



COMPREHENSIVE  
INTERNATIONALIZATION

# International Partnership Development Today: Insights and Best Practices from Case Studies

by Saroj Siegler Quinn

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## Introduction

In the past decade, the scope of partnership development has expanded and evolved as universities have developed robust internationalization strategies. These strategies have been influenced by the rise of new technologies, increased diversity in partnership types and domains, and institutional goals of creating programs that are responsive to changing demographics. Together, these internationalization strategies have led to a notable shift from ad hoc to strategic international partnerships.

This publication focuses on the ways in which institutions have become increasingly strategic in their internationalization efforts and the key shifts and factors influencing institutions' approaches to partnership development. This publication aims to provide international educators with insight into higher education partnership development today. Different partnership types and trends will be discussed and real-life case studies will be presented. The case studies illustrate the challenges of establishing, implementing, and sustaining partnerships in the context of the contemporary and rapidly changing landscape of global collaboration.

### What Makes a Partnership Successful?

For many years, international partnerships were comprised of mostly student exchange agreements. Although student exchange agreements are still prevalent, partnerships now take on a greater variety of forms. Moreover, partnerships can begin in one form and evolve over time. There are countless factors that can lead to partnership success or failure and these factors can vary based on partnership type, length, goals, etc. (see Tillman 2007; Kinser and Green 2009; Van de Water, Green, and Koch 2008 for more detailed discussions of success factors). To help set the stage for a productive and viable partnership, institutions should consider the following best practices.

- **Institutions should define the goals of the partnership and identify an appropriate partner to achieve these goals.** The success of a partnership is measured against the goals of that partnership; thus, clear and attainable goals must be identified by the institution from the beginning. Once the goals have been defined, it is easier to determine and communicate the attributes that an institution seeks from an appropriate partner. Tatiana Mackliff and Carol Reyes from Miami Dade College (MDC) stress that partnering institutions' "values, mission, areas of academic strength, and academic calendar" should align ([Case Study 1](#)). For example, when creating a collaborative degree program, it is best to identify a partner with a similar academic caliber and compatible majors and graduation requirements. If the goal is to establish a joint research program, it may be necessary that both institutions have appropriate lab facilities, resources, and faculty interest. In a productive partnership, each partnering institution must leverage its individual strengths to contribute to the other, as well as the dynamic as a whole.
- **Both institutions should establish a mutual, equitable, and fair commitment of time and resources.** This does not necessarily mean that one partner might not take the lead in a particular area, but partnerships flourish when both partners are invested. For example, California State University-Long Beach (CSULB) and Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW) have been able to develop a thriving partnership due to a mutual agreement to provide "the resources required to nurture and grow [their] strategic partnership" ([Case Study 2](#)). While the CSULB-HAW partnership began with a single international business workshop, it has gradually evolved to include a number of faculty-led initiatives (for more information, see [Case Study 2](#)). HAW committed resources for travel stipends, marketing, and partner visits, while CSULB focused its efforts on developing more faculty-led programs. Although the institutions are committing different resources, both institutions have deemed the allocation to be equitable.



The level of investment that each institution offers will vary depending on the complexity of the partnership. Some partnerships, such as a student exchange agreement, may require only a minimal commitment of resources annually, whereas a collaborative degree program is likely to require a greater sustained administrative commitment. Regardless of what type of partnership is involved, it is best practice to establish an understanding and clear guidelines delineating what is expected of both partners. For example, the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program between City University of Hong Kong (CityU) and Columbia University has been productive in large part because both institutions “have invested heavily in the administration of the program, from development of the program website and joint promotional events to the selection and interviews of the candidates to the academic advising and counseling of program participants from both schools” (Case Study 3). It is only through mutual efforts and resources that CityU and Columbia have been able to maintain the program and keep the channels of communication open.

- **Institutions should secure support from the appropriate players on campus.**

Memorandums of understanding, or agreements, can develop at a variety of levels within institutions; they can be approved by a faculty member, department chair, college dean, president, or provost. Consequently, faculty and leadership members must share the same institutional vision when it comes to partnership discussions and negotiations. Dedicated administrative and faculty support is crucial to ensuring that there is a sufficient, and usually ongoing, allocation of the resources needed for the partnership to succeed. The College of Staten Island’s (CSI) experience in launching a new program in Cuba (Case Study 4) demonstrates that the initial investment can require more resources than anticipated, especially in a nontraditional market. However, through the support and perseverance of key players within

CSI’s leadership, appropriate funding was provided to keep the program planning stages moving forward. Program success is heavily dependent on a sustained commitment from campus leadership.

The role and scope of international partnerships continue to change to meet the developing needs of the students, faculty, and institutions. Some of the trending factors affecting the development of international higher education partnerships today include:

- **Strategic Partnerships:** the shift from ad hoc friendship agreements to agreements that are considerably more strategic in nature;
- **Quality Versus Quantity:** increased selectivity as institutions establish partnerships that contribute to their internationalization portfolios;
- **Diversity of Partnerships:** the rise of short-term, collaborative degree, and research- or industry-focused programs; and
- **Partnerships in New and Emerging Markets:** a commitment to the introduction of partnerships in nontraditional destinations.

The implications of these trends on partnership formation, development, and sustainability will be explored throughout this publication.

## Strategic Partnerships

One of the most notable changes seen in the evolution of partnership development is the growing emphasis on strategic partnerships that align with and support internationalization goals. Institutions have begun to cultivate partnerships that have the potential to grow beyond a single activity, such as a student exchange or faculty-led program, to ones that cross numerous disciplines and activities and lead to robust, multifaceted collaborations.

Institutions engage in careful and deliberate communication and action in order to build strategic

partnerships that in some way enhance their campus or position in the global arena. When approached by a new partner or approaching a possible new partner, institutions often use more formal procedures to determine if the partnership will truly benefit the institution; these measures often include applications, checklists, and structured conversations. The responses to these exploratory exercises may be presented and vetted by a committee comprised of both faculty and staff to ensure that the proposed partner adds value to the international profile. Some institutions will require a formal vote for an institutional-level partnership to be signed. In other cases, committees may present their recommendations but ultimately leave the decision in the hands of the institution's senior international officer, provost, or president. Throughout these deliberations, most institutions aim to balance their portfolios so that partnerships do not compete with existing initiatives, which can then lead to inadequate participation.

### **Strategic Goals**

Strategic approaches to partnership development consider factors such as the region, academic discipline, degree level, program duration, and more, alongside the institution's internationalization goals. Strategic goals vary by institution, but might include:

- Diversifying study abroad program types and duration;
- Reaching a specific target percentage of students studying abroad;
- Identifying international internship opportunities;
- Developing joint research collaborations;
- Expanding opportunities for study or research for students from underrepresented majors; and
- Launching opportunities in nontraditional markets.

In the example of California State University-Fullerton (CSUF), administrators made a conscious decision to establish partnerships that featured multiple capacity-building activities in line with the university's mission and strategic goals. As a Hispanic-serving institution, CSUF chose to engage in partnerships that would expand its collaborations in Latin America and "emphasize participation of first-generation and culturally diverse students" ([Case Study 5](#)). Additionally, CSUF was awarded a 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund grant to partner with Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP) in Brazil on an experiential STEM-focused mobility program designed to support engineering students, thereby reaching students in the underrepresented STEM fields. CSUF's collaborations demonstrate how the university's strategic goals have helped to shape its international partnerships.

This case study also introduces the idea of "creative reciprocity," a strategy that can be implemented in a variety of ways. Institutions may agree on a formula for reciprocity that deviates from the traditional one-to-one exchange. For example, four U.S. students might attend a short summer program at an Indian institution in exchange for one Indian student attending a semester-long program at the partnering U.S. institution. Creative reciprocity can also apply to the multi-institutional exchanges commonly used in consortia, such as the Institute of International Education's (IIE) Global E3 program. In this consortium program, member institutions agree to accept engineering students from any of the other member institutions. For instance, a student from Hong Kong might go to a university in the United States, while a student from the United States goes to a university in France or any of the more than 70 member institutions that reside in the 40 participating countries. This type of reciprocity can offer students more flexibility in options and can help institutions to maintain balance. Creative reciprocity is becoming increasingly

common and can provide the framework for a greater variety of strategic goal-oriented partnerships to thrive.

