

Teaching Tips/Notes



Globalizing Agricultural Curriculum by Creating International Exchange

In higher education, one of the popular buzzwords of the 21st Century is globalization. Although there are many interpretations of how globalization should be manifested at the collegiate level, the real challenge becomes how to implement it. This is often because many colleges and universities are charting new territory and may not even have the academic structure ready in order to get started. However, by doing a quick personnel skills and experiences inventory, international experience can often be discovered and exploited.

An international exchange between Sam Houston State University (SHSU), Texas, and Palawan State University (PSU), Philippines, has been on-going for over three years. The SHSU/PSU international exchange team recommends the following checklist of how to get started with the collaboration.

1. **Find an institution interested in foreign exchange:** networking by both faculty and the college's "International Programs Department" will allow international exchange opportunities to surface. Quite often institutions will match up due to common commodity production, political alliances, customs, or other similarities.
2. **Make initial contacts:** both institutions need to explore the possibility of establishing an agricultural or related educational exchange agreement; both should inquire about the goals of the other interested institution.
3. **Host international guests and visiting foreign colleges and universities:** the visitor must have the intention to explore development of an exchange agreement. It is critical to receive administrative support since campus-wide cooperation is imperative and memorandums of understanding (MOU) are executive-level decisions.
4. **Develop teaching, research, outreach, and exchange opportunities:** even if there is not an agricultural department on both college campuses, exchange opportunities may still exist; collaborative teaching, research, and outreach may still be possible when business and science departments are matched up with agricultural departments.
5. **Analyze international faculty and student exchange potential:** A college's varied teaching, research, and outreach programs make it difficult to easily assess exchange potential with other higher educational institutions; however, efforts should be made to discover and develop mutually beneficial opportunities. Exchange opportunities allow faculty and students from both institutions to see another part of the world and gain global experience.
6. **Understand educational and cultural similarities and differences:** everyone has the same basic needs and wants; however, we filter them through our own personal experiences and environment. Faculty and administrators must visit each others' campuses in order to get sufficient knowledge of both participants' cultures.
7. **Find funding for student and faculty exchanges:** funding may occur with both traditional and non-traditional sources such as: USAID, USDA, the Rotary Foundation, and other private and public foundations. There are sometimes international components of existing grant programs which will enhance the grant and add to the international exchange.
8. **Develop long-term college exchange relationships:** long-term relationships are found when all three college functions (teaching, research, and service) are jointly met and participating colleges can each benefit. Negotiation of international curricula offered by exchange partners will help meet each

institution's globalization objectives. Constant communications and monitoring of activities are imperative for long-term partnerships.

9. **Fully engage faculty, researchers, and students:** learning takes place during both one-day and full-semester teaching opportunities. Adding contributions from the colleges' arts (such as music, dance, and other creative media) will create better understanding of cultural similarities and differences. If language differences exist, immersion classes will help overcome existing communication challenges.
10. **Evaluate college teaching, research, and service success:** since non-traditional benefits result from an international college and/or university exchange, non-traditional assessment methods should be developed and implemented. Qualitative assessment methods may be more appropriate for these situations.

By following the suggestions mentioned above, any institution of higher learning can reap rewards for the institution, its students, and faculty and staff by globalizing and creating international university exchange. To best accomplish this, determine what your institution will gain from globalization and then involve as many persons as possible. The rewards of globalization are many for everyone involved.

Literature Cited

Hamilton, Phil, L. A. Wolfskill, Doug R. Ullrich, Stanley F. Kelley, and Reiko Clark. "Creating international exchange opportunities for undergraduate and graduate agricultural programs." Poster at 23rd Annual International Agricultural and Extension Education [AIAEE], Polson, Montana. May 20-24, 2007.

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