have been chancellor of Troy University ( Ala.) since 1989. For more than two decades I have witnessed the internationalization of American higher education. Given the global nature of higher education, our U.S. universities are more reliant on partnerships with international universities than at any time in history. The university of the future will be built upon these partnerships.

Students must be competitive at a global level. It is no longer sufficient to serve your native population. All students benefit from exposure to classmates from other cultures, traditions and faiths. We must understand the people of the world in order to appreciate them.

Troy University is reaching around the globe to serve the world’s people. For example, in 2008, Troy was the first American university to award the bachelor’s degree in Vietnam, where we enroll 600 students.

A few years ago, I received an email from a member of our first graduating class in Vietnam that illustrates this global village. Duc Dang is a native of Hanoi. He said his Troy degree made it possible for him to be hired by Samsung, a Korean company, and he now works as a rising executive growing his company’s market in China. Education is truly the key to success in any nation.

The successful university of the future must also be “high-tech.” Economic conditions have forced us to re-examine the way we operate. Many students are geographically bound and cannot travel, thus over five million students study online with U.S. institutions. Through distance learning—primarily via the Internet—Troy serves students in 13 time zones.

Our students understand technology and computers. Most have grown up with Google, Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media. They expect their universities to provide the most current technology available.

Economic realities require the university of the future to respond to market forces. Change is the constant. Many of the programs our universities offer today were unheard of 25 years ago—nanotechnology, e-business, organic agriculture, and robotics, for example. The challenge will be to create new courses of study that meet emerging needs while maintaining a focus on academic quality.

The government does not control higher education in America. There are seven private, regional, non-profit accrediting agencies that ensure universities meet a shared set of standards. This system is peer-driven, standards are high, and the process is demanding. Many universities around the world seek accreditation from U.S. accrediting agencies.

As we come together as a global community we will witness the internationalization of accreditation. It will be rigorous and require unprecedented cooperation between nations and universities.

Finally, the university of the future will be “high-touch.” Great universities stir great emotions, and emotions are stirred through relationships. Those relationships unite faculty and students in the learning process.

The traditional residential setting accommodates “high-touch,” which promotes social and educational development through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as theater, dance, music and intercollegiate athletics.

I am reminded that even in our rapidly changing world, some things will remain the same. Four years ago while in Inner Mongolia, I met a brilliant student—Su Er Fu. He asked me, “What is the purpose of an undergraduate education?” I advised him that education is not just about making a living, it is about making a life. And a quality life requires balance—intellectual, physical, social, spiritual and emotional.

In other words, our commitment as educators must be to develop the total person. I am pleased to join you in this journey of student development.

By Jack Hawkins, Jr.

University of the Future Will Be International, High-Touch and High-Tech

Excerpted from a speech delivered October 27, 2014 at Pannasastra University of Cambodia.

Jack Hawkins, Jr. is chancellor of Troy University (Ala.).