### **Complex Partnerships**

In addition to an increased emphasis on partnerships that reinforce an institution's strategic goals for internationalization, there is a move toward more complex partnerships. They can span disciplines, have multiple objectives, and may not fit neatly into a box. These partnerships often begin as a simple departmental arrangement or student exchange agreement but evolve over time to become more inclusive.

California State University-Long Beach (CSULB) offers a prime example of how a small departmental partnership grew into a prospering, multilayered institutional partnership (for more information, see [Case Study 2](#)). CSULB and Hamburg University of the Applied Sciences (HAW) started on a small scale in 1993 with a joint international business workshop that was met with success. However, students outside of the business schools were not aware of the partnership and the opportunities it presented. Thus, in 2008, both partners decided that the partnership was a priority and the agreement was expanded to the institutional level through a well-defined, multitiered strategy that included semester exchange, short-term programs, faculty collaboration, and joint workshops. The case of CSULB demonstrates a shift from purely transactional partnerships to transformational relationships that can lay the foundation for substantial academic engagement, expanded curricular offerings, and internationalization for both institutions.

Partnerships can also grow from national initiatives or consortia and may include corporate or nonprofit partners. Multi-institution partnerships can increase the sustainability of programs by adding mechanisms to maintain balance. For example, The George Washington University

(GW) School of Business, along with the business schools at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and Duke University (Duke), collaborated on an innovative program model with Copenhagen Business School (CBS) in Denmark (for more information, see [Case Study 6](#)). Students from CBS attend GW for a traditional semester-long program. While GW, UNC, and Duke students can attend CBS for a semester-long program or one-week intensive program centered on sustainability and social responsibility, a theme that is featured in all of their respective institutional missions. Bryan Andriano, the executive director of the business school at GW, notes that "Having multiple institutions collaborate on a single program is inherently more complicated than a bilateral design, but it has allowed for some flexibility in years where demand has fluctuated among the U.S. institutions; should one institution not meet its quota, it may offer available spaces to other institutions" ([Case Study 6](#)). This multilateral partnership implements a mixed program model that appeals to more diverse student interests and needs by including short and semester-long options. Given the multitude of goals and requirements involved in the partnership, there is a greater need for ongoing oversight and communication between all four institutions.

It is important to note that these partnerships can be challenging and labor intensive because of their growing complexities. Nevertheless, these and other partnerships are essential elements of campus internationalization efforts and missions. Given the overwhelming prospects that partnerships can entail, institutions must be increasingly strategic when cultivating their partnerships.

## **Quality Versus Quantity**

Institutions have become more selective as they focus on establishing partnerships that contribute to their internationalization strategies. The days



of measuring successful internationalization efforts by the number of partners and signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) are in the past. Now, institutions often only sign MoUs when there is a clear plan in place to augment the MoU with an engagement and implementation strategy. Some institutions have taken this a step further by reviewing all of their current agreements and retiring those that have never led to specific activities or have become dormant in recent years.

One factor that can contribute to the delineation between a partnership of quantity from one of quality is the language used. Gatewood and Sutton (2017) categorize agreements as “agreements of intentionality” or “agreements of implementation.” Agreements of intentionality are more ambiguous and often take the form of MoUs. They demonstrate an interest or desire to explore the possibility of working together, but generally do not lay out a clear plan, strategy, or measurable goals. In contrast, agreements of implementation are considerably more specific and can take many forms, such as a student exchange agreement, research partnership, or joint degree program. They are generally written for a specific period of time and must be renewed or retired after that period. Agreements of implementation are seen by many as more meaningful and of value because they include clear, measurable activities and outcomes.

In addition to focusing on partnerships that are implementable and have defined goals, many institutions are trying to assess the potential long-term sustainability of programs early on and are creating frameworks to enhance the potential success of the partnership. Institutions that seek to launch a new program or partnership but have doubts that their institution alone can sustain the program may consider partnering with a peer institution, nonprofit corporation, or government agency to create a dynamic, sound program.

For example, Mount Holyoke College, a small liberal arts college for women, prioritized its investment in high-potential partnerships that advance and support university curricular goals (for more information, see [Case Study 7](#)). Mount Holyoke reviewed its current international activities and then retired agreements that were dormant. The school made the decision that “new collaborations with institutions abroad had to be strategic, meeting multiple student and faculty interests and needs” ([Case Study 7](#)). One such institution that met those terms was the Monteverde Institute (MVI), a nonprofit research center in Costa Rica. According to Kirk Lange, Eva Paus, and Joanne Picard from Mount Holyoke:

MVI’s mission to blend classroom learning, applied research, and community engagement in support of a sustainable future fit well with Mount Holyoke’s strategic focus on environmental sustainability and place-based learning. We had several faculty from different disciplines, whose research interests connected both with Costa Rica and Mount Holyoke’s institutional priorities, providing a strong base for developing an interdisciplinary program. ([Case Study 7](#))

However, Mount Holyoke identified early on that due to its relatively small student body, the program would not generate sufficient enrollment numbers among Mount Holyoke students alone. Partnering with another U.S. university, in this case Goucher College, which shared its values and goals allowed Mount Holyoke to build a sustainable program and viable pool of participants. Mount Holyoke’s partnership with MVI and Goucher illustrates the importance of assessing potential student demand and regularly reviewing resource needs in order to maintain high-quality programs. Furthermore, finding a partner that fits an institution’s needs and objectives is fundamental to an active partnership agreement.

An emphasis on the quality over the quantity of partnerships often leads to institutions retiring duplicative agreements and choosing instead to invest in new partnerships that diversify and add value to their international portfolios.

## Diversity of Partnerships

Partnerships come in many shapes and sizes and vary in duration and scope. They include student and faculty exchanges, collaborative degree programs, research projects, internships, branch campuses, and more. Partnerships have traditionally focused on in-person interaction and residency programs; however, this is no longer an essential element. With the rise of video conferencing, smart classrooms, and other technologies, students and faculty can engage in joint teaching and research from a distance. Partnerships may be all in person, all virtual, or a hybrid delivery method. Moreover, virtual collaborations may be synchronous or asynchronous.

Three developments that have become increasingly popular and have become a centerpiece of many institutions' internationalization strategies include:

- Short-term programs;
- Collaborative degrees (joint, dual, or double degrees); and
- Programs with a research, internship, or practicum component.

Institutions have seen a rise in partnerships that fall on opposite ends of the time spectrum, including short-term programs that last a week or two and collaborative degree programs that generally comprise two years at each institution. Some students are looking to truly distinguish themselves from their peers and are eager to participate in programs that lead to an additional degree or a jointly issued degree. Others are

looking for internship opportunities and training that can be applied to their future careers.

### Short-Term Programs

The rise of short-term programs is not a new phenomenon. According to IIE's *Open Doors* report, as of 2014/2015, 63 percent of students studying abroad chose short-term academic year programs, summer term, or January term programs, whereas only 37 percent participated in programs lasting one quarter or longer (IIE 2016).

The growth of short-term programs is demonstrated qualitatively through the case studies highlighted in this publication. All of the case studies, with the exception of the joint degree program in [Case Study 3](#), include a short-term component. These partnerships may not be limited to short-term programs, but they emphasize the role that short-term programming has had in increasing student participation rates, engaging a more diverse student population, and achieving strategic institutional goals.

For example, [Case Study 1](#) describes how Miami Dade College (MDC) began its collaboration with Lorenzo de' Medici Institute (LdM) as a semester-long program through the College Consortium for International Studies (CCIS). In 2016, however, MDC shifted its model to a direct partnership with LdM, which allowed students to primarily engage in the faculty-led summer program. MDC made the decision to shift its program model because 92 percent of MDC students participate in short-term, mainly faculty-led, programs (Carol Reyes, pers. comm.). The demographics of the MDC student body help to explain this preference for short-term programming. Many MDC students are first-generation, low-income minority students or nontraditional students who don't have the financial means or liberty to participate in long-term study abroad. Additionally, many students are focused on completing their studies in order to enter the workforce and are drawn to the appeal of a shorter time frame. Shifting the

program from a semester-long to a faculty-led short-term program significantly increased participation among MDC students.

