

CASE STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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About CSIE

Case Studies in International Education (CSIE) is an open access, online, peer-reviewed publication that utilizes case studies for the development and advancement of the field. CSIE seeks to promote further professional development through engaging case study discussion. We offer publication opportunities for scholar-practitioners, including working professionals, faculty, and graduate students at CSIEpub.org. Each case study provides an opportunity to integrate theory and practice through interdisciplinary analysis/insight for the benefit of the field's future growth.

International education is defined by Punteney (2019) as "the profession of designing, managing, and facilitating programs and activities that help participants to appropriately, effectively, and ethically engage in interactions with culturally diverse people and ideas, often across national borders."

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Middlebury Institute of
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Racism in the Dominican Republic: Black Americans Face Discrimination Abroad

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Tags

Crisis-Management; Cross-Cultural Issues; Education Abroad; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; Experiential Education; Language Education; Primary and Secondary Education; Program Design; Professional Training

Setting

Jennifer and Ivy are working over the summer for a reputable third-party provider of international education abroad in the Dominican Republic. They are co-leading a group of 20 high school students who have traveled from all over the United States to participate in a month-long language immersion program where they will live with host families, take Spanish courses taught by Dominican professors, and enjoy several weekend activities. Jennifer and Ivy are both white women, educators, fluent in Spanish, and have years of experience working with high school students. About half of the students participating in the program are students of color.

The Dominican Republic's complex relationship to race and ethnicity are present in its everyday culture. For example, many people choose to straighten their curly hair because it is often viewed as unprofessional in the workplace and at school. Similarly, there are many cultural complexities surrounding skin tone, especially as it relates to light-skin privilege and abject colorism. This dynamic tends to be exaggerated when looking at relations between the Dominican Republic and its neighboring country, Haiti, where the majority of the population is Black. A thirty-year dictator who favored "European" features, along with the current day impacts of colonialism, has created an atmosphere ripe with racial bias and anti-Black sentiment.

Prior to departure, Jennifer and Ivy attended a mandatory two-day pre-training where all staff that would be departing that summer were trained on academic expectations, crisis management, and the student experience.

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They received a two-hour training on diversity and equity and talked about topics like racism abroad and its impact on students. Beyond this two-hour session, they were not specifically briefed on the Dominican Republic, nor were they informed of students having received any prior information specifically related to race and ethnicity.

A few days after they arrived on site, the team, including the students, attended a presentation given by a Dominican historian about the historical and present-day role of race and colorism in Dominican culture. Jennifer feels glad that both during the pre-departure training and now on site the topic of race and racism is being so openly discussed and feels that the third-party provider has done more than many prior institutions in addressing the issue so openly.

Case

The group is on a bus traveling to a cultural event a few hours away, outside of the city where they were residing. Four Black students are sitting in the back of the bus together where the bus seat is slightly raised above all of the other seats. A few hours into the trip, the Dominican police stop the bus to do a routine bus check. While not uncommon in the Dominican Republic, routine stops by armed guards are not common in the United States, and the students had not been previously advised that this stop may occur. The Dominican counterpart on the trip opens the door to the police officer and tells him that they are a group of American high school students on a study abroad program on their way to an educational outing. As he glances over the bus, his eyes land on the back row at which point he asks to see the passports of all of the passengers. The Dominican trip leader assures him that they are all American students and states that they are not traveling with their passports, as it is a short day-trip inside the country. The police officer begins to gesture toward the back of the bus and asks the trip leader in Spanish if they “are trafficking any Haitians,” implying that the students in the back of the bus are Haitian. The trip leader is able to convince him that the students are American and after another few minutes, he gets off the bus but not without distressing the four students in the back of the bus.

Recognizing the impact this has had on the students, particularly those of color, Jennifer heads to the back of the bus to ask how they are feeling. Shortly thereafter, the bus arrives at its intended destination at which two of the four targeted students get off and two stay behind, breaking down in tears and stating that they do not wish to attend the activity. One student states, “I wish I would have never come to this racist country. I’ll never be back.” Ivy enters the activity while Jennifer stays behind to console the students who remained behind. The in-country director approaches the students and Jennifer as she was traveling in another bus. Jennifer explains what happens and the director states that police stops are routine as is looking for Haitian immigrants and encourages them to come inside. Eventually, all three join the activity. Jennifer is unsure about how to follow up with the students.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- How can providers prepare Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color (BIPOC) students for potential racial discrimination?
- What resources could be made available to students who face discrimination abroad?

- As the co-leaders of the trip, what could Jennifer and Ivy have done better in this situation? What kind of follow up would you recommend?
- How could the provider have better prepared leaders of the program to handle incidents of racial discrimination abroad?
- How could the in-country program director have responded differently to the situation?
- Should the provider continue to send high school students to the Dominican Republic?
- How might this situation affect the relationship between the provider and the host community?

