

CASE STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

CSIEpub.org

An open-access online publication

Fall 2023

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2



CSIE

Case Studies in
International Education



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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In Appreciation

The editorial board wishes to thank the Middlebury Institute of International Studies for providing financial support for start-up costs for CSIE and providing on-going sponsorship of the CSIE website.



Middlebury Institute of
International Studies at Monterey

Growing Pains: Campus Reacts to Fast International Student Enrollment Growth

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Tags

Cross-Cultural Issues; International Student and Scholar Services; Internationalization and Global Learning; Leadership and Strategy; University/Higher Education

Setting

A small private liberal arts university has an explicit commitment to global engagement, intercultural competence, and inclusivity. As the institution continues to prioritize bringing in international students to the campus, the results are amazing in terms of enrollment. Within two years, international student enrollment has grown from 150 international students to 420 among a total student body of 7,500 students. They are supported by the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS), which has a director and a team of four staff. Recently, a former faculty member has been appointed as the Senior International Officer (SIO) which is a newly created position.

Faculty and staff have been excited to see international students on campus. Most go above and beyond to learn about different cultures and make sure international students are supported in equitable ways. Various structures help ensure international student success. For example, a Student Services Committee is comprised of Housing, Campus Dining, New Student Orientation, Career and Professional Development, Diversity and Inclusion office, and International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). In addition, an International Student Academic Success Committee is comprised of several academic departments, the English Language Learning Center, and Academic Advising.

Case

Three weeks into the fall semester, the new Senior International Officer (SIO) receives a few emails from faculty sharing their concerns about international students in their classrooms. They report concerns regarding English proficiency, participation in discussions and group work, and difficulty in navigating learning systems such as Canvas. Absenteeism is also an issue. In addition, some international students rely heavily on translation devices, and some seem to use AI to help with their schoolwork.

The SIO conducts listening sessions with these faculty members. Their desire to support international students and their concerns about academic standards are clear. The SIO subsequently organizes meetings with existing offices that offer relevant resources, such as the Learning Strategies Office, ISSS, English Language Learning Center, Academic Advising, and the Writing Center. English Language Learning Center colleagues hold significant expertise in understanding and supporting cultural variation in classrooms. The ISSS Director has also presented several sessions on cultural variations in the classroom on campus. Undoubtedly, other experts on campus could provide valuable insights as well. However, some colleagues express that there is a lack of coordination between these support efforts. Some faculty and staff share that they don't feel proficient in distinguishing between cultural, language, motivation, or other academic issues when supporting international students.

On the way back from one of these meetings, the SIO asks the ISSS Director for thoughts on this multifaceted issue. One question is if they would recommend raising English proficiency scores through the upcoming annual review process. The SIO is aware that the English Proficiency requirements have already been raised in recent years. The SIO also mentions that the administration is anticipating a tightened budget year ahead and loss of international student enrollments would have a negative financial impact.

Meanwhile, the Director of ISSS has just finished another meeting earlier with the Finance Office who asked for help with getting some international students to respond to their emails about completing tax paperwork or if the ISSS team could help enter relevant data on behalf of the students. The frustration expressed is because the students "don't read their emails or respond." The Director knows that the ISSS team is already at capacity. The Director tells the Finance colleagues that they will think about their request and respond later.

The Director recognizes that the situation at hand requires strategic planning and action. They have read studies showing that English language acquisition challenges typically dissipate over time. In addition, they are aware that US immigration regulations allow international students to take a reduced courseload at the beginning of their program to adjust to English-language requirements. The Director offers to develop a comprehensive plan to address some of the concerns and present it to the SIO.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What are some issues in this case?
- What would be the elements of an ideal comprehensive plan?
 - What data should be gathered to support the development of an effective plan?
 - Are there research and studies that might help shed some light on the situation?
- What specific recommendations should the Director make to the SIO?
 - Should the Director suggest changing the English proficiency requirement again? Why or why not? What evidence should be gathered to support that recommendation?
- What are some resources that could be shared with faculty and staff?
- How could the Director advocate for international students?
- What can the Director of ISSS do to support the SIO to make them as effective as possible in cross-campus relationship building?