MDC is not the only institution that has revised its partnership development strategies to focus heavily on short-term programs. The emphasis on short-term programs is seen across different institutional types; however, it is especially popular at minority-serving institutions with a large percentage of first-generation college students.

Tennessee State University (TSU), a historically black college and university (HBCU) with a history of low study abroad participation, launched short-term exchanges and more than tripled its study abroad participation in just three years (for more information, see [Case Study 8](#)). Through Tennessee State University's partnership with Centro Colombo Americano and EAFIT University (EAFIT) in Colombia, the 10-day intensive research projects in a foreign country offer an alternative model that has the potential to provide a significant intercultural experience to students who have limited financial resources. This short-term program has greatly expanded inbound and outbound mobility.

To ensure that short-term programs add educational value and engage students in substantive cross-cultural learning, institutions are implementing strategies to utilize technology and other resources to supplement the overseas programs. Moreover, partnerships are often re-envisioned to include both pre- and post-program content and engagement. Thus, the discussion is shifting away from the merits of short-term programming and moving toward the structure itself. Institutions are increasingly faced with the question of how to create quality partnerships that ensure that short-term programs are transformational, educational experiences.

### **Collaborative Degrees**

Although some of the increase in study abroad participation numbers have been represented in

short-term programs, collaborative degrees are also growing in popularity. Whether referred to as "joint degree programs" or "dual degree programs," students complete a considerable portion of their studies at two different institutions and ultimately earn a single jointly issued credential, two degrees, or even multiple degrees. Jane Knight states that collaborative degrees may include "double, multiple, tri-national, joint, integrated, collaborative, international, consecutive, concurrent, co-tutelle, overlapping, conjoint, parallel, simultaneous, and common degrees" (2011, 299).

Collaborative degree programs are on the rise and are attractive to students for many reasons. The programs provide students with an immersive experience that usually spans one to two years and gives them the chance to hone their foreign language skills. Participants may potentially achieve a working proficiency or even fluency in another language. Collaborative degree programs also provide more opportunities for cocurricular practical experience than is possible on short-term or exchange programs. Students are likely to participate in internships or research programs during university breaks or the academic term. These students are often eligible for a period of postgraduate employment because they have earned a local degree. With near native language skills, local internship or research experience, and eligibility for postgraduate employment, collaborative degree students have a competitive advantage when applying for roles at multinational companies. These programs may also appeal to students interested in pursuing a career outside of their home country.

For example, students in the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program between City University of Hong Kong and Columbia University complete all of the requirements for an equivalent major at both institutions and earn two bachelor's degrees in the same discipline (for more information, see [Case Study 3](#)). After some lengthy discussions

between the partners, “joint degree program” was deemed to be the most appropriate title for this program. All courses are matched and articulated and the administrators felt that the term “joint degree” reflected their vision of one consistent program where credits are transferred in both directions to fulfill each institution’s major, core, and elective requirements. This joint degree program offers students an immersion experience in two very distinct learning environments. Graduates of this program are gaining traditional and applied knowledge, along with a cross-cultural experience, that prepares them to excel in a globalized world.

The numerous institutional benefits and participant success stories of collaborative degree programs have many institutions racing to establish new programs. Faculty and administrators are excited about the potential effects that these partnerships have in internationalizing their campuses, attracting higher quality students, increasing mobility, and building on existing or establishing new relationships. As a result, however, many institutions are haphazardly pursuing these partnerships without first considering the administrative burden, level of student demand, and curricular alignment involved. Collaborative degree programs are considerably more challenging to launch and sustain than short-term or traditional semester-long exchanges. Collaborative degree programs take extensive cooperation and faculty and administrator time because a unified degree-granting program must be mapped out and articulation agreements negotiated to comply with legal and accreditation standards. Additionally, collaborative degree programs are selective, can be prohibitively expensive, and are more time intensive than many students are interested in or expect. Thus, collaborative degrees are likely to continue to make up a small percentage of overseas experiences compared with short-term and semester-long programs.

## **Research and Professional Experience Programs**

As institutions aim to offer programs with a greater curricular or professional impact, many are cultivating partnerships that include a research, internship, or practicum component. These field-based programs come in a variety of formats and durations, ranging from a few site visits woven into a short-term program to a semester-long internship or research experience. These programs support institutional strategic goals of expanding applied learning opportunities.

For example, Mount Holyoke recently decided to capitalize on its momentum and expand the impact of the Monteverde partnership by leveraging Mount Holyoke’s flagship Lynk program. The Lynk program “integrates curricular and applied learning and provides funding for a summer internship or research project” (for more information, see [Case Study 7](#)). Utilizing this program model, Mount Holyoke aims to further advance the community-based learning component by providing students with the support to conduct an applied summer project in Costa Rica.

The process of setting up such a program was made easier given the existing relationships that Mount Holyoke already has in Monteverde; however, it still required extensive planning and communication for the summer project program to come to fruition. Some of the common challenges of expanding research, internship, or practicum experiences abroad include: student visa policies, local faculty support, and access to the in-country industry. Stringent visa policies make obtaining authorization for students to work, even for unpaid opportunities, a cumbersome process. Furthermore, host country faculty are sometimes reluctant to offer visiting students research opportunities in their labs due to concerns about the training time, language barriers, and students’ commitment to the work. Faculty may prefer to reserve research opportunities

for local students who may commit to a longer placement and whose background can be readily assessed. Finally, building the necessary industry connections to identify internships, practicum, and opportunities for site visits can be time consuming for both partners. Institutions are often hesitant to secure placements for visiting students because these opportunities are limited in number and can be highly competitive.

Despite the challenges, many institutions have been able to develop partnerships with research, internship, and practicum components. Some of the more successful models include courses centered on practical experience where faculty advise students in securing an internship and then award credit for the experience. Another common partnership model is a course where the research experience is integrated into the curriculum. When pursuing this avenue, it is important to note that host institutions are often more likely to consider internships, research, and practicums when they are part of a longer-term study program and a mutually beneficial partnership.

## Partnerships in New and Emerging Markets

As part of their strategic approach to partnership development, many institutions are working toward diversifying their partners by looking at different world regions. These partnership opportunities may require new considerations and added levels of preparation and communication to ensure that they are successful. It is important to research and take into account the national contexts and institutional infrastructures of different countries when considering partnerships.

One market that is currently receiving increased attention from U.S. institutions is Cuba. Although some U.S. universities have had educational programs in Cuba for years, the structure and

landscape in which these programs function are changing. [Case Study 4](#) on The College of Staten Island (CSI) illustrates the processes and factors that go into establishing a short-term program for students to “study the history and pedagogy of Cuban education with observation in a K–12 Cuban classroom setting.” The proposed program will enable students to not only complete their coursework, but they will also have the opportunity to observe and participate in Cuban K–12 classrooms, a domain that has traditionally been off-limits to Americans. During the program development process, CSI and the Instituto Superior Pedagógico Enrique Jose Varona (UCPEJV) have encountered certain political, economic, and administrative hurdles, including the need to re-establish political pathways when oversight of UCPEJV shifted from one ministry to another, limited financial resources, and changing institutional rules and regulations (for more information, see [Case Study 4](#)). In order to overcome these challenges, CSI and UCPEJV relied on the commitment of the upper administration at both schools to invest the needed time and resources into the negotiations and program development.

In another case study, Grand Valley State University (GVSU) began a partnership with the Universidad del Bio Bio (UBB) in Chile, a dynamic and emerging market (for more information, see [Case Study 9](#)). This relationship grew beyond the initial student exchange in 2011 and has evolved each year to respond to student and faculty needs. New partnership initiatives include faculty immersion programs, faculty training workshops, study tours, and the launch of a dual degree. The viability of the programs was challenged a few years ago when “UBB shut down for a period of time in 2015, causing uncertainty among GVSU exchange students there. But the department where most GVSU students took courses held classes anyway, so student progress was not delayed” ([Case Study 9](#)). With faculty and administrators dedicating the time and resources to cultivating meaningful relationships



and understanding the needs of each institution, the GVSU-UBB partnership has grown into an active and diverse set of programs.