Bridge-Building in Study Abroad: Expectations, Language-Usage, and Support

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Tags

Cross-Cultural Issues; Education Abroad; Ethics, Equity and Social Justice; Student Services; University/Higher Education

Setting

The setting is a program in Spain under the study abroad office of a private, four-year, liberal arts college in the United States. This center has an office alongside six other U.S. university programs as part of a study abroad consortium within a public Spanish university. This consortium receives about 400 U.S. university students a year between undergraduate semester abroad or summer abroad students and post-graduate students. The semester in question, the college's cohort in Spain is made up of 19 students, of which five identify as Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color (BIPOC), and the consortium has about 160 students, 50 of whom identify as BIPOC.

The college's office in Spain is run by a resident director employed directly by the U.S. institution. While the students take classes in the Spanish university taught mostly in Spanish by the university's own faculty, these courses are designed exclusively for the consortium's students and are not open to the university's general student population. The resident directors for the U.S. universities that make up the consortium work alongside a dean appointed by the Spanish university to select courses and tenured or tenure-track faculty already in the university's employ to teach them. However, the resident director in this case study may also hire local adjunct professors to teach one class exclusively for his institution's students. The resident director is also responsible for advising, securing housing, and programming co-curricular activities. The resident director is from the U.S.

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Case

Maritza and Anabel identify as Black and Latina. They are spending the semester in their college's center in Spain. Like others in their cohort, they are taking advantage of the resources and support the center affords its students such as co-curricular programming centered on adjusting to the new culture and environment, spaces for students of color, and personalized guidance from the resident director, Justin.

One afternoon, Maritza and Anabel visit Justin's office to explain a distressing incident that occurred earlier in the day in their anthropology class. A White student read a case study passage aloud which contained the N-word, and there was no intervention or comment by the professor or any other student, nor was there a trigger warning prior to the reading or in the class syllabus. As the only Black students in the class, they felt uncomfortable speaking up at the time. Justin asks the students how they felt about reaching out to the professor to let him know what had happened and how it made them feel. Maritza says that she has no problem reaching out by email and will do so right away.

The following afternoon, Anabel and Maritza stop by Justin's office again. They explain to Justin that as the class was discussing the case study from the day before, which dealt with how historically excluded collectives reclaim the pejorative names used towards them by others, a non-BIPOC student in the class commented that an example of this is the use of the N-word by the African American community. This student also used the actual word in English, and the lesson continued.

Both Anabel and Maritza are incredulous as to how the N-word could be said in class on consecutive days. They don't understand how professors who teach students from the United States can be ignorant to the taboo nature of the N-word in English, despite the professors not being from the United States themselves. Justin listens to the students and asks what support the students need in the short term, while assuring them that he would be speaking with the Spanish university's dean and consortium faculty, as well as with their college's leadership to address the issue further.

Later the same day, Justin contacts his college's relevant support offices, namely, the study abroad office, the inclusion office, and the multicultural student services offices for advice on moving forward. He also requests an emergency meeting later in the afternoon with the dean and the other resident directors. During this meeting, the dean informs Justin that she would work on convening the consortium's faculty for an in-depth analysis and conversation of the social issues at play and that, in the meantime, the dean would contact them individually to explain what is occurring, to ask them to avoid using the N-word, and to direct them to send students with concerns to their own resident director's office.

The following week another student, Kim, visits Justin in his office. Kim, who identifies as Black, and her study group visited their Spanish teacher during office hours earlier in the day to review class material. Once the review was over, the professor brought up that he heard from the dean what happened in their other classes regarding the N-word, attempted to explain that this word has no real cultural equivalent in Spanish and proceeded to explain the word's etymology from Latin. During this explanation, the professor used the N-word, in English, multiple times, according to Kim. Kim describes how she became visibly distressed in the office and that the professor, sensing the negative impact of his explanation, began to apologize. This only caused Kim to feel singled out and even more uncomfortable in front of her study group. At this point, Justin's cohort has heard the N-word on three different occasions in the span of a week.

After speaking with his college's Senior Inclusion Officer, Justin learns that in the last two years the college community has experienced a series of higher-profile hate crimes on members of the Asian, Black, and Muslim communities as well as multiple lower-profile hate crimes and bias-related incidents. These have added to the distress caused by the use of the N-word at the Spanish university.

Justin, the Spanish university's dean, and the other resident directors convene a student and faculty assembly in one of the auditorium classrooms. Here, the dean offers a timeline of events. She subsequently opens the floor for students to ask questions and to express their thoughts and feelings. Some students insist that allies need to speak up when these sorts of incidents happen. Others, however, call for the dismissal of the professor who brought the word up in a Spanish-language study session. The dean states that no one will be fired, but because of recent events, initiatives were being enacted to complement DEI programming already in place, such as a diversity and inclusion task force with direct student involvement. Several of the students who voiced their concerns decide to sign up for the task force. Another initiative was training for local faculty and for Justin by his college's inclusion office to help contextualize the students' experience in the United States.

