

## “All the World’s a Stage”: Embedding International Perspectives into Leadership Education

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### Introduction/Need for Innovation

Today’s world is a global society. Through ever-advancing communications and technology, the Internet, and other modern conveniences, individuals can connect with each other across states, countries and even continents. These advances have changed how society interacts forever; as a result, it is imperative that today’s students and future employees have useful global perspectives and competencies. Graduates should not only be able to work with diverse cultures and people, but should also have a good grasp on issues and events that affect people worldwide (Irani, Place, & Friedel, 2006).

As such, the ability to develop competent, principle-based leadership is a major challenge facing businesses in today’s culturally diverse, global society (Marsh & Johnson, 2005). Many of today’s students do not have the knowledge or skills to effectively lead within a global setting. According to Irani, Place and Friedel (2006), employers of colleges of agriculture graduates expect their future hires to have the diverse knowledge, skills and understanding that equip them to work in the global workplaces of today. In addition, the need for internally aware students is demonstrated through our security, trade and cultural relations with other countries. These forces need globally savvy leaders, given that “...one in six U.S. jobs is directly tied to international trade” (Bruening & Shao, 2005, p. 48).

But how do today’s students – tomorrow’s leaders deal with these issues? More importantly, how can we effectively provide the right tools in order to develop these leaders of tomorrow? For all of these reasons, it is imperative that today’s leadership students are exposed to leadership training and development that integrates more contemporary international perspectives and issues. And one of the most effective ways for students to acquire these perspectives is by traveling abroad – or more relevant to this document, participating in an embedded international experience (Brooks, Frick, & Bruening, 2006).

### How it Works

This poster focuses on the development of an international course within the leadership curriculum at Penn State University. In the department of Agricultural and Extension Education, professors are designing a course that focuses on leadership development within the international context. This course, to be titled “All the World’s a Stage”: International Perspectives in Leadership, will be part of the department’s leadership major and minor, and will be offered to upper level undergraduates and graduate students.

The course will be focused on leadership concepts and practices within different cultures around the world, illustrated through assigned texts and readings. An integral aspect of the course will be the “embedded international experience”; an international field trip of sorts designed to take place during the course, with the intent to provide an experiential learning

experience outside the classroom walls. Students would not have the choice to participate in this experience; they would sign up for the course with the knowledge that travel is required to complete the course.

The embedded international experience would take place over seven days, during spring break in March. Students will learn about the culture prior to departure, and will spend a week in the foreign country “experiencing” leadership from the local cultural perspective. The significance of this type of experience is rooted in witnessing how leadership concepts are operationalized and related to differently within another culture. Students will return from the trip and reflect on knowledge gained through developing and presenting in-class seminars based on assigned aspects of the international experience.

### Results/Implications

Currently, development of this international course is in the works and is slated to be offered the spring semester of 2009. In a more holistic sense, this internationally focused course provides a key component to the core leadership curriculum at Penn State University. Providing a positive and valuable leadership experience within an international setting will ultimately provide the international expertise needed as leaders within tomorrow’s working world.

### Advice to Others

When planning an international course such as this, it is important to develop networks. This is not just those international contacts with whom you will be closely working to develop the course’s embedded international experience, but also individuals within your International Programs office (or a similar entity within your institution). Other people you should develop a rapport with is other faculty within your college/university who have developed an international course, or taken students on an international study tour. Both faculty members and individuals within your International Programs office can not only offer you essential advice and answer any questions that you might run across, but perhaps even more importantly, can assist you in finding student and faculty funding.

### Costs/Resources Needed

To develop this internationally based course, the costs are minimal. Faculty time and effort are the only expenditures in developing the curriculum and course content. A preliminary planning trip to the international destination is usually necessary, to reinforce contacts and networks for a successful international experience. These trips can range from \$2000 to \$5000, depending upon the destination. Within this specific example, the preliminary planning trip to Ireland (set for Spring 2008) will cost approximately \$2500. Annual course expenses will run approximately \$1800 per person, and would include airfare, lodging, transportation and other expenses associated with the embedded field trip. Opportunely, there are several programs at Penn State that assist both students and faculty in securing funding for international experiences such as these.

## References

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