Building a partnership with an institution in a new or emerging market may require a greater financial and administrative commitment up front and may progress more slowly than expected. As a result, it is important that universities looking to establish partnerships in new destinations have the needed faculty, administrative, and financial support to see the process through to the end, as well as patience and realistic expectations. These partnerships are more likely to succeed if they are in line with strategic goals and have widespread institutional support. It is important that faculty and administrators consider the potential quality and sustainability of the partnership and the benefits to both institutions.

## Conclusion

The scope of partnerships has broadened and the international portfolios of higher education institutions are more diverse than ever. As multifaceted partnerships emerge that align with universities' strategic goals, existing partnerships need to evolve to remain relevant and sustainable. Partnerships must be responsive to the ever-changing needs of the students, administrators, and faculty.

Critical to the success of any productive long-term partnership is a shared commitment by both institutions. The negotiation and signing of an agreement provides the legal framework and objectives for a relationship, but that should not be the end goal. Many institutions focus more of their time on cultivating new relationships than on managing and fostering the strategic direction of existing relationships. This can lead to programs that fail to launch, dormant agreements, or ones with only short-term results. In response,

some institutions are strategically focusing their partnerships, diversifying their program scopes and durations, and employing alternative and complex models.

These shifts in partnership development thrive with appropriate faculty and administrator oversight, reflection, and intervention on both sides. In addition to gathering information about partnership activities, faculty and administrators need to track whether the partnership is meeting the goals of both institutions. If there are concerns, partnership modification or a larger evolution may be needed to ensure long-term sustainability.

The availability of new and low cost technology has helped to facilitate global communication, thus changing the nature in which institutions cultivate and transform partnerships. According to Mandy Reinig, director of Study Away at Virginia Wesleyan College, "Institutions can take advantage of video conferencing and voice over internet protocol (VOIP) options. These can be utilized to cut down on the cost of travel, connect faculty to each other, review documents, and assist in eliminating confusion or miscommunication that can sometimes be created via email or written communication" (pers. comm.). The work that would traditionally take significant periods of time and financial resources to secure can potentially be accomplished to a large extent via the latest, most secure electronic tools and services.

Technology and social media have transformed how institutions promote programs, recruit participants, and sustain partnerships. For example, one of the key elements of the enhanced marketing strategy for the CSULB-HAW partnership discussed in [Case Study 2](#) was the use of social media to connect prospective students with peers who had previously studied in Germany. Students often rely on social media to select their programs, engage with the curricula and culture, and provide feedback on their programs. Institutions can use these communication

channels to take the pulse of a program more frequently and work with their partners to ensure that the program develops to meet institutional and students' needs.

Mobile technology has changed how people view communication and their expectations surrounding communication. Partnership agreements can be negotiated faster because the challenges of working across time zones are less problematic and a student crisis can be resolved from anywhere. However, administrators must be strategic in their approaches to their communication with both the students and partnering institutions. Clear and ongoing dialogue is needed to develop and support responsive partnerships.

Historically, the scope of partnership development has been influenced by external political, economic, and ideological factors. For many years, the trend toward globalization has increased political, economic, and social interconnectedness and has transformed the realm of higher education. When faced with ever-changing world events, international educators will take on new challenges to partnership development and need to be strategic and deliberate in their thinking to ensure that diverse international partnerships continue to thrive.

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## Appendix. Case Studies

The nine case studies that follow illustrate some of the rationales, challenges, and best practices that these U.S. institutions have seen during their partnership development processes. The featured partnerships include:

- [Miami Dade College](#) with [Lorenzo de' Medici Institute](#)
- [California State University-Long Beach](#) with [Hamburg University of the Applied Sciences](#)
- [City University of Hong Kong](#) with [Columbia University](#)
- [College of Staten Island](#) with [Instituto Superior Pedagogico Enrique Jose Varona](#)
- [California State University-Fullerton](#) with [Universidade Federal Fluminense](#), [Universidade Estadual Paulista](#), and [Universidade São Paulo-Instituto de Ciências Matemáticas e de Computação](#)
- [The George Washington University School of Business](#) with [Copenhagen Business School](#)
- [Mount Holyoke College](#) with [Monteverde Institute](#) and [Goucher College](#)
- [Tennessee State University](#) with [Centro Colombo Americano](#) and [EAFIT University](#)
- [Grand Valley State University](#) with [Universidad del Bío Bío](#)

All of the case studies highlight the importance of developing partnerships that speak strategically to institutional contexts and priorities. The case studies provide international education professionals with solid models to consider and insights that may apply to their own internationalization initiatives.

*The author would like to thank all of the case study contributors for sharing valuable insights from their institutions' experiences developing partnerships.*

## Case Study 1

# Miami Dade College (MDC), Florida, USA

# Lorenzo de' Medici Institute (LdM), Florence, Rome, and Tuscany, Italy

—Tatiana Mackliff, Executive Director of International Education, MDC, and Carol Reyes, Director of Global Student Initiatives, MDC

## BACKGROUND

Miami Dade College (MDC) offers programs in more than 100 cities in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Europe via a wide range of consortium, direct exchange, and other partnerships. Despite MDC's geographic proximity and cultural affinity to the Latin American region, recent activity and survey results have demonstrated that MDC students have a particular interest in western Europe as a study abroad destination, which led to MDC's historic cooperation with Lorenzo de' Medici Institute (LdM).

## PARTNERSHIP EVOLUTION

MDC joined the College Consortium for International Studies (CCIS) in 1979 to engage students in affordable international options within a renowned consortium. Since then, MDC's collaboration with LdM, one of CCIS's member institutions, has evolved into a direct partnership that provides a platform for summer, semester, and yearlong study abroad for MDC students; more than 33 MDC students have studied at LdM since 2007.

Leveraging the strong partnership that developed through the consortium, MDC proposed and successfully executed its first faculty-led study abroad program to LdM (outside of the CCIS relationship) in summer 2016. During the program, 14 MDC students and one MDC faculty member were hosted by LdM for a month-long human anatomy and physiology II course. The course consisted of in-classroom instruction as well as

laboratory work, which was complemented by customized visits to local hospitals and health care facilities. These visits gave students access to the local community and enabled MDC to build ties within the Italian medical community. The course will be repeated in summer 2017 and, due to the success of the program, MDC and LdM are now exploring avenues for faculty exchange and development.

## CHALLENGES

Study abroad programs at state-supported post-secondary institutions such as MDC are limited primarily by financial constraints—those of the students, who are primarily low income, and the institutions themselves, which strive to serve economically disadvantaged students by keeping tuition low. Therefore, the cost of study abroad can present an issue for sustaining the programs.

Another challenge is managing the amount and level of communication needed to sustain a successful partnership, especially while navigating differences in time zones and when one institution is relatively understaffed. If the partnership includes a faculty-led component, professors must be willing to work beyond regular working hours to make the program a success because it will require constant coordination with the partner as well as regular support and advisement to students before and during the program.

Other challenges include understanding work cultures and communication styles and making

an effort to bridge possible misunderstandings with constant communication. Lastly, failure to set realistic goals for how the partnership will work and what projects will be feasible can lead to a lack of trust between partners.

### **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

It is important to know an institution's strengths and the students' needs to ensure that the partner's values, mission, areas of academic strength, and academic calendar align. Equally important is the need to clarify the goals of the partnership and the roles and responsibilities of each partner, respect social and academic cultures, provide support to faculty and students (especially if they have limited international experience), and measure outcomes and results via student surveys and constant feedback between partners. If possible, partners should plan to meet in person regularly or conduct Skype meetings in order to build a relationship of trust and commitment. In more practical terms, it is important for the

partners to support each other in recruitment and outreach efforts, provide funding and scholarships when available, and build programs based upon common values.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

MDC and LdM value experiential learning as a way of providing students with tangible skills that they can apply upon entering their professional fields, a means of embracing diversity of all kinds, and a channel for designing programs that encourage community engagement and create opportunities for meaningful interaction between students and the communities in which they study. The partnership has also enabled both institutions to meet their respective strategic priorities around student access and success, educational quality, and institutional agility. These common values and goals have guided the historic relationship and are at the center of the partnership.