After the assembly with the students, faculty met separately with the dean and the resident directors to ask their own questions and express their own feelings and concerns. Having come out of a dictatorship only forty years earlier, several Spanish faculty struggle with the thought that there are what they consider to be "censored" words, especially when said words are used in an academic setting and not as an epithet directed towards anyone. There is anxiety regarding committing racial blunders, and other professors consider eliminating from their course bibliographies readings that may be viewed as controversial.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What did the local administration, including Justin and the dean, do effectively to support Anabel, Maritza, Kim, other students, and faculty? What could they have done better?
- What, if anything, could the following groups have done to help prevent this situation or to mitigate the distress once it occurred?
 - The Spanish university's faculty and administration
 - The consortium study abroad offices in Spain
 - The consortium study abroad offices in the U.S.
 - Other offices and leaders at the U.S. universities
- Most of the professors at the study abroad center are Spanish and teach a minority of their courses to U.S. American students. Considering this, how should Justin have responded to the students' comment that faculty should know not to say the N-word?
- How should the local administration have responded to some of the faculty members' concern that avoiding the N-word in an academic context was tantamount to censorship?
- If the Spanish faculty request a list of words not to say, how should the administration respond?
- How would this case be different if the study abroad program was located at a branch campus of a U.S. institution, or at a study abroad center run by a provider organization, rather than embedded in a local university?
- How should U.S.-based staff and their overseas colleagues work together to properly assist students in preparing for identity-based issues abroad? How should faculty and staff be prepared?

Toeing the Line between Cultures: When Expectations for Faculty Behavior Differ

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Tags

Cross-Cultural Issues; Education Abroad; Management and Operations; Personnel Management; University/Higher Education

Setting

The “PER” undergraduate student exchange program is the result of an agreement between a private, Midwestern U.S. university (CU) and a private university (KU) in a large capital city in a Southeast Asian nation popular with international students. KU is an institution which matriculates 20,000 local students and at least 1,500 international students each year. Each semester approximately 100 students are exchanged between the two institutions. KU also invites one CU faculty member to teach one course per semester. CU is responsible for paying the faculty member’s salary, under the purview of the CU Human Resources office.

To coordinate the PER program onsite, KU employs local staff including a Director (who is new to the position) and two supporting staff members, all local to the host culture and all of whom identify as female. Other than the one visiting U.S. faculty member, the several professors who teach for the program are local to the country or international faculty who have resided in the country long-term and therefore are familiar with the cultural expectations. To start each semester, the Director leads a comprehensive, two-day orientation with the U.S. students participating in the semester-long program, and a half-day orientation session with all faculty members including the visiting faculty member. Students sign a code of conduct referring to program and cultural expectations, while professors are not asked to sign one.

Case

Midway through the semester, one of the program staff members passes by the classroom door and hears the U.S. professor using profane language during a lesson. From the professor's tone of voice, the staff member assumes he is speaking as part of the lesson and not directly berating or addressing a student in the class. The staff member is taken aback by the offensive language, but does not want to disrupt class, so she does not enter the room. She reports the incident to the Director. In local culture, the language used is considered obscene and not appropriate for a professional or classroom setting.

Based on cultural norms dictating hierarchical respect for professors, and particularly for guest professors from another country, the staff member and Director hesitate to talk with the professor about the language incident. The Director contacts two U.S. colleagues for advice and is told that U.S. professors tend to act more casually than professors in other cultures, for example, allowing students to address them by their first name, or dressing more informally in the classroom context. On the other hand, punctuality in the host culture is not enforced; the U.S. professor has arrived late to class one time during the semester thus far, based on what the Director is aware of. As it was not a strict cultural expectation, the Director did not speak to the professor about punctuality or the one late arrival instance.

Mid-term course evaluations completed that week by students were generally positive; students reported they felt they were learning well and sufficiently challenged in the U.S. professor's course. There were no comments referring to the professor's language or behavior. All students attending the course are from the U.S.

On another occasion a few weeks later (one month before the end of the semester), a different staff member reports having seen the professor sitting at a neighborhood outdoor bar and drinking alcohol with several students from his class. Also present at the bar, which is close to campus, are program students who do not attend the U.S. professor's course and numerous local students. The incident took place during the evening, outside of class hours. The professor and students did not see the staff member who was walking by on a nearby sidewalk. The staff member did not stop to talk with the professor and students. The next day she reported the incident to the Director.