Internationalization for All: Designing Exchange Programs for Disadvantaged Students

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Tags

Education Abroad; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; Internationalization and Global Learning; Language Education; Leadership and Strategy; Program Design; University/Higher Education

Setting

In 2012, Brazil introduced a quota system to increase the enrollment of historically marginalized groups in government-funded universities that offer tuition-free higher education. There is also a significant achievement gap between public and private high schools in Brazil. Thus, there are two main types of quotas: quotas based on graduation from public high schools and racial quotas designed to increase the representation of Black, Indigenous, and mixed-race students. Students accessing universities through the quota systems often face barriers related to their academic and language skills that can impact their competitiveness for international opportunities and grants.

A public, state, research-driven university in Brazil enrolls 6,500 new students per year in its undergraduate programs, 50% of whom are admitted through the quota system. Currently, the institution has 5,000 undergraduate students benefiting from need-based aid programs. From this group, 70% of them (3,500) accessed the university through the quota systems and normally attend night courses and/or have to work part-time during their studies.

The university has been actively pursuing internationalization and providing opportunities for international mobility of students is a major goal. The institution sends out 500 students a year on international exchange

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programs, but participation from the group of students who were admitted through the quota system and receiving need-based aid was limited. Over the years, the programs officer in the international office noticed that students from this specific background were not able to access grants and scholarships in international exchange programs due to the lack of academic resources and language barriers. Many of those students reported feeling that international exchange was something that did not belong to them, that it was an opportunity for wealthier students. Scholarships are rare and the requirements in terms of GPA and language proficiency are very high.

Case

The administration was very aware that internationalization efforts mainly reached students coming from privileged backgrounds and made efforts and financial investments to develop inclusive approaches. Taking this into consideration and thinking of the university's strategic goal to develop a global perspective in students, the international office decided to build specific programs for students enrolled in financial aid programs, who were admitted through the quota system. The program design process was challenging and consisted of many steps. First, the office had to identify and understand the needs of this group of students. Then, they had to design a feasible program, build a fair selection process, prospect partners, fully fund it, and ensure sustainability for the future.

After consideration, the office decided to partner with international universities and design fully-funded exchange programs. They started by searching for potential partners, universities that understood the mission and were willing to collaborate and be flexible.

The first partner was a Spanish university due to the language proximity and the institution's funding structure. The first program received 104 applications for nine placements and was a very successful experience for all partners. Students participated in international conferences, increased their language skills, earned honor roll accolades, and developed willingness and confidence to further access other international opportunities as researchers. They all reported that the international exchange was a life-changing experience.

Based on this success, the office decided to continue with the Spanish partner and also develop new programs with some English-speaking partner universities. One major challenge was finding partners that were willing to waive tuition for the students, with the expectation of an equalized exchange balance in the future.

The partners for this endeavor were four higher education institutions in the US, the UK, Canada, and Australia. The international office selected 40 students to take an intensive English course for six months, culminating in a TOEFL exam. Both the language preparation and tests were funded by the international office, which then selected nine students from the 40 to participate in the exchanges. The nine students came from a variety of academic fields.

Given that the target population for these programs is comprised of thousands of students, the institution funded fewer than one percent of them for an international exchange period, even with all this effort and investment. Looking forward, the institution would like to increase this number to at least ten percent.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- Given the time and effort, would you consider this program to be a success?
- What should the next steps be for this university? How could the university improve their program?
- How else could the international office address the language and academic barriers experienced by these students?
- What concerns might potential partner universities have about these programs? What actions could be taken to mitigate these concerns?
- How can international offices make exchange programs sustainable?
- What strategies could an international office use to increase access to international mobility for disadvantaged students and create inclusive programs? What groups might those be and how would the strategies differ?
- Are the challenges described in this case specific to Latin American universities?

Across Borders: Partnerships and Student Learning in Unanticipated Situations

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Tags

Cross-Cultural Issues; Education Abroad; Partnerships; Program Design; Student Learning and Development; University/Higher Education

Setting

At a U.S. public university, grant funding was awarded to develop a three-week study abroad component for an existing, popular interdisciplinary program focused on border issues (e.g culture, human rights, border-business). The success of the original program, according to students, was centered in the inclusion of diverse topics and authors offering a comprehensive learning experience about geographical and socio-cultural borders. Former students assessed the course as a transformative learning experience based on learning different topics, analyzing different socio-cultural realities, and reflecting on diverse identities. The revised study abroad course sought to build on this success and recruit students from varied cultural backgrounds and academic fields.

