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An advertisement for the Toshiba Portégé M700 laptop. On the left, a black laptop is shown with a silver pen resting on its lid. To the right of the laptop, the text "Portégé® M700" is written in a large, bold, red font, with "from the laptop expert." in a smaller red font below it. In the top right corner, the "TOSHIBA" logo is displayed in red, with "Leading Innovation >>" in a smaller black font underneath. At the bottom right, there is a red rectangular button with the white text "EXPLORE NOW".

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Going 'Un-Global'

By [George Morgan](#)

As summer begins, negotiations in the so-called Doha Round of world trade talks again heat up as countries jockey to retain their protection for domestic industries such as agriculture and to restrict non-agricultural market access. U.S. presidential candidates are focusing a lot of attention on issues of trade and immigration. The candidates blame a slowing U.S. economy and big jumps in the unemployment rate on NAFTA, Chinese currency policy, dependence on *foreign* oil, and globalization.

Popular pundits are pleading that the next administration must protect our borders, restricting cross-border movement of people as well as goods. Cries for restricting the import of Chinese toys and chemicals have become louder in recent months. All around us, the free movement of goods, services, people and capital across political borders is losing political strength and popularity.

It is past time for colleges and universities to fully accept the trend before they and their graduates are left behind. Universities should embrace the anti-globalization ethos not just with rhetoric or by re-focusing investments of their foundations, but by overhauling the curriculum. The curriculum and staffing should be harmonized with the tenets of the new nationalism movement. The status quo will not do justice to our students who will enter the un-global world.

How should such a curriculum be configured? How should the university prepare its students for this coming world of self-sufficient economies? Here we examine a few of the most significant trends that will develop. Many additional more modest proposals could certainly be examined in a more comprehensive manifesto.

Where are we headed? Corporations, bereft of their international subsidiaries and manufacturing facilities in the coming world order, will hire a different type of graduate from the university. Managing employees across different cultures? No need for those aptitudes once each country dis-integrates their affairs from others'. Employers will not value, in their hiring or promotion decisions, graduates with foreign language skills, study abroad experience, intercultural breadth, or international business acumen.

There will be no need to cross borders or to bridge cultures. No need to deal with suppliers of components or services, or with providers of Chilean wine or Finnish cell phones, or to interact with overseas customers for our coal, computers or corn (since other nations, too, will be, in their nationalist interests, self-sufficient). So there will be no practical need for foreign language skills or courses. Faculty in those areas will be nearly eliminated from the academic ranks.

Our inwardly directed economy will not reward students for studying abroad. Demand for such programs will dwindle, and they will need to be eliminated to conserve resources for the self-sufficient economy. Offices for education abroad will be "re-sized." Similarly, universities will need to shed their international business and international relations programs, courses and faculty.

Intercultural breadth will be devalued. Instead, a renewed emphasis must be placed on technical skills and the trades to serve the self-sufficient economy. In fact, de-mobilizing labor, i.e., stopping the flow of people across borders, will mean a renaissance for professional programs in plumbing, bricklaying, construction, call centers, sewing and other fields. Universities' curriculums must adapt to such a revival or face significant declining enrollments.

The implications for and readjustments in faculty hiring and salaries will be substantial. The ensuing glut of unemployed language, linguistics, international relations and culture faculty will mean salaries will plummet even further below those of faculty in other areas. Faculty in areas with more direct relevance to self-sufficiency, such as business management of sole proprietorships, accounting (under U.S. standards), nursing, farming, and building bridges, not requiring any international skills, will rise.

We can certainly anticipate there will be a later stage "backlash." Foreign languages and linguistics will become majors for students purely interested in intellectual stimulation. Language departments will not be service departments but will become the domain of students with a purer objective of studying language and culture without any practical application. All foreign languages will take on the esoteric mantle of Latin – you won't ever need to speak it to anyone, but it will be an intriguing intellectual pursuit. Thus, some language and international affairs scholars must remain in academia. That elite cadre will be valued for their intellectual purity and their commitment to studies with so little real world applicability. This, thankfully, will bring languages back to the heyday of intellectualism when language studies were untainted by real world application.

In summary, universities' fully endorsing and embracing the neo-nationalist movement should significantly alter the educational landscape. In an economy insulated from others in a compartmentalized world, educational resource allocations must shift. Courses emphasizing trade and professional skills will be the heart of a domestically oriented curriculum. Experts on foreign cultures, languages, politics, business, technology, and international art will become useless relics of an obsolete (*so* 20th century) point of view – a viewpoint too broad to apply to the new balkanized world economy.

In the long run, those few educators in such areas as languages and cultures who survive will be revered as scholars who pursue knowledge purely for its own sake — at the cost of being increasingly irrelevant in an economy that has no need for interacting with foreigners. They will be admired for their steadfast ivory-tower intellectual purity. Hence, the unintended side effect of universities accepting this challenge for curriculum reform is that the reputation of the language and culture departments will be restored. Our best language and culture faculty will be elevated, and our students will be better prepared for the orderly new world.

Let's jump on this trend before it is too late and before the university curriculum's 20th century breadth becomes its 21st century albatross.

George Morgan is SunTrust Professor of Finance in the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech.

The original story and user comments can be viewed online at <http://insidehighered.com/views/2008/06/16/morgan>.

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