The Director is conflicted and unsure of the best way to react. When she asks her supervisor at the host university, she is informed that the professor has political influence and should be given full leeway without any repercussions.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What cultural differences emerge in this case?
- Should visiting faculty and students be expected to follow all local cultural norms in the host country, even if conflicting with their home culture?
- What questions does this situation raise about orientation, training, and setting expectations for staff, students, and faculty?

- What is the role (and what are the limits to the role) of staff in instances that some would consider outside of the program context (i.e. after work hours)? Does this differ for matters involving: a) students only, b) faculty only, c) students and faculty together?
- What choices do the Director and individual staff members have in the classroom incident and evening incident? If you were the Director, what would you do and why?
- Do you think gender plays a role in this case?
- Does time of the semester (i.e. midway; one month from end) influence the action taken, if any?
- Do you think the response/action taken would or should vary according to the cultural background of the staff member (i.e. if from the same culture as professor)?
- What does this situation represent regarding issues of “power” and “face” across cultures?
- How could financial circumstances surrounding the exchange agreement potentially influence decisions that the director makes in this scenario?

Crisis Management at the U.S. Border: Review of a Sexual Harassment Case

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Tags

Crisis-Management; International Student and Scholar Services; Management and Operations; University/Higher Education

Setting

The International Center at a private, nonprofit, research-intensive university is responsible for advising over five thousand international students, scholars, and their families, as well as helping them to obtain and maintain legal status. The Center strives to enable the international community to receive the maximum academic, cultural and personal benefit from their stays in the U.S.

Case

An international student came to the Center early Monday morning and told a front desk staff member that an officer was going to contact her about her documentation. She began to cry as she spoke about her encounter from the past weekend at the port of entry. She explained that the immigration officer insisted that she meet with him at her apartment to review her documents. She became more upset as she clearly knew this was not proper behavior on the part of the officer. She explained that the officer stated that she would receive a phone call from an immigration officer and that she should answer the call. When she asked him what would happen if she could not answer the call, he stated that she could be sent back to her home country. He also told the student to promise to answer the call. The officer specifically mentioned that he had to review her passport and I-20 to check her record. In fact, just one hour before the student came to the Center, she received the call from the CBP officer stating that he had to review her passport and I-20 to access her record.

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She asked the officer if he could tell her what was missing. He said it was confidential and because of security issues he could not reveal what was missing. He then stated that he would come down to collect her passport and I-20 and return them two days later.

She asked him if she could just tell him over the phone, and he responded that it would be information she could not understand and needed to meet with her at her apartment. She suggested meeting him at the airport, and he stated he did not want to do this at the airport because other people are not supposed to know about this. He then said he would give her a call later before arriving.

When she told him she did not want to be without her passport, he suggested that he could still come to her apartment and view the documents and record the information that he needed. Again, she told him that she felt uncomfortable meeting him alone in her apartment and suggested a common area like the lounge in her dorm.

He persisted in stating that he preferred meeting in her room in private because what he was doing could jeopardize his reputation. At the time of entry (at the airport), he was supposed to put her in another room to verify information that would take several hours since the officers in that room have to call the school to verify information.

He repeated several times not to tell anyone, that he was doing her a favor, and asked her to promise not to tell anyone. The officer stated again he would meet her the following day at her dorm room and would call before arriving.

The student mentioned that she had to attend a workshop at the International Center, and then he suggested that he could meet her after he got out of his shift around two a.m. She told him she could not meet him at that time but could meet him in the afternoon.

The Center told the student she should not meet with him alone and arranged for the Associate Director to be with her. Instead of meeting at her apartment (as the officer had insisted), the meeting was scheduled at the Graduate Student Center common area.

When the officer arrived, a staff member from the Center approached him, asked to see his badge, and asked him why he was trying to talk to the student. He became agitated and demanded to know who she was. When she insisted on seeing his badge, he fled the building running.

Due to concerns for reprisal and harassment from the officer, staff from the Center assisted the student in obtaining a new phone number because she had been harassed. The store manager then waived the fee for changing the phone number, and she obtained a new number the same day.

Later that afternoon, the Center contacted the Residence Dean for assistance in finding a new dorm room, and by late afternoon, one of the Residence Deans and a staff member from the Center loaded up their cars with her belongings and moved the student to a new apartment. The Residence Dean then checked in regularly with the student to see how she was doing. The Center contacted her boyfriend, who then flew five hours to be with her, as well as the Department of Public Safety and the Title IX office to let them know about the incident.