The course instructor and staff in the international office worked together in this new educational effort. They identified potential partners (e.g., host institutions) to accomplish the programming and educational objectives. This collaboration cultivated local engagement and refreshed the inclusion of varied experts from different disciplines. This refreshed programming included a practical exploration where students studied the uniqueness

of national territories across three geographical borders (one week per location). The instructor and staff members worked closely with international and local partners to create a faculty-led study abroad program based on previous evaluations, diversity of student population, transdisciplinary curriculum, and institutional collaborations. The team also developed a detailed schedule, a departure orientation, and a meeting between the students and the host institutions.

Case

Week #1

The student group and instructor arrived safely at the first destination. The first host institution conducted welcome activities and the group was placed in a hotel near downtown. This location was a long distance from the host institution, however, transportation was arranged for the group. The first day of activities was promising. The group planned to meet the leadership team from the local institution and visit historical settings. The instructor suggested the students be in the lobby 30 minutes before departure.

All students were on time, but transportation arrived 25 minutes late. The instructor thought the delay was an isolated situation so a conversation with the host team was not needed. Although activities started late, the day was full of satisfactory experiences with local partners and the group forgot about the schedule incident.

The next morning, transportation arrived late again, and some students started getting upset about it. The instructor talked to the group about this issue but did not address the matter with the local partners. The schedule for this second day was so packed that local organizers decided to skip lunch time. During the following dates, there were other schedule changes that raised uncomfortable interactions between students, instructor, and host representatives. The first week was wrapped up with mixed feelings about the experience.

Week #2

The group continued their travel schedule to the second destination. All participants were hosted in one of the institutional dorms. Activities were running on time based on shared expectations between the local partners and the group. This second destination was focused on topics related to economics, business, high skilled immigration, and challenges in education grounded in their border location. As part of the experience, the partner put together a panel where local students shared stories about their immigration pathways in the region. The panel conversation was able to engage both groups, visitors and locals, in a reciprocal conversation where personal stories were shared to connect theory with practical examples.

After this activity, the group talked about the day. One of the students started crying and shared with the group an uncomfortable experience that happened at the end of the activity. A local participant had touched his hair without permission and referred to its texture as “different and lovely.” This issue was an unexpected situation that brought confusion and sadness to the group. The group decided to have a conversation with their host institution collaborators. During this conversation, the group found out that this type of behavior is normal in this region and was considered a compliment.

Week #3

The third and last destination included experiential activities such as dance sessions, cuisine workshops and craft activities. The students and the instructor were excited about the last portion of their abroad schedule. In the following days, the group was able to meet local artists and attend performances. One of these activities included a dinner hosted by a famous local artist. It was a great opportunity to learn more about this artist, local culture, and the importance of preserving traditions.

Other well-recognized artists and community members attended this special dinner too. After dinner, local guests started cleaning the table, washing dishes, and helping the host. At the same time, the student group sat in the patio area and chatted. When the group was leaving, a local highlighted to the group their rude behavior and their lack of community spirit.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- How could/should the instructor address each situation with local partners?
- How could learning experiences be created from these three situations? How could the instructor facilitate student learning?
- How should educators approach conversations with students about cultural differences and practices? How could educators plan or prepare for uncomfortable situations? How can they create safe spaces for dialogue?
- How can educators balance the demands of a busy study abroad program schedule with the desire to take time to debrief situations in the moment?
- During the program design phase, what kind of activities should be considered for mentoring students before, during, and after a study abroad program to navigate these situations?
- How can educators create and nourish collaborative practices across cultures? How can educators facilitate reciprocal relationships with international partners?

Local Intercultural Exchanges: Using Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) to Increase Impact and Engagement

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Tags

Adult Education; Cross-Cultural Issues; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; Experiential Education; Language Education; Partnerships; Program Design; University/Higher Education

Setting

An intercultural exchange program is run in partnership between two instructors teaching parallel courses at a graduate school and a nearby community college. The two courses are *Spanish in the Community* at the graduate school and *English in the Community* at the community college. All the students in the English class are native speakers of Spanish and most of them work or live with workers in the agricultural industry. Students in the Spanish class travel on Fridays for 20 miles and meet for three hours with students in the English class on the grounds of the community college.

The graduate school is in the western United States in a coastal town, and the community college is located in an inland city, at the epicenter of the agricultural industry. There is an economic divide between the two areas, called the "lettuce curtain." The inland region is one of the most productive agricultural areas in the United States, particularly for growing lettuce. However, the prosperity generated by this industry has not been evenly distributed among the region's inhabitants. One side of the "lettuce curtain" includes wealthy coastal communities with access to better education, healthcare, and social services. The other side includes communities that consist mostly of agricultural workers, many of whom are low-wage earners and migrants.

