



“The challenges
of our age are problems
without passports; to address them
we need blueprints without borders.
The United Nations is there
to provide them.”

~ *Kofi A. Annan*
Macalester College Commencement, 1998

Macalester College and its 21,000 alumni around the world congratulate Kofi A. Annan, Macalester Class of 1961, U.N. Secretary-General, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2001

 **MACALESTER COLLEGE**

International Education. Now More Than Ever.

— A message from Macalester College by President Michael S. McPherson —

It is worth remembering, in these times when proposals are afoot to make it harder for international students to attend American colleges, that Kofi Annan, winner of this year's Nobel Peace Prize, first entered the United States on a student visa. Secretary-General Annan has said of his time at Macalester College in the early 1960s that “the focus which I found here has never failed me.”

Our country has, to be sure, legitimate security concerns regarding the entry of foreign nationals to the United States and their movements while here, and our colleges and universities need to cooperate with legitimate efforts to ensure that student visas are not abused.

Yet it is desperately important that we not lose sight of the larger picture. Education remains the most important vehicle we have for promoting international understanding. We should be encouraging American students to learn all they can about the lives and the histories of people around the world. We should encourage young people to study abroad – and not only in the more familiar territory of England and France, but in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America as well.

By the same token, we must keep the doors of American education open to students from all corners of the world. As president of a college which at any given time enrolls students from more than 70 countries, I see first hand the growth both in understanding and in curiosity about the world that happens for American students as they engage their colleagues from abroad. Meanwhile, our international students not only experience a broad liberal arts education of a kind that is available

in few other countries in the world, but they also acquire a deeper understanding of our complex, dynamic, and yet far from perfect country. Real education is the enemy both of fanaticism and of complacency.

More than 514,000 international students were studying in the United States during the 1999-2000 academic year, according to the Institute of International Education. At the same time, nearly 130,000 American college students were studying abroad. Any one of those students could someday make a difference in the world in the way this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner has or in a myriad of other ways.

The events of September 11 have shattered forever the illusion, still cherished by too many Americans, that we stand at some distance from the world. We are, it must now be clear, for better and for worse, and quite inescapably, part of the world. However tempting it may be to try to withdraw into ourselves, our best – our only – hope is to engage the world in all its cultural and religious and human variation and to join in the struggle to improve it.

As Kofi Annan said during a commencement speech at our campus in 1998: “The challenges of our age are problems without passports; to address them we need blueprints without borders. The United Nations is there to provide them.”

To do that will require all of our intellectual and moral faculties. We must allow and encourage our colleges and universities to lead the way.

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