## Case Study 2

# California State University-Long Beach (CSULB), California, USA Hamburg University of the Applied Sciences (HAW), Hamburg, Germany

—Terrence Graham, EdD, Associate Dean/Executive Director for International Education, CSULB; Sharon Olson, Director of Study Abroad, CSULB; and Ingrid Weatherall, Strategic Cooperation & International Marketing, HAW

## BACKGROUND

The partnership between California State University-Long Beach (CSULB) and Hamburg University of the Applied Sciences (HAW) started on a small scale more than two decades ago with a joint international business workshop. A formal university partnership including a student exchange agreement was signed in 1998. It has since blossomed into a comprehensive partnership involving reciprocal semester exchange, short-term programs, joint workshops, and faculty collaboration.

The CSULB-HAW partnership illustrates how a small-scale faculty connection in one department can be transformed into a dynamic, institution-wide strategic collaboration that encompasses students and faculty from a range of disciplines. This case study focuses on the factors that contributed to the success of the partnership, including collaboration between the international offices, marketing efforts, the leveraging of internal and external funding mechanisms, and the dedication of discipline-specific faculty champions.

## PARTNERSHIP EVOLUTION

CSULB and HAW began collaborating on a small scale in 1993 through faculty connections forged between the business schools. Faculty members developed a biannual international business workshop. Students from both universities attended lectures, visited companies, and

collaborated on joint projects in Long Beach and Hamburg.

## CHALLENGES

The international business workshop was successful; however, the partnership did not grow into a robust institutional partnership. Few students or faculty beyond the business schools knew of the relationship and study abroad participation was low.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

### Student Exchange

In 2008, HAW initiated an expansion of the partnership to a strategic level through its “HAW goes USA” strategy. The international offices at CSULB and HAW focused their efforts on identifying areas of collaboration beyond the business schools, and a new institution-wide agreement was signed. The initial focus was to revitalize the traditional reciprocal student exchange. Increasing CSULB exchange participation was achieved by:

1. Increasing the number of English-taught courses at HAW. Each department now offers an English program, so CSULB students can choose classes in a variety of disciplines. Knowledge of German is no longer a barrier.
2. Intensifying marketing efforts featuring Hamburg as a study abroad destination and employing returning students as ambassadors. Social media, particularly a popular

Facebook page, connected prospective students with their peers who had been to Germany.

3. Initiating “HAW goes USA” travel stipends for CSULB students enrolling for a semester in Hamburg. These stipends lowered the cost barrier, which was especially acute during the U.S. recession, by covering housing costs to make a semester in Germany affordable to a wider student demographic.

As a result of increased outbound exchange, CSULB was able to accept more HAW students. The number of exchange students increased from two in 2008 to 32 in 2016/2017, with a total of 174 students exchanged over nine years and reciprocal balance.

### **Faculty Exchange and Short-Term Programs**

With a successful foundation in student exchange, CSULB and HAW decided to take their cooperation to the next level in 2012. The international offices recognized that the key to deepening the partnership was to involve faculty from different disciplines and connect them with their counterparts. Faculty-led short-term initiatives, which provide more accessible opportunities for CSULB students to go abroad, have become a centerpiece of CSULB’s strategy. In Hamburg, the “HAW goes USA 2020” strategy has resulted in a commitment of resources for travel stipends, marketing, and partner visits.

At CSULB, resources have been dedicated to developing more faculty-led programs. In addition to the continuation of international business workshops, teams of CSULB and HAW faculty have developed programs in film, design, and health care administration.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

An essential component of CSULB’s study abroad strategy is the goal of deepening connections with a handful of strategic partners. Due to the level of semester and short-term exchange activity taking place, the international offices of both CSULB and HAW have engaged the faculty members, department chairs, and deans from several disciplines to find curricular linkages that will facilitate greater student participation and faculty collaboration. By making small and timely investments in faculty visits—and involving faculty who bring energy and enthusiasm to the projects—CSULB and HAW have built enduring ties among colleagues that will lead to additional collaboration in joint workshops, as well as research and creative projects. The CSULB-HAW partnership has made both institutions stronger and more globally engaged. Students from multiple disciplines have and will continue to benefit from the strengthened relationship. Faculty are energized by the opportunities this relationship has created, and senior leadership remains committed to providing the resources required to nurture and grow this strategic partnership.

### Case Study 3

## City University of Hong Kong (CityU), Hong Kong SAR Columbia University, New York, USA

—David Cheng, EdD, Associate Vice President for Global Services, CityU

### BACKGROUND

City University of Hong Kong (CityU) and Columbia University share the vision of providing students with an international undergraduate educational experience. At CityU, there is a spectrum of opportunities for students to study overseas, from week-long tours to in-depth learning experiences that include joint bachelor's degree programs. Currently, CityU runs successful joint bachelor's degree programs with Columbia University in the United States, National Taiwan University in Taiwan, and Leuphana University in Germany.

Through the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program between CityU and Columbia, students have the opportunity to study in two distinct learning environments, with attention given to the roles that social and cultural traditions play in students' intellectual development. During the first phase of the program (years one and two), students take courses in one of seven approved majors at CityU. Once admitted to the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program, they will go to Columbia to finish their core and major requirements for both degrees in their third and fourth years. Students complete the undergraduate curricula of both CityU and Columbia and earn two bachelor's degrees—one from each university.

### PARTNERSHIP EVOLUTION

The design and implementation of such a complex program did not come easily. Faculties from both schools first identified academic programs that are offered at both institutions, and then they worked together to match each major,

course-by-course, so that credits taken at one university can be recognized by faculty at the other university.

The pilot CityU-Columbia Joint Bachelor's Degree Program started in the field of mathematics in 2012, and other majors were added once both universities' faculties had completed the course mapping. In 2015, a formal agreement was signed between the two institutions. To date, students who are enrolled in one of the following seven approved majors at CityU can apply for the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program: applied biology, applied physics, applied sociology, business economics, computer science, computing mathematics, and psychology.

### STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

One of the biggest challenges that CityU faced was to make the program financially accessible to most, if not all, of their qualified students; after all, the tuition fees at Columbia are considerably higher than those at CityU. While Columbia offers financial aid to students admitted to the program, CityU is also actively raising funds to provide scholarships to program participants. Given the high selectivity of the program, the goal is to make it less of an obstacle for low-income students to apply.

In order for the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program to maintain its smooth operation and healthy development, the key lies in keeping the communication channels open between the two partner institutions. Every student is unique in his or her academic, financial, and social background; thus, constant care is needed from members of both

universities to ensure each student's success in the program.

Both CityU and Columbia have invested heavily in the administration of the program, from development of the program website and joint promotional events to the selection and interviews of the candidates to the academic advising and counseling of program participants from both schools.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The beauty of the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program is that it integrates CityU's emphasis on professional education with Columbia's tradition of liberal arts education. While CityU's discovery-enriched curriculum motivates and nurtures students to think creatively and make original discoveries, Columbia's core curriculum engages students to contemplate the most difficult questions about human experience. Along with rigorous training in their chosen academic fields, students gain both the knowledge and competence needed to succeed in the globalized world and workplace upon graduation.

**Case Study 4****College of Staten Island (CSI), City University of New York,  
New York, USA****Instituto Superior Pedagógico Enrique Jose Varona (UCPEJV),  
Havana, Cuba**

—Stephen Ferst, EdD, Executive Director, Center for Global Engagement, CSI

**BACKGROUND**

The College of Staten Island (CSI) has a history of unique and varied education abroad programs. However, CSI identified gaps in its portfolio, namely, gaps for students from the School of Education as well as programming in Latin America. With strong faculty connections to Latin America, CSI set out to explore programming options in Cuba. CSI aims to establish a program that is unique, authentic, and integrated into Cuban life.