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These communities often face challenges such as substandard living conditions, limited access to quality education and healthcare, and sometimes, exploitation in the form of low wages and poor working conditions.

In this academic partnership, the two courses allow language learners to collaborate on a weekly basis through a curriculum that seeks to strengthen listening, interpersonal, and intercultural skills beyond mere conversational practice (Little, 2001). The program was created a decade ago with these premises in mind:

- Intercultural exchanges should be at the core of the language curriculum
- Spanish is not a foreign language in the US (Torres, 2017)
- There is a need for language skills in the community
- Education has the power to tear away the “lettuce curtain”

In the program, students collaborate in English and Spanish for ten sessions and work on a final project during the last weeks of classes. This project is presented at a symposium, which is intended as the climax of the semester. The program aspires to have an impact in the community, transcending the walls of the language classroom. Despite its consolidation in the curriculum of both universities, the program still grapples with several issues, such as the limited societal impact of its final project.

Case

In the past, the curriculum for this program borrowed from varied approaches to second language teaching including tandem learning, virtual exchanges, service-learning, and the Growing Participator Approach. While useful, these methodologies did not pedagogically feed the final project, which had only a peripheral presence and value in the curriculum. The projects and presentations rarely left the classroom and students’ engagement in the project tended to be superficial, according to the instructors.

To tackle the shortcomings of the final project, the program organizers decided to adopt a new approach, embracing the principles and methodology of Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL). In PBLL, teachers guide students through the creation and execution of real-world projects that require them to collaborate and create a “public product” for a community partner while developing their language skills. These projects involve ongoing collaboration, feedback, and engagement with authentic materials, and scenarios, often leading to greater student motivation and engagement.

To prepare, one of the instructors completed a course on PBLL and participated in the 2023 PBLL in Action Summer Institute at the National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC). The practical nature of these trainings allowed the instructor to deeply engage with PBLL and revamp the curriculum for their program. The training led to this revised framing of the final project:

- *Challenge*: How can we, as intermediate and advanced learners of Spanish and English, promote opportunities for professional development in our county?
- *Authentic, real-world purpose*: Workers in the field face many obstacles that prevent them from accessing resources for professional development.
- *Community partner*: County Free Libraries.
- *Public product*: “Professional Pathfinder”, a digital and paper-based booklet with useful information in Spanish and English for community members who are seeking professional development opportunities in the community.

The public product was defined in conversations with the community partner, who joined the first class session to set the context, provide a sense of purpose, and help students understand why the project is worth doing. The instructors reported high enthusiasm among students, and their weekly reflections also evidenced a genuine desire to contribute to the project.

After five weeks, engagement was strong and students were actively researching opportunities in small groups. Groups were working on mapping the different companies who hire in the region, creating a guide on how to apply for a job and participate in an interview, providing technology tips for job seekers, and curating useful resources for professionals in the county. Looking forward to the end of the revised course, the program organizers were optimistic that the public product would be useful for the partner and were satisfied with the PBL format as a tool to increase motivation and impact.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- Based on what you know, do you think this program will achieve its aims for language learning? For engaging students? For social impact? Why or why not?
- What cross-cultural issues could affect this program?
- What power dynamics may be happening in this scenario? How can they be addressed?
 - How can the instructors ensure that there is equal learning for the students studying English and the student studying Spanish?
 - How can the program ensure that it is not perpetuating a "savior complex", where the graduate students may feel they are "rescuing" the inland community?
- What are the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and risks of Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) in the context of intercultural exchange?
- What metrics can be used to evaluate the impact of the "public product" created for the community partner?
- Imagining future semesters, what public projects might be appropriate for this course? What organizations might be good community partners?
- How could the program ensure continuity and lasting impact in the community, especially considering its semester-based nature?

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“I Want to Go Home!”

A Student Travels Abroad for the First Time

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Tags

Crisis-Management; Education Abroad; Partnerships; Student Services; University/Higher Education

Setting

Claudia is a third-year undergraduate student at a private institution in the US. She is a Communications major focusing on film production and has an interest in Japanese entertainment. She believes that learning about the industry and the language will help her in her future goals. She strives to work in the music industry and live in Japan one day. She applied and was accepted to the exchange program in Tokyo for a semester to help improve her language skills, learn the culture, and gain experience in the country she hoped to work within in the future. Claudia is a first-generation university student who has never traveled outside of her hometown, let alone out of the country. Two of the main concerns she had before her semester abroad were finances and the unknowns of daily life abroad. Her home institution provided her with travel logistics, resources to apply for scholarships, and a pre-departure orientation. In addition, prior to going abroad, students are required to take a cross-cultural training course to help students through the acculturation process (culture shock, homesickness, etc.).

