

feature review

2008 GLOBAL LOGISTICS INNOVATION REPORT

globalSCALE

The MIT Center for Transportation & Logistics (MIT-CTL) is recognised world-wide for its dedication to driving supply chain and logistics innovation, writes Anna Game-Lopata



Globalisation continues to present supply chain practitioners and their organisations with immense challenges, as well as new opportunities for growth.

MIT-CTL's executive director Dr Chris Caplice tells Logistics Magazine that the Center's vision is to not only develop innovations to confront these challenges, but also to accelerate the adoption of its innovations into practice. "In order to successfully create and manage a global supply chain that's robust yet flexible, professionals must firstly understand their own business challenges and secondly, develop a knowledge of world regions," he says.

"It's also essential to have a specific understanding of the challenges and opportunities in emerging markets, home to 80 per cent of the world's population, and to develop the ability to quickly adjust to bounce back from disruptions that will occur in an unpredictable global market."

For more than 30 years, MIT-CTL has made major knowledge

contributions and helped numerous companies gain competitive advantage. "Our research focuses on a wide-range of topics from sustainability to healthcare to risk management," Caplice says, "however, most recently, MIT-CTL announced the creation of the MIT Global SCALE Network, (Supply Chain and Logistics Excellence) an international alliance of leading research and education centres dedicated to the development of supply chain and logistics excellence through innovation."

The MIT Global SCALE Network is the first research network of its kind. "Other supply chain research groups have studied global trends second-hand through the experiences of global companies or through data collection from one location," Caplice emphasises. "By involving faculty and researchers from Latin America, Europe, the US and eventually Africa and Asia, SCALE research will have a truly global perspective, and the supply chain strategy born out of this research will have tremendous impact on building and managing

global supply chains."

The Global SCALE Network spans North America, Latin America, and Europe, with plans to expand into Asia and Africa. The Network currently includes the MIT Center for Transportation & Logistics (MIT-CTL) in Cambridge, Mass, the Zaragoza Logistics Center (ZLC) in Zaragoza, Spain and the Center for Latin-American Logistics Innovation (CLI) in Bogotá, Colombia.

"The Network will allow faculty, researchers, students and affiliated companies from all three centres to pool their expertise and collaborate on projects that will create supply chain and logistics innovations with global applications," Caplice enthuses. "It will also help companies to compete in an increasingly complex business environment."

The Global SCALE Network

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builds on the already successful, five-year partnership between MIT-CTL and the Zaragoza Logistics Center established in 2003. This collaboration, between MIT-CTL, the University of Zaragoza, the government of Aragón, industry partners, and the PLAZA logistics park, has resulted in the creation of a highly-regarded supply chain masters program at the ZLC, and continues to play a key role in the economic growth of the Aragon region in Spain and the success of PLAZA in Zaragoza, the largest logistics park in Europe.

The other Network member- CLI was launched just a few months ago through a US \$19 million agreement between MIT-CTL and Colombia-based logistics company LOGyCA. The result was the creation of a leading supply chain and logistics research and education centre located in LOGyCA's 5-acre Bogotá headquarters. The area boasts one of the most robust supply chain technology infrastructures in the region, offering virtual and real environments in which to test, adapt and develop supply chain technologies.

While the MIT Global SCALE Network is brand new, researchers from across the network have already started developing ways to collaborate on existing projects. "We are in the early stages of expanding projects in Emerging Markets, Healthcare and Energy," Caplice says. "For example, as part of the Emerging Markets project, researchers from each SCALE Network Center will examine the similarities and differences between the way infrastructure has evolved in the US, Europe and Latin America."

"The delivery of healthcare will be the focus of the second project, specifically in developing regions such as parts of Africa and Latin America," Caplice explains. "It will be lead by ZLC researcher Prashant Yadav, who has begun work on this subject in Africa."

"The Carbon-Efficient Supply Chains project will involve the other Network centres in a 3-part initiative," Caplice adds. "It will determine a process to measure carbon footprint and reduce it, then create a reporting system to facilitate communication to customers and stakeholders."