**PARTNERSHIP EVOLUTION**

In early 2016, a CSI faculty member went on a fact-finding trip to Cuba, making several contacts and exploring the Cuban educational system. Meanwhile, CSI's senior international officer attended the Universidad 2016, 10th Congreso Internacional de Educación Superior and further explored a partnership with the Instituto Superior Pedagógico Enrique Jose Varona (UCPEJV) in Havana, Cuba. These early discussions focused on the mutual desire to create programming for U.S. and Cuban students that expands the common knowledge of teaching pedagogies and practices in each country. Subsequent visits from both partners solidified the relationship.

A proposal emerged to create a program focusing on the study of the history and pedagogy of Cuban education, with observation in a K–12 Cuban classroom setting.

The goal of the program is for students to become familiar and interact with the Cuban educational system by:

- Learning about the history of Cuban education and the National Literacy Campaign;
- Participating in classroom observations and extracurricular activities; and
- Understanding the art of teaching in Cuba.

Emphasis will be placed on:

- Cuban teaching pedagogy;
- Pairing U.S. and Cuban teacher-education students; and
- The sharing of students' home country cultures.

The program is divided into three segments:

- Familiarization with the host country and educational system;
- Integration into university life and school practice; and
- Practical experience in Cuban K–12 schools.

**CHALLENGES**

While early signs point to a successful program, there have been numerous obstacles in the planning and initial launch that are unique to the Cuban landscape and the nature of working with an under-resourced institution. During the program planning stages, oversight of UCPEJV transferred from the Ministry of Education to the



Ministry of Higher Education and political pathways had to be re-established. UCPEVJ is finding that navigating institutional rules and processes, along with governmental regulations and political realities, is creating some initial frustration. The structure of this program, with U.S. students observing classrooms in a Cuban K–12 school, is a hurdle that must be overcome because these permissions have not been previously granted to any U.S. institution. CSI is facing its own challenges in finding the financial resources to properly administer the program. The realities of working in Cuba can include unexpected costs and delays. Managing the expectations of each partner requires patience and persistence.

### **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

The keys to a successful program lie in the commitment of individuals from each partnering institution and a sustained and persistent effort to innovate and overcome political, administrative, and economic barriers. First, the political relationship between the United States and Cuba is still tenuous and both governments are treading carefully. Operating in this environment, where attitudes may frequently change, adds a layer of uncertainty to the program development process that must be carefully approached and given time to develop. Second, early and strong support of the upper administration at both institutions has been critical in navigating existing hurdles on

each campus. Without the rector and the provost agreeing that this program is worth investing time and resources into, ongoing negotiations would be difficult. The fiscal and logistical support of each institution also allowed for applying for and securing a 100,000 Strong in the Americas grant under the Marlene M. Johnson Innovation Challenge for U.S.-Cuba, Caribbean, and Central American Academic Mobility. This grant, coupled with CSI's commitment to fund several visits to Cuba, identify scholarship support for students, and dedicate time to this project, is essential to the successful launch of this program.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

As the program develops, the financial resources and time commitment necessary for success are well beyond the typical start-up costs for programs in more traditional locations. CSI and UCPEJV will only succeed if they are able to continue to contribute the extra support of faculty, staff, and resources at the institutional level. Given the collective lack of experience running programming in Cuba, and the standards required in the United States, CSI and UCPEJV have come to realize the need for more local support. CSI intends to enlist a local organization, one that is experienced in programming for U.S. students in Cuba, to provide on-the-ground support. The organization will be Cuba-based to maintain the authenticity of the experience.

## Case Study 5

**California State University-Fullerton (CSUF), California, USA**

**Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), Niterói, Brazil**

**Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), São Paulo, Brazil**

**Universidade São Paulo–Instituto de Ciências Matemáticas e de Computação (USP-ICMC), São Carlos, Brazil**

—Kari Knutson Miller, PhD, Associate Vice President, International Programs & Global Engagement, Senior International Officer, CSUF

### BACKGROUND

California State University-Fullerton (CSUF) can be described as a “comprehensive, regional university with a global outlook.” The current strategic plan emphasizes promoting a “curricular and co-curricular environment that prepares students for participation in a global society,” as well as programs and experiences that “advance students’ recognition of roles they play in an interdependent global community.” Additionally, the strategic plan calls for an increase in the percentage of students who participate in high-impact practices, including study abroad.

CSUF is designated as a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) and is recognized for its diverse student body. Institutional commitments emphasize participation of first-generation and culturally diverse students in study abroad, as well as a systematic and coordinated outreach and engagement with institutions of higher education in Latin America, given the university’s HSI designation. The Brazil Scientific Mobility Program (BSMP) provided the opportunity for CSUF to enroll Brazilian undergraduate students in academic programs and courses on its campus. Related experiences enriched the curricular lens for all enrolled students and contributed to “internationalization at home.”

Actions associated with the institutional commitment to increasing study abroad mobility included: launching the International Programs & Global Engagement (IPGE) unit to enhance support for university initiatives, implementing and extending President’s Strategic Fund awards aligned with study abroad course development and student scholarships, registering as a Generation Study Abroad Commitment partner in spring 2015, and submitting a 100,000 Strong in the Americas grant proposal in fall 2015. The grant proposal addressed barriers frequently cited to study abroad participation, including language, degree requirements, and cost. Additional challenges specifically associated with CSUF engineering and computer science student study abroad participation included: time to degree expectations, accreditation and degree program requirements, and access to study abroad options that took these considerations into account.

### PARTNERSHIP EVOLUTION

Throughout 2015, IPGE and other academic program partners engaged in multiple capacity-building activities to enhance institutional collaborations. In light of anticipated BSMP changes, CSUF was committed to cultivating meaningful institutional relationships to continue strategic mobility efforts.

Initial action included participating in the annual FAUBAI conference in Cuiaba, Brazil. This conference provided opportunities to discuss intersecting partnership interests and, through ongoing dialogue, resulted in an exchange agreement with Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF). The FAUBAI conference also reintroduced CSUF to Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP). Subsequent actions included participating in the 100,000 Strong in the Americas: Capacity Building Workshop II, attending the NAFSA Latin America Forum, attending a U.S.-Brazil partnerships meeting at the Boston-based consulate, participating in meetings at the U.S. consulate in São Paulo, outreaching to Brazil-based EducationUSA advisers, and holding meetings with developing Brazilian partners at subsequent international conferences.

In fall 2015, CSUF was awarded a 100,000 Strong grant with UNESP to support an experiential STEM-focused mobility program. Summer and fall 2016 project components included a Fullerton-based Summer International Research Institute (SIRI) and Sorocaba/São Paulo-based International Symposium for Engineering Research (ISER) workshop. Collaboration activities were thoughtfully connected to intersecting institutional interests and engaged students, faculty, and academic leaders. Reciprocity was contextually considered and mobility activities encompassed primarily short-term research-focused activities rather than semester exchange.

## CHALLENGES

The challenges associated with the implementation and extension of partnership activities included new administrative appointments, governmental transitions, economic fluctuations, and more. Successful project implementation required ongoing communication between all involved. Development of a memorandum of understanding with UNESP to formalize institutional collaboration interests required deep

commitment from all involved, given that each complex university system has its own templates, structures, and processes. Creative outreach and additional fundraising were also required to support outbound mobility.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Sustainability of CSUF-UNESP partnership activities will require ongoing persistence and commitment. A key takeaway was the importance of recognizing the role that alternative study abroad models and “creative reciprocity” play in successful collaborations and mobility. Over a three-year period, CSUF study abroad participation increased by 97 percent. This increase was primarily associated with student participation in short-term programs with diverse teaching and research foci.

Future mobility programs partnering with UFF may entail program models that deviate from the original exchanges that were initially conceived. Additionally, an unanticipated positive outcome associated with grant-related outreach and faculty connections was the development of a relationship with Universidade São Paulo-Instituto de Ciências Matemáticas e de Computação (USP-ICMC). CSUF’s presence in the region provided the opportunity for outreach extension and discussion and subsequently resulted in bidirectional mobility of both faculty and students. Again, mobility was characterized by short-term research and project emphases. The creative thinking and problem-solving tactics that resulted in the successful collaborations with UNESP and USP-ICMC have since been extended to other international contexts, most specifically, collaborations with Mexican institutions of higher education. It is in the context of the Mexico programs that CSUF has the greatest potential for scale.