On the day she moved to the new apartment, the Center also changed her address and contact information in the SEVIS database to a fictitious phone and address with the approval of the Chief Customs and Border Protection (CBP) official. The same CBP Chief talked to the student to assure her that she would be safe, that

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the officer would not have access to any information on her, and that he had dealt with him. The Center also received a phone call from another Chief CBP official who assured the Center that he took this matter very seriously, and there would be further follow up on this case. The following day, the Center was contacted by the DHS Office of the Inspector General – Investigations to request from the student a sworn statement about her horrible experience. Since she was too distraught to write the statement herself, the Center took the statement from her and faxed it to the investigating officer. That same week, the Center had another meeting with an officer who identified himself as a Special Agent with the Office of Inspector General, DHS, who took a sworn statement from Center staff. He, too, reassured the Center that that CBP official had been dealt with.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What laws, rules, or ethics might have been violated by the officer's behavior?
- Who should an international student be able to approach regarding sensitive issues like sexual harassment and sexual violence? How should staff in International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) be trained?
- How can orientation or other programs raise student awareness of safety issues, sexual harassment, and assault response for international students?
- What kind of crisis management protocols should be in place within an ISSS office to protect student privacy and safety? Which departments on campus should the ISSS office coordinate with?

When to Pull the Alarm if it's Not Your Fire: Managing Gray Space in Faculty-led Programming

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Tags

Education Abroad; Education Policy; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; Leadership and Strategy; Management and Operations; Personnel Management; University/Higher Education

Setting

A study abroad office within a U.S. public university is tasked with ensuring that institutional policies and best practices within the field of international education are applied to programming involving student mobility. Approximately 75% of student mobility abroad is conducted on the faculty-led program model. The office was recently launched with a goal of centralization and a small staff to navigate a series of long-established study abroad programs within certain colleges of the university. Heritage practices, varying interpretations of policy, and a spirit of independence among key faculty and administrators present unclear authority and oversight — notably in the realm of program budget which remains decentralized and housed within respective host colleges.

Case

Over the course of two or three program cycles, the nascent study abroad office has developed a series of institution-wide policies associated with student health and safety guidelines, insurance requirements, and pre-departure preparations for all programs. These domains were clearly defined within the scope of the office and proved to be the most compelling because of the impact on student safety. Areas of contractual negotiation involving third-party providers and the subsequent budgets built off these contracts represented domains in which the study abroad team played a large role for newer programming but were often only peripherally involved

when it came to the long-standing, heritage programs. This was often due to the decentralization of the accounts associated with these programs.

A highly independent and senior faculty member of one of these long-standing programs has continued to retain authority over their respective program, enabled by extensive turnover within the Dean's Office of their home college. The study abroad team navigated challenging relationships with this faculty member and about a half dozen others from the following perspective: Do what we absolutely must to ensure student health, safety, and preparation; any collaboration beyond that is a bonus.

The third-party provider used by this independent faculty member was contracted regularly by several other faculty-led programs throughout the campus. However, the involvement of the study abroad office again has varied based on the personalities involved. While the relationship between the provider and the study abroad office has been amicable, there was increasingly a strong sense that a parallel dialogue was occurring with this key faculty member regarding programming details, inclusions, negotiations, and renegotiations. While the study abroad team has had access to the contract itself, the ability to understand the full mechanics of the budget remained opaque. This faculty member regularly had access to a centrally funded pool of money for programming that demonstrates broad and lasting impacts for student success. This funding was applied for by the faculty member in question and granted directly to the faculty member for disbursement within the broad category of use for student costs.

While at one time successful, this faculty-led program has struggled for the past two or three enrollment cycles to recruit students and to meet sustainable enrollment numbers. Nonetheless, at least two faculty members still participated annually as co-leaders on this program. The program continued to operate despite perceptions from the study abroad office that the program was grossly under-enrolled and did not support the budget of the provider. This was due to pressure to support as much student mobility as possible, even though they were distanced from the financial details and lacked the ability to assert their role in budgetary management. The study abroad team continued to facilitate this program despite growing questions about the solvency of this program.

The office of internal auditing approached the study abroad office to investigate the budgets from this program. They found that the faculty member had been misusing the funds intended for student success and, through the third-party provider, indirectly covering the costs of the additional faculty members' travel and accommodations on the program. While the study abroad team was not directly indicted by the audit, questions about their oversight were raised, and awkward answers about territory and politics were given. The findings that resulted from this audit led to a policy that inserted the central study abroad office more clearly between faculty, budgets, and providers, but without additional staffing for the new duties.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- In what ways could the study abroad office be held at fault for not raising an alarm in this situation? Keep in mind that they had very little hard evidence until the audit and the faculty member involved was a well-established and senior academic.

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- In what ways was the study abroad office disincentivized from raising an alarm? What risks were involved?
- What role does pressure for increased mobility numbers have on circumstances like this?
- When is it appropriate or not appropriate to run programming at a deficit?
- What can be learned from this scenario regarding the role that institutional politics and culture play in the balance between “getting along” and “doing what is right”?
- Is it “good”, “bad” or “neutral” that the authority of the study abroad office in budgetary oversight for these programs was increased as a result of the internal audit? Why?

