

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF COLLEGE OF BUSINESS PROGRAMS: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Colleges of Business (COB) recognize the importance of internationalization in business education – along with AACSB. However, as with many things, theory and practice sometimes diverge. The logistical and psychological challenges of a truly international program are significant. While this function is sometimes outsourced to the University at large, some COB programs take a more significant involvement in the process. This panel will discuss the major parts of college of business internationalization and try to identify the success and challenges related to the following: (1) Faculty Internationalization; (2) Student Experiences; and (3) Curriculum issues. In addition, the idea of dual/joint degree options, which encompasses all three of the areas, will be discussed. Globalization of Business Schools

Nearly all business schools/colleges recognize the importance of global subjects related to each specific discipline. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to find a business degree at the Bachelor's degree level without at least one, if not several, global/international business classes. However, it has long been recognized that experiential learning, typically in conjunction with traditional or theoretical learning, adds significant value to student knowledge, understanding, and ability. In the international arena, experiential learning typically, but not exclusively, involves an overseas or cross-border experience (e.g., student exchange). While colleges and faculty typically encourage these experiences, few degrees require such an experience. Thus, the degree of globalization of business programs tends to range from traditional classroom theory to a truly global integration into the curriculum that includes a international student experience. We recognize that the degree of globalization in a business program needs to be driven by the school's mission, but certainly some importance must be placed on the area in each business school.

Business schools typically outsource the experiential learning aspect of global business to the university level – typically through a centralized office for international education that coordinates study abroad opportunities. Some have chosen to internalize the function by creating a department or position within the COB to strategize, champion, and execute the school's globalization efforts. Yet others leave this to faculty, either totally within the COB or across schools. Functionally, all options can work well or poorly depending on the resources available and competence of the structure. In structuring an international learning component, universities need to consider whether they will focus on internationalization of faculty, student experiences, curriculum, or a combination of all, or some, of these factors.

Internationalization of Faculty

Regardless of the functional structure, whether the program is housed within the COB or not, it is our belief that having faculty support significantly contributes to success– not only in globalization, but also in all aspects of academe. Thus it becomes imperative to garner both interest and support if expansion in this area is to be successful. Nearly all COB faculty understand the importance of global business. However, individual faculty have varied interests, often with narrow levels of focus. Thus, global business for many tends to be of less immediate

importance than their specific areas of interest and research. Competing with committees, research, and teaching, global business sometimes gets put in a secondary or lower position of priority for many faculty. Increasing awareness as well as the benefits of globalization for individual faculty members encourages their support actively, or at least tacitly, of program expansion. Benefits could entail course reductions, decreasing committee assignments, or remuneration for championing a study abroad program,

Our experience indicates that the primary method for garnering involvement is faculty exchanges. As faculty get involved in teaching overseas, traveling, research opportunities with foreign colleagues, and even professional opportunities, they tend to be much more supportive of program globalization. Even faculty that have never shown interest in teaching/researching internationally often change their opinion after this initial exposure. Functionally, faculty exchanges require the commitment of resources, but these are often minimal.

Faculty exchanges typically take on one of two forms – direct, non-employed, or employed. Direct exchanges involve trading faculty, either synchronous or asynchronous, and have the advantage of minimal governmental red tape and visa issues. The easiest version is two professors trading classes for a few weeks, perhaps even a semester. Since the home university is the official employer and the faculty is not officially employed in the host university, the visa issues tend to mirror those of a tourist. In many cases, such as those between the United States and the European Union, no visa is required at all unless the stay extends beyond 90 days. Employed exchanges are those in which schools agree to hire faculty from each other. From an academic standpoint, these are logistically easier exchanges – the visiting professor is simply hired for a term to teach and/or research. There is no necessity to ensure balance of the hours of the exchange or match academic subjects between faculties. However, the governmental logistics and additional associated costs can be quite daunting with varied, and often cumbersome, work visa requirements that could include a personal interview at the regional consulate. This added effort may entail additional travel costs and time.

Other costs associated with employee exchanges could include providing housing and transportation, among others.

Several practical issues can arise when implementing a faculty exchange process. First is the concern of qualifications of incoming faculty, including both hard and soft skills. As exchange faculty may not be very familiar with the overall curriculum design of the host university, they may not have particular knowledge of what the host university wants delivered to the students, or they may not place as much importance on certain aspects as preferred by the host university. Regarding the maintaining of records for accrediting bodies, the visiting professors may not have the motivation to archive necessary information, or even fill out the appropriate paperwork, especially if they are only visiting for one term.