## Case Study 6

# The George Washington University School of Business (GW), Washington, DC, USA

# Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Copenhagen, Denmark

—Bryan Andriano, EdD, Executive Director, Global & Experiential Education, School of Business, GW

## BACKGROUND

Traditional academic partnerships for student mobility between higher education institutions generally follow a standard format: students exchange places and are granted access to the standing services and educational opportunities at the participating institutions. These bilateral exchange collaborations are generally low-cost, resource-efficient opportunities for students to seek embedded learning opportunities. They may serve as a foundation to support other collaborations in research, instruction, or community outreach.

These partnerships, while simple in design, can present many challenges, including overcoming misalignment of academic calendars, matching the curriculum needs of visiting students with standing offerings, and ensuring that support services are appropriate for participants. In addition, bilateral exchanges fundamentally require reciprocity for success. Without consistent demand on both sides of a partnership, a successful collaboration cannot be sustained.

Institutions experiencing an out-of-balance partnership may try to find ways to encourage engagement in the standing program through scholarships, new academic programs, or increased branding and promotion. However, all of these activities would require substantial investments from the hosting institutions.

## PARTNERSHIP EVOLUTION

This case study profiles an alternative model for overcoming exchange imbalances. The model involves a traditional inbound semester exchange to The George Washington University (GW) School of Business, as well as a collaborative short-term program at Copenhagen Business School (CBS) with two other U.S. business schools: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and Duke University (Duke).

All four institutions partner on a theme (sustainability and social responsibility) that is central to their missions and facilitates relationship-building among students, creating networks that can inform students' professional and personal interests in the United States. The model is nonfinancial and relies on a dynamic exchange balance for students, making it highly transferable to any institution, but particularly those that may be resource constrained.

After a long-standing and successful bilateral student exchange relationship, GW and CBS experienced an unsustainable exchange imbalance. Seeking a solution, but facing constraints that prohibited the development of the resource-intensive activities mentioned above, GW and CBS instead focused on program design to encourage increased mobility.

The institutions reframed the traditional model of semester-based exchange by developing dynamic exchanges that allowed GW to send students for semester study or a one-week program hosted by CBS that was focused on sustainability and social

responsibility, a theme that is central to the mission of both schools and highly desirable to their student bodies. Students received instruction from CBS faculty and participated in topic-related case studies and site visits to industry and non-profit organizations in Copenhagen.

### **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

The model was successful because it fit within a traditional organizational design and was true to the spirit of bilateral exchange in that no funds changed hands between the institutions. Students paid the host institution directly for any in-country arrangements organized on behalf of the student by the partner.

The exchange is managed through a one-to-one ratio for traditional semester exchange and a separate ratio established based on credit hour equivalencies for those students participating in the short course. This dynamic exchange ratio has made the design transferable to other institutional partnerships, particularly those that are similarly constrained by resources, are in regions that lack sufficient opportunities for short-term study, and where there are partnerships with institutions abroad with a high volume of out-bound exchange.

As an organizational priority, GW continued to host CBS exchange students so that they could connect with GW students, be cultural ambassadors for their institutions, and, ideally, encourage GW students to consider participation in the short- or semester-duration exchanges.

### **CHALLENGES**

Short course study during the academic year requires that academic calendars are aligned across institutions. This became more complicated when the other institutions, Duke and UNC, were included in the short study design. Having multiple institutions collaborate on a single program is inherently more complicated than a bilateral design, but it has allowed for some flexibility in years where demand has fluctuated among the U.S. institutions; should one institution not meet its quota, it may offer available spaces to other institutions.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

Despite the limited challenges, this case highlights a low-resource format for student exchange partnerships that also resolves an enduring challenge with exchange imbalance. Many institutions may consider this alternative format when establishing or extending exchange partnerships with U.S. institutions.



## Case Study 7

# Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, USA

# Monteverde Institute (MVI), Monteverde, Costa Rica

# Goucher College, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

—Kirk Lange, Director of International Experiential Learning, McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives, MHC; Eva Paus, PhD, Professor of Economics; Carol Hoffmann Collins Director of the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives, MHC; and Joanne Picard, Dean of International Studies, McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives, MHC

## BACKGROUND

A leading liberal arts college for women, Mount Holyoke College made the internationalization of every student's education a strategic priority in 2003 and established the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives to lead the charge. We began by taking stock of all things "international" that we were already doing, in and outside the curriculum, which included the retirement of a number of dormant MOUs that had been signed over the years. We decided that, henceforth, new collaborations with institutions abroad had to be strategic, meeting multiple student and faculty interests and needs.

## PARTNERSHIP EVOLUTION

Mount Holyoke's partnership with the Monteverde Institute (MVI) in the cloud forest of Costa Rica reflects a perfect confluence of strategy and serendipity. In 2006, we learned from one of our faculty members who had connections to MVI that it was seeking new partners to develop a semester-long study abroad program. MVI's mission to blend classroom learning, applied research, and community engagement in support of a sustainable future fit well with Mount Holyoke's strategic focus on environmental sustainability and place-based learning. Additionally, we had several faculty from different disciplines who had research interests that were connected with Costa Rica's and Mount Holyoke's institutional priorities, providing us

with a strong base for developing an interdisciplinary program.

Mount Holyoke's roughly 2,100 students can choose from 150 study abroad options around the world. Thus, to ensure sufficient numbers for this program, we decided to collaborate with a U.S. partner. Serendipity was on our side again. Goucher College had just participated in a summer conference that we hosted on best practices and challenges in learning abroad. It was during that conference that we learned of Goucher's interest in expanding its study abroad opportunities in Latin America.

Mount Holyoke and Goucher faculty and staff visited MVI twice to develop the curriculum in conjunction with MVI faculty. After nearly two years of planning, we launched our first semester program in spring 2009, focusing on globalization, development, and the environment.

## CHALLENGES

We faced three main challenges in sustaining the program: staff turnover at MVI, the financial sustainability of a resident director from Mount Holyoke or Goucher, and student enrollment numbers.

There has been more staff turnover at MVI than we anticipated, due to a variety of unforeseeable but understandable circumstances. The program and partnership have weathered these personnel changes well because of the trust built in the

time-intensive process of developing the program and institutionalizing the partnerships.

A faculty member from Mount Holyoke or Goucher initially served as the resident academic director of the program. However, the financial burden of paying salaries for both the resident director and the replacement visitor at the home institution became too high. We then moved to a new model with a blended physical-virtual academic directorship that has worked very well. An MVI faculty member serves as the academic director in collaboration with a faculty director from Mount Holyoke or Goucher. The director from the U.S. institution spends 10 days with the students at MVI at the beginning and the end of the program and is otherwise in close virtual contact with students and faculty during the course of the semester.

Despite consistently receiving rave reviews from students, enrollment has fluctuated more than we would like and we continue to seek ways to increase enrollment and balance the numbers more evenly from year to year. Students who are interested in sustainability can choose from programs in a wide range of locations, from urban centers to remote places just now opening up to study abroad, so we have to continue to work on making this program particularly compelling.

### **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

Trust, time, the right partner, faculty interest from multiple disciplines, inclusion of already existing initiatives, and serendipity are the critical ingredients for building sustainable and dynamic collaborations for student learning abroad. Those are the key lessons we have learned over the past 10 years. Trust among partners is critical in order

to be able to respond flexibly and in a timely manner to changes in circumstances. Faculty interest guarantees ongoing commitment to the program and program-specific student advising. And leveraging existing initiatives and interests integrates a program more fully into the college's academic offerings.