Ethics vs. Economics: Students & Faculty Oppose Lucrative Partnership Over Ethical Concerns

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Tags

Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; Leadership and Strategy; Management and Operations; Partnerships; University/Higher Education

Setting

The main institution in this case, Western University, is a medium, private research university located in the United States. It is a 4-year institution with a student population of about 23,000, including approximately 6,000 graduate students. The school has a long history of academic excellence and a reputation of providing a quality education. The institution has multiple campuses and facilities, including in the Middle East and Central America, and agreements with over 200 universities and institutions around the world. The case takes place within the business college of the university, specifically the hospitality program. The hospitality program offers undergraduate and graduate degrees as well as professional certificates. While the case primarily involves the hospitality school's master's program, the particular individuals involved represent multiple departments across Western University.

Case

The institution considered creating a dual-degree program between one school of the institution and the business school of a large research university in China. The program would allow students at the Chinese university to complete an MBA as well as a master's degree from the U.S. university, hopefully attracting executives within the industry in China to attend. Chinese students would not take classes with the U.S. institution's students.

Western University faculty members would teach short-term courses in China and the United States, especially for the dual-degree students.

Once the partnership was proposed by Western University, it was immediately opposed by members of the institution's Faculty Senate and the Student Assembly. The Faculty Senate voted to oppose the proposed dual-degree program, but it was an advisory vote and therefore not binding. The Student Assembly also voted to halt the proposed dual-degree program.

The main issues the faculty raised were concerns about constraints on academic freedom on Chinese campuses and human rights violations by the Chinese government, specifically the treatment of the Uyghur minority, which has been labeled a genocide by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The Student Assembly raised concerns that academic freedom and other student rights were not protected on the Chinese campus, a concern that was echoed by some faculty senators. The Student Assembly encouraged the university to reconsider and evaluate international partnerships on "stronger standards" that are consistent with institutional values and promote social good, keeping ethical concerns in mind. The Student Assembly also called for the suspension of programs in other countries where academic freedom might be questioned, as well as the creation of a committee specifically designed to oversee all of the university's programs in China.

The university declined to comment on whether the Chinese government or the Chinese university were guilty of legal or human rights violations but has committed to further discussions about the program although no final decision has been made. Administrators noted that the proposed program would be a new revenue source for the university, and other programs and partnerships with China have raised a significant amount for the institution in previous years.

Three years prior, another school on campus ended two programs with another Chinese university over similar concerns about academic freedom and the treatment of students.

Eight years prior, multiple Western University faculty members wrote an open letter in which they expressed concern about the treatment and freedom of a professor at the same Chinese university involved in the dual-degree proposal. At that time, the faculty voted to keep the program.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What are the roles of faculty and students in determining international partnerships? Should faculty have the primary role in overseeing curriculum?
- How should an institution balance the need to generate revenue with issues of human rights and social justice?
- How should government policies and actions play into the ethical considerations of international partnerships? How should institutions weigh the actions of the individual partner against the political climate?

- Would the Chinese students in this custom program have the same learning experiences as their U.S counterparts if there is no integration with U.S. students? How would it be different?
- What, if any, difference would there be if the target student audience were American students instead of Chinese? Would it matter if the proposed program involved sending Western University students to China or welcoming faculty from the Chinese university to the United States?

Student-Centered Approach at a Research-Intensive University: A Gap Between Theory and Practice in Higher Education

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Tags

Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; International Student and Scholar Services; Student Services; University/Higher Education

Setting

A medical/doctoral university in North America promotes itself as a leading research university and is committed to bringing the best students to produce cutting-edge research and innovation. The university also emphasizes its commitment to student-centered pedagogy and improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education.

Jane Smith is an international student studying for her doctorate in a social science program with a focus on peace and conflict studies at the university. Jane speaks several languages, including English at the bi-lingual level, and has over 20 years of professional experience in peace studies. To recognize her outstanding achievement as a professional expert, Jane received an additional scholarship package on top of her general funding from the university. Jane is a non-traditional student, is a parent, and has come to the university with her family. Her situation requires her to be organized and efficient in her time. Jane has struggled through the program but finally arrived at the final stage during the summer in her fifth year: her doctoral defense.

Case

During the last few months before her graduation, Jane received an email about her designation in a specialization program in her field. An administrator wrote to Jane that she needed to fill out a form for the designation to appear on her transcript. She asked a few questions for clarification and then filled out and returned the form via email. She thought that was the end of the administrative matter.

The next day, Jane received another email from the same administrator. The administrator explained to Jane that she failed to meet the requirements for the specialization. The administrator wrote that, on the form, Jane noted that she had given a presentation at the special program seminar. However, the administrator noted that no record was available for such a seminar in the special program. Jane explained to the administrator that she was invited to present her dissertation research to a special interest group, where her supervisor was present. The administrator replied,

Although you were invited to present to the interest group, the program office was not notified about the presentation. The required seminars are directly managed and linked to the program, while these interest group events such as yours are just social events. Unfortunately, your presentation does not count towards the program requirement.