The home and host institution have a bilateral exchange agreement and have successfully sent and received students for years. During the exchange program, students take courses related to their major in English along with Japanese language courses. Upon arrival in Tokyo, students must make their own way to campus during move-in dates. However, the Japanese institution does provide resources to students including orientation. They also offer events and opportunities for students to meet each other.

Case

To help with her finances, Claudia applied for a scholarship and received \$4,000 towards her program. The Education Abroad Office tried to help her find other financial opportunities. Given Claudia's financial concerns, the Education Abroad Office hired her until her departure to help with her finances.

Claudia's program began at the beginning of April, so she had plenty of time to prepare her documents for her visa. Once submitted, she purchased her ticket to Tokyo. After a week, she was nervous that her visa would not get there in time, so she postponed her flight for a few days. Her visa arrived not long after. As she got closer to her departure date, Claudia decided to reschedule her flight again as she was nervous about the arrival time and the housing check-in window.

The Japanese institution does not offer pick up services from the airport, but they do provide information on how to get to campus. When she arrived at the airport, she was able to get a taxi and arrive at her dormitory safely with no issues. The following day, the Education Abroad Advisor, Sofia, received an email from Claudia stating that she wanted to back out and could not carry on with her study abroad program. Upon arrival, Claudia felt overwhelmed, leading to uncontrollable tears and near panic. She was sorry and did not want to disappoint Sofia as she had helped her in many ways. Claudia shared that she was also scared and she might do something bad to herself because she worked hard to get to Japan, but was not happy at all.

After receiving the email, Sofia reached out to Claudia immediately to talk to her and also informed her supervisor of the situation. Within hours, they were able to communicate with Claudia. Sofia asked Claudia how she was doing and to explain what happened. After explaining, Claudia seemed calmer. Sophia encouraged Claudia to try attending class the next day. They asked Claudia to wait and reassess at the end of the week after some opportunities to engage with other students. After the end of the week, Sofia did not hear back from Claudia. Sophia reached out to her a few times and did not get a response. Sofia reached out to the international office at the Japanese institution to see if they can check in on her. After a few days, Sofia received an email from Claudia letting her know that due to financial and family reasons she had to return home early. Claudia apologized for not notifying her as Claudia bought a ticket at the last minute for fear that ticket prices might go up. Claudia had packed and left within 24 hours and did not notify the international education office nor the housing office at the host institution that she was leaving.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What are some consequences that the student might face because of the manner in which Claudia left?
- How could Sofia support Claudia upon her return?
- Is there another program model that may have been more supportive for this student?
- How might this case affect the institution's relationship with their long-standing partner?
- What advising might support first-generation university students at the inquiry, application, pre-departure, travel, and orientation phases of education abroad programs?

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- How might an education abroad office or other student services offices help students that want to study abroad but have limited travel experience and/or limited experience away from their families?

Promoting Inclusivity:

An Intercultural Peer Mentorship Program at a Community College

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Tags

Cross-Cultural Issues; International Student and Scholar Services; Internationalization and Global Learning; Program Design; Program Assessment; Student Learning and Development; University/Higher Education

Setting

Nestled in the heart of a Midwestern U.S. town, Springfield Community College has recently emerged as a hub for international students seeking quality education in a diverse setting. With an influx of students from various corners of the globe, the college has become a melting pot of different cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and academic pursuits. Recognizing the challenges and opportunities of diversity, Springfield Community College's International Office is committed to ensuring that international students transition smoothly into their new academic environment and that they feel integrated and valued within the larger community. The leadership is committed to fostering intercultural competence in international students and the entire student body.

The college's International Office introduced the Intercultural Peer Mentorship Program (IPMP) as a solution. Envisioned as a bridge between cultures, the IPMP aims to pair newly arrived international students with domestic students in their second semester or beyond. This pairing fosters a symbiotic relationship, benefiting both parties through cultural exchange, mutual learning, and friendship. The main goal of IPMP is to facilitate authentic interactions, nurture a space for open dialogue, enhance cultural awareness, and forge lasting bonds.

