groups. The lectures are conducted to stimulate thinking and to challenge the status quo. For example, in the First Summit, Dr. Jim Dator, a leading futurist from the University of Hawaii, challenged the TEFI members to develop scenarios of future worlds, and then to propose possible solutions/responses to these scenarios. In the Second Summit, Dr. John Tribe articulated a vision of hope – an Academy of Hope – for the future of society and tourism education, in particular. But, he also challenged the group to take personal responsibility in shaping this future world. Dr. Gianna Moscardo presented a lecture focusing on the learning styles of the next generation, arguing that how we teach is just as important as what we teach. And, Scott Meis, former director of research for the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, demonstrated quite conclusively that the industry need for qualified employees will become even more critical over the next decade. The Third Summit focused on barriers to change within the university (as discussed by Dr. Thomas Bieger of the University of St. Gallen) and strategies for programmatic change (as exemplified by lectures by Drs. Irena Ateljevic, Simon Wong, Betsy Barber and Loredana Padurean). These presentations clearly demonstrated barriers and potential strategies for changing educational processes within the university; they also highlighted a number of conflicts within higher education in realizing the changes.

While the lectures provide the starting point of discussion, TEFI is organized around break out groups that provide the setting for ideation, creativity, dialogue and problem resolution. Throughout the three TEFI Summit meetings, the members of the break-out

groups are tasked to develop position statements regarding the various issues related to the theme of the annual meeting. Then, the results of these efforts are presented to TEFI body for clarification and ultimate approval.

The second pillar of the TEFI process is the Working Group. For each of the Summits, Working Groups have been organized to provide essential energy and direction so as to result in concrete action-oriented tools that can be used by TEFI. For example, prior to the first TEFI summit, a Working Group identified a core set of readings that established a foundation – a common language and set of ideas and ideals - for discussion. In addition, the Working Group conducted a pre-meeting survey of participants regarding key knowledge and skill sets needed for the tourism graduate of the future. Three different Working Groups emerged from the first Summit, focusing on defining TEFI values, identifying case studies in the values-based education and assessing programmatic changes through outcome-based education. Each of the Working Groups developed working papers and presentations which were then presented and discussed at the TEFI 2009. And finally, as the result of the Third Summit, a series of Working Groups have been developed so as to create more concrete tools for supporting TEFI. These Working Groups include the following activities: 1. Developing a White Paper which outlines/documents the progress made by TEFI members; 2. Proposing a Faculty Code of Ethics; 3. Developing an outreach pilot program to universities worldwide; and, 4. Developing a ‘values inventory’ which may be used as part of program assessment.

TEFI Values

An important outcome of the TEFI process is a set of five values-based principles that tourism students should embody upon so that they will become responsible leaders and stewards for the destinations where they work or live (see below).

Figure 1. The TEFI Values



They five values are: 1 Ethics, 2. Stewardship, 3. Knowledge, 4. Professionalism and 5.

Mutuality, and are portrayed as interlocking Value Principles because of the interconnectedness of the value sets and their permeability. It is envisioned by TEFI members that educators can use subsets of the five value principles to integrate into their courses as appropriate. The outcome of the third TEFI summit was a detailed description of these values in the form of a White Paper.

The Way Forward

With the goal to fundamentally transform tourism education, TEFI is poised to move forward in a number of ways. As we move forward it is critical that we engage all stakeholders. In particular, we wish to work with leading industry thinkers to define a new model for the tourism industry. In addition, we will bring students into the process to add their understanding to the redesign of education. Finally, we will also invite those in the

upper levels of administration of university programs including deans, rectors, chancellors, provosts, etc. to gain their unique perspective and implementation possibilities.

Efforts to move the initiative forward include networking with a series of organizations and institutions involved in tourism education, distribution of the TEFI ideas and values, applications for grants, and the planning of future meetings.

Summary

TEFI is dynamic with many institutions and players involved. It is our wish that this collaborative effort succeed in shifting the focus of tourism education worldwide to provide more responsible graduates and better stewardship for destinations and their environmental and socio-cultural resources. We invite as many people as possible to walk this path with us and help to redefine tourism education for the future.