CONNECTION
NEW ENGLAND'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CONNECTION has devoted a fair amount of ink during its 11 years of publication to two subjects that may at first seem scarcely related: New England's economic competitiveness in world markets and the region's magnetic appeal to foreign students. This issue looks at both, along with international programs for New England students, as part of a single, larger phenomenon: the globalization of New England's knowledge-intensive economy.

What is the relationship between New England's attractiveness to foreign students and the region's international economic position, particularly, its export trade?

For starters, when a foreign student pays tuition and fees at one of the region's colleges or universities — and last year, nearly 39,000 did — a New England service is being exported. But foreign enrollment also has a broader, less quantifiable effect on trade. Indeed, with a few notable exceptions, the nations whose students travel to New England in the largest numbers — and make contacts here — are the same ones with which New England conducts most of its trade.

Moreover, the scientific talent upon which much of New England's export-dependent economy is based has a distinctly international flavor. Nearly one in four U.S. scientists and engineers with doctorates is foreign-born. Massachusetts Institute of Technology faculty who have won Nobel prizes hail from Japan, India, Italy, and Mexico. And many of the central characters in the story of New England's modern economy have been foreign-born, high-tech entrepreneurs.

Our linking of foreign enrollment, international education and world trade, however, begs for some qualifications. Most importantly, the need for international awareness is too often presented solely as an imperative of economic competitiveness. It's true that we need to understand other cultures in order to sell them things. It's a borderless world, and many New England jobs depend on exports. But as Connecticut College President Claire L. Gaudiani notes, "In the multipolar world, international education must be reconceived not only to ensure New England's prosperity, but also to achieve global stability and improve the lives of the poor."

As trade becomes freer, child labor and other human rights abuses become New England's business — literally. The data provide few clues about the working conditions or labor practices of some of our trading partners. A report by the State Department and the New England Council, "American and Human Rights in New England Trade," found that human rights violations in Southeast Asia, for example, are a major concern for New England businesses. The report calls for increased awareness and action to address these issues.

In conclusion, there is no question that international education and trade are key components of New England's economic future. The region has a unique advantage in terms of its proximity to important international markets, its strong tradition in higher education, and its high-tech industries. But it must also be clear that these assets must be used in a responsible and ethical manner, and that the region must continue to work to improve the lives of people around the world.

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We are pleased to note that CONNECTION's Spring/Summer 1992 issue on regionalism remains timely. In September, the New England Board of Higher Education granted permission to Temple University to reprint the issue's "Cover Stories" on regionalism and interstate cooperation in their entirety in an edited volume entitled, American Confederate Experiences, Past and Present, to be copublished by Temple's Center for the Study of Federalism and the University Press of America.