Case

With strong institutional backing, the International Office allocated resources to ensure a successful program roll-out. This investment was channeled into several areas: meticulous crafting of extensive training materials, enticing perks for peer mentors, and orchestrating vibrant events—each of these elements aimed to strengthen the bond between mentors and mentees. An intensive two-day training workshop was developed to equip mentors for their pivotal roles by diving deep into intercultural communication, conflict diffusion, and the creation of inclusive environments.

Yet, like many well-charted voyages, the initial journey of IPMP was not without its tumultuous waters. As weeks transitioned into months, the International Office found some concerning patterns. During the first semester, feedback was gathered monthly through face-to-face sessions and supplemented with bi-monthly anonymous online surveys. The once high-spirited rapport between mentors and mentees seemed to ebb each week. Digging deeper through candid feedback sessions, the mentees highlighted a pressing concern: their academic commitments, often relentless and unforgiving, were draining them of time and energy, leaving little room for the enriching experiences the IPMP promised. In this shifting dynamic, several mentors initially envisioned as cultural bridges inadvertently transitioned into roles resembling academic counselors.

By the academic year's midpoint, other challenges began to surface. Despite their training, mentors felt unequipped and sometimes overwhelmed by the profound emotional and cultural issues their mentees presented. The training design had underestimated the emotional depth and cultural chasms that needed bridging. Ongoing challenges faced by the international students included intense homesickness, the culture shock of being submerged in unfamiliar societal systems, and the uphill task of adapting to a different academic culture.

Navigating the intricate maze of cultural norms and etiquette posed challenges. An episode that stood out involved a mentor named Jennifer and her mentee, Ali, from Saudi Arabia. Jennifer confided to the program coordinator, "I thought Ali was disinterested because he never voiced any concerns." On the other hand, Ali revealed during a feedback session, "In my culture, we are taught not to challenge or question our elders directly. I did not want to seem disrespectful." This incident highlighted the depth of cultural values ingrained since childhood, emphasizing reverence towards elders and avoiding confrontations.

There were other areas of the program that required improvement. Although conceived with the laudable aim of facilitating organic bonds similar to naturally blossoming friendships, the reality painted a different picture. The rigid framework of tight schedules and prepared agendas gave the program an unintended bureaucratic atmosphere. This formal structure inhibited the spontaneity and heartfelt interactions the program was designed to inspire.

Toward the end of the first semester, staff recognized a need for a robust assessment framework. Using well-defined metrics and performance benchmarks, the International Office started working to measure the impacts of the IPMP, particularly its efficacy in smoothing academic transitions and fostering genuine intercultural dialogues.

As the academic year drew to a close and the pilot year of IPMP concluded, the International Office began a comprehensive introspection. The feedback and assessment reinforced the urgent need for a program facilitating

intercultural exchanges. Reflecting on the insights, the college envisions refining the mentor training sessions, introducing more fluidity in program structure, and fostering an environment where mentors and mentees feel empowered to share and learn without reservations. Several ideas for strategies emerged—like smaller group check-ins, more frequent feedback loops, and 'culture share' sessions where mentees can share about their native cultures. Now, the International Office must decide which strategies to implement to address the challenges and build upon the program's initial successes.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- What strategies could encourage consistent and genuine engagement between mentors and mentees throughout the academic year?
- Given the diverse cultural backgrounds of participants, how can the IPMP effectively address and bridge cultural misunderstandings and ensure a comfortable environment for open dialogue?
- How can the International Office support mentors so that they do not feel overwhelmed or unprepared?
- Considering the rapid technological advancements, how might digital platforms and tech tools be leveraged to enhance the IPMP experience?
- What formative feedback mechanisms would be most useful for the continued improvement of the IPMP?
- What metrics and methods could the International Office use to assess the impact of the IPMP? How should they define success?
- How does this program contribute to the institution's broader internationalization goals, including the development of all students' intercultural competence? How could it further expand its contribution?

Ideologies Abroad:

Encountering Political Doctrines on a Faculty-led Comparative Healthcare Program

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Tags

Cross-Cultural Issues; Education Abroad; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; Internationalization and Global Learning; University/Higher Education

Setting

This case takes place during a 2-week faculty-led study abroad program in Comparative Healthcare from a university in the United States to Western Europe. The program runs every year to Europe, often varying the countries and sometimes returning to popular selections. The group consisted of 16 undergraduate and graduate students that traveled to Munich, Germany; Interlaken and Geneva, Switzerland; and Paris, France to witness healthcare systems firsthand. Of the 16 students, only four self-identified as minorities. The faculty leader does not identify as a minority.