The administrator explained to Jane that this matter needed to be discussed with a program coordinator who was a faculty member in the program.

The next day, the administrator wrote again and explained that this special interest group seminar did not count as a fulfillment of the requirement, according to the program coordinator. However, the program coordinator suggested sharing Jane's research in the program newsletter as a solution. Frustrated, Jane replied,

Unfortunately, I am unable to complete the article by the date required. I wish I had known about this in advance so that I could have planned accordingly. I am dropping the special program designation.

Jane explained to the administrator that she is a parent with family obligations and needs to be organized to make things happen. Jane also complained to the administrator that this problem often occurs at the university.

On the following day, Jane received a long email from the program coordinator, a faculty member of the program. The program coordinator explained that "an assumption was made" for this special interest group to fulfill the requirement. However, the program coordinator was making "an exception" to this situation so that Jane could still receive the designation once she completes a 1,000-word article for the program newsletter. Flabbergasted to read such an email, and feeling as if she was being blamed, Jane responded to the program coordinator:

Thank you very much for your email and willingness to make an accommodation. I think I have explained to the administrator as well, but without going into detail, my family obligations do not allow me to commit to additional tasks at this point. Although I saw the presentation requirement on the website, I found no mention that a presentation to a special interest group would be excluded. I accept the consequences and will graduate without the specialization.

The program coordinator quickly responded, "Thanks for confirming your decision. Congratulations on your graduation. Wishing you all the best in your future endeavors."

Jane is now pausing for a moment to reflect on what has happened to her over the last few days. Initially, she thinks her withdrawal from the special program was out of her control since she simply did not have time to write the article. Upon further reflection, Jane feels like there is a broader issue. She has spent the previous five years finishing her doctoral study in this special area of scholarship in peace studies only to be told that she couldn't earn the specialization due to a technicality. While the university is a leading institution and claims itself to be committed to the student-centered pedagogy and "equity, diversity, and inclusion," Jane feels that it isn't living up to its ideals.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What are the responsibilities of the administrator and the program coordinator to ensure students understand the program requirements? Are having the website, reminding students during the orientation, and frequent emails enough?
- In what ways can university programs support student parents?
- In what ways can university programs support international students?
- The complete text of the email to Jane is below in the Appendix. From Jane's perspective, how is the tone of this message? How could it have been delivered differently?
- What does the "student-centered" pedagogy mean in practice when faculty members have power over students?
- What can we learn from this case about equity, diversity, and include?

Appendix

Dear Jane,

I'm writing about the issue of meeting the specialization requirements so that I can approve your graduation form. I understand that you "wish you knew", but the fact is that all students are told the requirements when they start, with this information reiterated at the orientation each year. The requirements are also listed on the website. The administrator also sends several emails to thesis-stream students each year to remind them of the presentation requirement.

It seems that an assumption was made that the presentation you gave to the special interest group counted as the presentation requirement; however, we do not have record of you having asked about or confirmed this. Had an inquiry been made, this last-minute stress could have been avoided.

I know that you have been actively involved in the specialization program, and I don't want you to miss out because you made a wrong assumption about the presentation requirement. That said, for the sake of fairness

to other students, you need to somehow share your work with the community, to meet all graduation requirements.

With this in mind, I offered the option to write a short (750-1000 words) newsletter item that summarizes your doctoral research (and ideally, a picture of yourself to include). This shouldn't be too difficult as you can simply develop your abstract, for example. If you can commit to submitting this newsletter item, I will approve your graduation form now, so that you can meet the deadline. Please understand that I am making an exception in this case and trust that if you commit to crafting a summary of your doctoral work, you will do so.

Please advise if you're willing/able to do this.

Dr. Janet Johnson, Professor and Program Coordinator

Teaching the “Truth” in Tautilau: Clashes Over Developing Curriculum After Conflict

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Tags

Crisis-Management; Cross-Cultural Issues; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; Partnerships; Primary and Secondary Education

Setting

Tautilau is a small, island country that lies southeast of Hawaii. Since 2006, the country has been recovering from a twenty-year period of violent ethnic conflict and oppression which resulted in the deaths of over 400,000 people out of a population of just over one million. The origins of the conflict largely stem from ethnic divisions that were first put into place by the island's former French colonial power and sustained by the succeeding government. Following an end to the conflict, the United Nations, the World Bank, and other organizations sent teams of developers into the country to help with rebuilding the infrastructure, including replacing school buildings that had been destroyed by the violence.