Additionally, in regional schools, both students and faculty may be concerned about the ability of the visiting faculty to communicate so the students can understand (i.e., language, accents). Interestingly, while faculty inherently understand the importance of cross-cultural communications in international business; they often see the same issue as an impediment to learning when applied in the classroom. With student evaluation, students will often attribute a lack of success in a specific course to the inability of the instructor to communicate in a manner that they understand – especially if an unusual accent is involved. Interestingly, this happens even in a class entitled International Business.

Various universities also have a range of what is required of faculty in terms of availability to students. At some universities, office hours and being accessible via email are not a priority, but in others, there are practically open-door policies where students feel the right to have access to

a faculty member at any time, day or night. If a visiting faculty member is not with the same mindset, this can cause difficulties. Department and/or program administrators are often concerned about student satisfaction and thus see these as a negative aspect of hosting visiting professors. The primary methods to address this issue to very carefully layout expectations, screen, and carefully select first time visiting faculty. The adage 'there is no second chance for a first impression' applies well here. If the first several exchanges are successful, a faculty exchange program can be much more easily expanded. Later problems are much more easily forgiven by both faculty and administrators if the value of exchanges is strongly established in the first several exchanges.

Involving faculty in other opportunities, such as Fulbright scholars program, has essentially the same effect. Such international scholar programs have many advantages. Language issues are anticipated and screened by the program, there is a substantial support network in place to resolve any issues that might arise, and the faculty tend to gain monetarily as well as professionally. Not only does the experience typically enrich their research record and material for classroom presentation, it provides a distinguishing addition to one's vita.

Many colleges focus on attracting international faculty or those with international interests. Either of these approaches can be successful if handled properly. Attracting faculty with international interests, especially those who have experience teaching abroad, or those who are willing to take on the task of being in charge of, or at least taking students on, international study trips, can be an asset as long as they also fulfill the other staffing and research criteria needed by the department. Simply hiring visiting professors from abroad can work as well but comes with its own issues to be managed. Administrators, especially those who are AACSB accredited, have to think about where the PhD holder earned their degree and the type of education they received, as well as look at the style of teaching they are accustomed to using. This is important because many schools out of the United States have a very different style of teaching and assessment than most U.S. schools. There are also immigration issues to be considered and with some visiting faculty members there may be a need for some sort of introduction to the culture and the local community.

Even though having international faculty on campus using any of the above approaches brings the world to the students, it does not guarantee the students will truly experience the world unless this focus also has an experiential learning component.

Student Experiential Learning

Universally, marketing students take some theoretical coursework related to global business. As we move up Bloom's Taxonomy, students should be encouraged to have experiential learning opportunities in global business as well. Typically, these would involve some type of study abroad or an international internship. While some students immediately gravitate to these experiential learning opportunities, others may need more encouragement to participate, especially those students at regional U.S. universities.

Three main issues arise to discourage students from studying abroad: inertia, uncertainty, and financial loss. The most important factor in overcoming inertia and uncertainty is information. Faculty encouragement through their foreign experiences (as discussed previously) is a good starting point. International examples in the classroom from the faculty exchange experiences and information about traveling and living in another country reduce uncertainty and in some cases enhance the excitement of study abroad. However, students tend to place more confidence in information from peers and personal experience. Having past study abroad students speak to the classes and business clubs about their experiences works well to accomplish this peer influence. Alumni of previous travel abroad programs are ideal for

speaking to classes and other students about the excitement and value of the program. Many times a student makes the final decision after talking with another student or alumni. Travel abroad is contagious as students hear about the excitement and share the news. Also, having visiting foreign exchange students integrated into the college can have a huge impact on both social networking and uncertainty avoidance.

If the study abroad program is coordinated in-house, careful screening of student applicants is also needed. Issues that can arise include dealing with students who have never spent much time away from family, are sensitive to different cultural manners and beliefs, do not thrive without friends around, and so on. These issues can occur even with short study trips. Explaining the program well before the application process begins, doing a thorough interview with the student, and then if they are chosen, giving an in-depth pre-trip class on what to expect and what is expected will alleviate some of these potential problems.

Curriculum Issues

Nearly all business schools have a course related to International or Global Marketing. Additionally, global business is discussed elsewhere in the curriculum, and as expected by AACSB, often across the curriculum. In some cases, the foreign faculty exchanges can allow the visiting faculty to teach a specialized or special topics course in global marketing or business, such as: “doing business in China, or “international finance and the Euro crisis.” The authors have experienced these specialized courses taught during the summer term, as 3 week, or full semester courses.

Other innovative approaches to globalizing the business/marketing curricula include the development of a capstone international business class where students work in interdisciplinary groups with an international project from a business client.

Conclusions

In summary, this panel will discuss the many different ways that the panelists have experienced in internationalizing their respective business programs. This will include a discussion concerning faculty, students, and curriculum and what has succeeded or failed with their internationalization efforts.