Students participated in healthcare facility visits, guided tours of healthcare museums, and guest lectures by healthcare professionals to understand differences between healthcare systems in Western Europe and the United States. The program is designed to immerse students in healthcare systems while also experiencing the culture in each community and identifying the connection between local customs and their influence on healthcare. In terms of healthcare systems, Europe partakes in universal healthcare whereas the United States' system uses a mix of government and private insurances to fund care, resulting in a disparity in healthcare

access and quality among demographic groups. The focus of pre-departure preparations had been on preparing students in terms of healthcare knowledge and basic tips for traveling abroad.

Case

The group of 16 students and one faculty member arrive in Munich, Germany. In each city, the faculty provides background information before the group spends the day engaging in healthcare facility visits, guest lectures, and group tours. In these countries, students noticed the implementation of socialist ideals into everyday life such as public transportation, healthcare, and overall quality of living. Initial cultural differences noted by students included smaller rooms, having to pay for water at restaurants, and water being room temperature when served. The group moved on to Interlaken, Switzerland where students quickly noted the increase in cost of food and extracurricular activities. Although information was provided in advance as to what to expect, students expressed to the faculty leader that they were not prepared for the high cost of food in Switzerland.

During the trip, an undergraduate student who identifies as Cuban, July, reported some difficult feelings about the socialist ideas encountered. Socialist ideas promoted by Che Guevara in South America were implemented with government, healthcare, and habits in everyday life in Europe. July felt that the very structure and ideas that Guevara spread led to the downfall of her home country, Cuba. Being Cuban and understanding the deeper history that is not taught in detail due to extreme censorship for support in the Cuban revolution, and witnessing communist support from the locals, felt confusing. It left July wondering how these countries took the same ideas yet flourished, while the original dictatorship collapsed along with its promises.

Understanding the differences in healthcare systems and the origin of healthcare ideals, July couldn't help but wonder about the political mentality of citizens. While walking the streets of Germany, Che Guevara's face was plastered in plain view, not as governmental propaganda, but in local support of ideals. When being asked where July was from, she didn't hesitate to say her home country Cuba, even though she emigrated to the United States. The reaction to July's nationality mostly consisted of communist propaganda spread by Che such as exclaiming "Hasta la Victoria" holding a closed fist in support, being asked how beautiful her country is due to his work, being called a "Cuban princess," and receiving better treatment than her American peers. While proud of efficiently communicating with the locals in a mixed Spanish-Latin vocabulary, July was left with mixed feelings about not only seeing support towards the revolution, but because she was assumed to be a supporter. While Switzerland didn't seem to promote these political ideals as much as Germany, in France, it only seemed to get worse with occasional merchandise that featured Che's image. Overall, July enjoyed the faculty-led program, but was taken aback by the attitudes she encountered towards Cuba and Che Guevara in particular. She reported these feelings to her faculty leader, who wondered if other students had similar experiences.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- How would you react if you were in the student's situation?
- How could the faculty leader address July's experience while on the program and turn it into a learning experience? How could they address concerns about costs in Switzerland?
- What kinds of materials should be covered during faculty-led program's pre-departure orientations?
- How can privilege, positionality, and perception affect a student's study abroad experience?
- How can a faculty leader support students with different identities from their own? What resources, local or international, could they draw from?
- How can programs be designed to maximize global learning during short-term study abroad experiences?

Tipping Points:

Managing Ethical Partnerships Amidst Student Complaints and Process Breakdowns

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Tags

Education Abroad; Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice; Experiential Education; Management and Operations; Partnerships; University/Higher Education

Setting

At a dentistry school in a large, public research university in the United States, the International Dental Service-Learning Program (IDSLP) is a summer program in which second-year dental students travel to a partner organization to complete a public service project. IDSLP partners are clinics in low and lower-middle income countries. The countries represented are Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Mozambique, Mali, and Bolivia. Average enrollment in IDSLP is six to ten students. Partners determine project topics and final placement offers. IDSLP has been on hiatus for two years, but partners are now hosting students again.

Student success support includes pre-departure orientation, weekly reflective journals, project assignments, individual check-ins with program staff and peers, and a post-IDSLP returnee retreat. Students pay tuition to their home university as well as expenses for travel, passports, immunizations, living expenses, meals, etc. Partners charge student support fees directly to the students (usually \$300-500). These fees are discussed in the program application and at orientation. Partners receive no other direct financial compensation for hosting IDSLP students. Participants are given a \$2,000 stipend to offset the additional in-country, out-of-pocket costs of IDSLP participation.