Most recently, we have leveraged Mount Holyoke's Lynk program, which integrates curricular and applied learning and provides funding for a summer internship or research project, and its Community-Based Learning program to develop a "Global/Local Hub" in Monteverde. These efforts seek to integrate a student's academic work at MVI with an applied summer project and work to help students connect learning in Costa Rica to Mount Holyoke's neighbor communities upon their return.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

Partnerships like the one described here have played a critical role in advancing global education at Mount Holyoke. They are especially powerful vehicles for promoting international education when they interact with the college's educational offerings and promote the strategic goals. Mount Holyoke's achievements in global education were recognized with a NAFSA Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization in 2015 and have led to the establishment of new goals for global education in Mount Holyoke's strategic plan (*Plan for 2021*). These include building out the Global/Local Hub at MVI and reproducing it in other locations where there is faculty interest, student demand, and the right partner. And, of course, we are banking on a healthy dose of serendipity along the way.

## Case Study 8

# Tennessee State University (TSU), Nashville, Tennessee, USA

## Centro Colombo Americano, Bogotá, Colombia

## EAFIT University (EAFIT), Medellín, Colombia

—Jewell Winn, EdD, Senior International Officer, Executive Director for International Programs, Deputy Chief Diversity Officer, TSU

### BACKGROUND

Historically, students of color have faced challenges to study abroad due to factors such as financial barriers, uncertainty about traveling abroad, and lack of family support. Through intentional efforts, the Office of International Affairs (OIA) at Tennessee State University (TSU) has been able to move its international efforts from conceptualization to implementation, increasing the number of students studying abroad from 36 to 121 in three years. Based on survey and focus group results, the qualitative data indicated that student interest and participation in study abroad stemmed from peer marketing and ongoing study abroad workshops.

### PARTNERSHIP EVOLUTION

OIA implemented a strategy to increase student mobility by expanding study abroad opportunities, more specifically, collaborative exchange projects. OIA affirmed this goal by signing a commitment letter with the Institute of International Education's Generation Study Abroad Program to double the number of students who study abroad in five years.

In 2013, OIA launched the innovative Cultural Immersion Initiative (CI2). CI2 has increased opportunities for TSU students to study abroad and engage with international students by developing cutting-edge joint research projects. Cohorts of students participate in a 10-day intensive research project in a foreign country, in which they not only learn about research

abroad but also about the host culture, social and economic challenges, and the political climate. Participating students have found this collaborative research experience to be enriching and enlightening.

Two of the main CI2 partners are the Centro Colombo Americano and EAFIT University (EAFIT). Centro Colombo Americano helped TSU connect with local universities such as EAFIT to conduct four successful CI2 initiatives in the city. Forty TSU students visited the city of Medellín, Colombia, and participated in a joint research project with 40 Colombian students. In exchange, 40 Colombian students traveled to Nashville, Tennessee, to learn about the university, the city, and American culture.

### CHALLENGES

OIA was faced with a major challenge of finding students who were ready to participate in the partnership. The financial challenge was not from a travel perspective, but for basic spending money. Some of the students who were committed to the project began to have concerns about not having enough spending money. More than 80 percent of the students who attend Tennessee State University are Pell Grant eligible, which means that their funding is very limited. Students were encouraged to engage in some personal fundraising projects, as well as save a portion of their financial aid refund. The other challenge was finding students in Medellín who could speak sufficient English to participate in

the research project. Centro Colombo Americano helped to ensure that the participating students were proficient in English prior to the project launch.

### **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

Success is when preparation meets opportunity. All students were exposed to a global experience and then provided with the opportunity to articulate that experience through poster displays and virtual platforms. Their personal narratives proved that their lives were forever changed. Innovative funding (e.g., personal fundraising), conversational language workshops, a detailed predeparture orientation, scheduled virtual meetings between the student groups, and a relatable

research theme all contributed to the success of this project.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

Students who participate in the CI2 initiative gain not only key research skills but also valuable intercultural skills. Students who travel abroad return to TSU with a renewed sense of pride and ownership of their university and heritage. Furthermore, they gain a new understanding of the world that exists outside of the United States. They are able to dispel old misperceptions they may have had about other cultures and other ways of thinking. Lastly, these students are able to share their experiences with their peers, professors, and families, and their experiences impact the greater community.

**Case Study 9**

# Grand Valley State University (GVSU), Allendale, Michigan, USA

## Universidad del Bío Bío (UBB), Concepción, Chile

—Carol M. Sánchez, DBA, Professor of Management, Seidman College of Business, GVSU

**BACKGROUND**

Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and the Universidad del Bio Bio (UBB) signed a university-level student exchange agreement in 2011 after a GVSU business school professor spent her sabbatical there. Chile is a dynamic and emerging market country that is business friendly, and GVSU's Seidman College of Business was eager for a new partner in South America. GVSU and UBB have similar origins and characteristics; both were founded about 50 years ago, serve a similar first-generation college population, have an urban campus located on a major river and a suburban campus, have a similar size and scope, and are public institutions. The partnership's success stems from dedicated efforts to building strong personal relationships and friendships among faculty, administrators, and students. Personnel at both universities have built friendships that encourage creative collaborations that go beyond typical student exchanges.

**PARTNERSHIP EVOLUTION**

In 2012, the first partnership year, two students exchanged and three faculty from UBB's English language department spent four weeks at GVSU. The three UBB faculty members developed friendships with several GVSU faculty. One was a GVSU management professor who visited UBB's School of Business in 2013 to discuss how to jump-start the exchange and navigate the potential language barrier. In particular, UBB students must score well on the TOEFL in order to study at GVSU, and GVSU students should be proficient in Spanish to succeed at UBB. The GVSU professor met with several UBB students to encourage

them to improve their English language skills and apply to GVSU. During the 2013/2014 year, five UBB students enrolled at GVSU and six GVSU students attended UBB.

In summer 2013, UBB management information systems (MIS) faculty invited an MIS professor from GVSU to UBB to conduct faculty training workshops. In 2014, three UBB MIS faculty studied at GVSU for six weeks and became certified in a valuable SAP certification. In 2015, fifteen MBA students and faculty from GVSU visited UBB on a 10-day study tour to experience Chilean business and culture. A GVSU economics professor was then asked by UBB faculty to be an adviser to their economics research group. He expects joint research projects to result. In turn, 12 UBB graduate students and two faculty visited GVSU's Seidman College of Business in 2016 on a nine-day study trip. Chilean students attended MBA lectures, visited companies, and socialized with local students, experiencing Michigan's economic, institutional, and social business climate. Business school faculty who had visited UBB and GVSU organized the trips and joined the tours.

In the liberal arts, a GVSU Spanish professor created an innovative short-term summer program at UBB. It is popular with GVSU education majors who plan to teach Spanish. The program teaches Spanish language and composition and is complemented by structured excursions and cultural activities. Another creative program is a one-year GVSU-UBB dual degree in liberal studies. GVSU liberal studies majors with intermediate-level Spanish language skills can study history, culture, anthropology, philosophy, and sociology at



UBB, and earn a UBB degree too. The student exchange has averaged 10 per year since 2013. More than 40 students and a dozen faculty from UBB and GVSU have had mobility experiences between 2012 and 2016.

## **CHALLENGES**

Syllabi are prepared in the local language and require translation to assess course equivalencies, thus necessitating additional effort by both universities. Another challenge was when UBB shut down for a period of time in 2015, causing uncertainty among GVSU exchange students there. But the department where most GVSU students took courses held classes anyway, so student progress was not delayed. GVSU students have sometimes expressed a sense of discouragement by what they view as UBB's slow response to their questions about class schedules, housing, and start dates. But international mobility staff work hard to respond in a timely manner. An additional challenge is that funding for joint research can be difficult to secure.

## **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

Personal relationships between UBB and GVSU personnel are central elements to success. TOEFL scores, student strikes, union shutdowns, and bureaucracies may erect barriers, but the close friendships and personal relationships among the people involved in the GVSU-UBB partnership are strong, thus ensuring that the students, faculty, and collaborations, in general, will succeed.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The relationship with UBB fits well with GVSU's internationalization efforts by providing a dynamic and flexible exchange program for students, faculty, and advisers. Lessons learned include the importance of building strong personal relationships with leaders at the partner institution and having common institutional histories, student composition, goals, and global learning objectives.