Due to the sensitivity of the conflict, curriculum development for primary and secondary school history and citizenship courses did not begin until 2013 and was spearheaded by a group of “experts” from France who became involved in creating the curriculum with the Ministry of Education in Tautilau. According to the Ministry of Education, before the implementation of this curriculum in 2016, teachers relied on any available textbooks from the French colonial period and their own personal experiences of history. In 2020, the Ministry of Education decided to overhaul the curriculum, viewing it as largely irrelevant to Tautilauns' lives and not accurately portraying the conflict period. Despite the prior curriculum being deemed unacceptable for educators and students, Ministry of Education officials again contracted with outside developers for this second time, hoping that they could write the “correct” history.

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Case

Chlöe, a French-Canadian education professor from Grosse Rivière University, which has a highly regarded Curriculum and Instruction Department that has played a key role in helping other countries develop new curriculum for primary and secondary schools, was asked by her department head to lead the curriculum development project in Tautilau. Chlöe, a new professor with little knowledge of the country, saw this as an opportunity for her own professional development and for community outreach and readily agreed to travel to Tautilau and meet with Ministry of Education officials to assist them in the curriculum revision process. Before leaving for Tautilau, Chlöe is informed that her main task will involve working with various stakeholders to collect information on the conflict for inclusion into the revised history curriculum.

After a few days spent recovering from jetlag, Chlöe begins work with the Ministry of Education officials. Henri-Kalani, the Minister of Education, explains to Chlöe that she is to lead the revision process, working with others from the Ministry of Education, Tautilaun teachers, and other outside developers. Since Chlöe does not speak Tauti, the main language of Tautilau, or any of the local languages, she uses French when conversing with the others on the curriculum development team. She thinks nothing of it, since Henri-Kalani spoke to her in French when they met and, she was told, all Tautilauns born before 2006 speak French fluently. Teachers from all over Tautilau are invited to the capital city, Mogabai, to participate in revising the curriculum and are encouraged to provide their perspectives on what happened during the conflict for inclusion in the curriculum.

During her third week working with the team, Chlöe holds a focus group with the history teachers to learn about their impressions of the previous curriculum for history classes and what should be done to improve it. While the youngest teachers appear to be willing participants in the focus group, Chlöe notices that those who are older seem to be more reticent and annoyed, which puzzles her because in her own research using focus groups, she never had trouble getting participants to express their opinions. Chlöe decides to call on one of the quietest participants to ask for her opinion about the curriculum.

The woman, Iolani, responds angrily in a local language unknown to Chlöe. The younger woman sitting next to Iolani translates her response. “That language you speak at me. It’s not mine. We don’t use French, only the government wants us to use it. The young people won’t say this, but we don’t need the French people or some other foreigner to help us with our country. We can develop it by ourselves. We can teach our children the right history by ourselves.” Chlöe, taken aback by the response, apologizes, and then asks if she can share her opinion about the curriculum development process or history of Tautilau and have it translated. Another teacher, an older man named Léo-Makani, intervenes in French, pointing at Iolani. He says that she knows the French language. He then says, “You know that what the colonialists did for Tautilau was good for us. They built Tautilau into what it is today, and when they left, they gave it to the Maiuans to make it even better.” The translating teacher explains that the Maiuans are an ethnic group in Tautilau.

Iolani’s expression quickly turns from anger to sadness, and with tears welling up in her eyes, she fires back at him. She accuses his people of coming to her village and killing her sister and mother. She continues on describing the burning of entire villages and how her remaining family hid in the nearby caves for weeks without food, catching her breath between words as she struggles to tell her story while sobbing. The focus group quickly spirals out of control as others from the older generation voice their opinions in languages Chlöe cannot understand, before Iolani stands up and points directly at her, tears streaming down her face. “And YOU.” She

says that the French colonialists started the problems on Tautilau and that before they came it was a peaceful island. She explains that the divisions created by the colonialists caused separations between Tautilaun people and that this is the true history to teach to their children.

Chlöe stands in the middle of the room, stunned in silence and unsure of what else to say to the teachers. The focus group ends without Chlöe being able to collect complete information from the teachers. A week later, Chloë returns to Grosse Rivière University without completing the curriculum development project.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- How, if at all, could Chlöe have better navigated this situation with the teachers?
- What responsibility does Chlöe's university bear for putting her in this situation? What support could they have given her in working with the stakeholders in Tautilau?
- What could Chlöe have done differently to better prepare for her assignment in Tautilau? How might Chlöe have acted differently in her role?
- What ethical concerns arise when outside educational "experts" or programs work with stakeholders in other countries in developing history and citizenship education curriculum?
- Should Grosse Rivière University maintain connections with the Ministry of Education in Tautilau and again attempt to aid them with the curriculum development process?
- How could the Tautilau Ministry of Education provide support to the teachers and other stakeholders involved in this project?
- How can an international education consultant like Chlöe be more sensitive to the psychological needs of individuals in post-conflict countries like Tautilau?

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