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IDSLP has experienced significant staff turnover, with three different teams overseeing the program in the last four years. The current program lead and coordinator are struggling to access information and are slow to communicate with participants. The IDSLP program lead is about to go on parental leave. The program coordinator will assume some of the lead's duties until their return.

The first post-hiatus cohort is about to return to the US. Soon they will gather for the post-IDSLP retreat to debrief in an intensive one-day seminar led by the program coordinator.

Simultaneously, throughout the dental school, there is growing, outspoken concern from students about high tuition and fees, and lack of transparency around student fees. The school has convened a committee to address these concerns. At the same time, the university is undergoing major transitions in financial systems. All financial transactions are significantly delayed or cannot be completed. IDSLP students did not receive their stipends until the week before they left home.

Case

Elaine (program lead) and Alex (program coordinator) are preparing for the returnee retreat that will take place in two weeks. They have reviewed the students' weekly reflective journals and mid-program check-in conversation notes. All students have demonstrated personal and professional growth. One student in Tanzania who identifies as Asian-American has discussed the racial discrimination he experienced in the community but tells Elaine that his onsite mentor is very supportive and that he does not feel he needs further support from the program. Students have expressed frustration at not having been able to accomplish as much as they had expected, but from Elaine and Alex's perspective, all students are making great progress.

Elaine is worried that onsite hosts may not overtly discuss the site's student support fees with the students, and students may leave before paying this fee. She asks Alex to send out an explicit reminder to pay these fees before the students depart, which he sends out that afternoon.

The following morning, Elaine and Alex receive a response from the three students in Tanzania, expressing an intense reaction to the fee reminder email. They state: that they received insufficient information and reminders of the student fees; that the out-of-pocket costs of the program are already high and another fee is unreasonable; and that the program should be responsible for paying the student fees on behalf of the student (given that home university tuition and fees are already so high). They state that their host has not explicitly asked the students to pay the student support fee, and they refuse to pay it proactively. The students say that their overall experience in IDSLP has been very poor, that they feel that Elaine and Alex have mismanaged the program, and that the fee reminder email was their "tipping point."

Elaine and Alex are surprised by this message. Neither feels that previous communication they've had with these students, or their reflection assignments, indicated significant problems. Elaine is hesitant to press the partner to push the students to pay this fee and reaches out to the partner to gather more information. The partner voluntarily offers to waive the fee, but Elaine feels uncomfortable with this, knowing that the students were given funds specifically for this purpose, and that the livelihood of onsite support staff can be significantly impacted by non-payment of this fee.

Elaine responds to the students. She reminds them that this information has already been given to them and that they have received stipend funds from the program specifically for paying these fees. She says that she

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understands their concerns about high tuition and fees, and explains why this particular fee is not included in the university's tuition and fees structure. She asks the students to pay the fee before they depart. She offers to meet virtually with the students to discuss the matter in further detail. The students respond to this with a reiteration of their original complaints and decline to meet.

Elaine and Alex alert their department director to the situation. The next day, Elaine begins her parental leave. Alex is now very worried about leading the post-IDSLP retreat on his own.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- Do you think Elaine and Alex could have done anything differently to avoid this issue? If so, what?
- Was Elaine's response to the students' complaints appropriate? How would you have responded?
- What should Alex do to prepare for the upcoming post-program retreat?
- What external conditions in U.S. or international higher education may have impacted this case?
- In this specific case, do you think the students should pay the fee? Why or why not? Going forward, should the program consider a different funding structure?
- In programs that are dependent on institutional partnerships, how do participants impact that partnership? What responsibility do program participants have in maintaining institutional partnerships (if any)?
- What kind of ethical considerations arise when there is an immense resource and power imbalance between two partner organizations? How do those considerations relate to the events of this case?

CASE STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

CSIEpub.org *An open-access online publication*

Authors Wanted for Spring 2024

Welcoming all scholar-practitioners, including working professionals, faculty, researchers, and graduate students

Tentative publication schedule for Volume 5, Issue 1:

Intent to submit (optional): February 23rd

First draft due: March 22nd

Peer review due: March 22nd - April 17th

Final draft due: April 19th

Anticipated publication: May 13th

CSIEpub.org