

Lessons Learned from the “Globally Engaged” Conversation Series

Summer 2013 Report Post-“Bringing Theory to Practice” AAC&U Seminar Grant
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“Globally Engaged”: Context behind the CTTL Conversation Series

“Bringing Theory to Practice” Seminar Grant from the Association of American Colleges & Universities

In June 2012, the Reinert Center was awarded a seminar grant through the ["Bringing Theory to Practice"](#) program via the [Association of American College and Universities](#), for work to be completed in the spring semester of 2013. According to the AAC&U's website during the selection period for which we applied, « Of 200 grant proposals for the 2012-14 funding period, 61 were selected. » The goal of the CTTL proposal was to host a series of conversations dedicated to exploring interest, motivations, ideas, and current programs dedicated to internationalizing the classroom experience at Saint Louis University, especially through distance-learning initiatives.

As host of this seminar, the Reinert Center's aims were to:

- *Facilitate conversations between faculty, staff, and Information Technology Services about how to create scalable global learning opportunities*
- *Explore what pedagogies and learning technologies promote transformational and collaborative global learning*
- *Begin to build a faculty learning community focused on promoting globalization in the classroom, intercultural exchange, and civic engagement*
- *Generate an action plan and/or recommendations for building capacity and infrastructure at the institution for developing more global, collaborative learning partnerships*

Highlights from the Conversation Series

**3 conversations
in the spring
2013 semester**

**46 participants
from over 20
departments,
schools, &
programs**

**Participants
included faculty,
staff, students,
ITS, librarians,
and CTTL**

**Faculty interest
in establishing a
"community of
practice" in fall
2013**

Themes and Format of the Conversation Series

In the spirit of [Ignatian pedagogy](#) and the Center's commitment to reflection-driven, learner-driven programming, we designed the conversation series for participants to explore online, global teaching and learning at Saint Louis University through the five elements of Ignatian pedagogy: context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation. Of the three conversations offered, each event focused on 1-2 aspects of Ignatian pedagogy as an intentional yet flexible starting point for conversation.

Conversation #1: CONTEXT & EXPERIENCE

- Guiding Question(s): What is a globally-engaged learning environment? What does it look like, sound like?
- Primary Goal(s): Identify existing globally-centered organizations, resources, teaching practices, and learning experiences at SLU.

Conversation #2: REFLECTION

- Guiding Question(s): Why foster a globally-engaged classroom?
- Primary Goal(s): Explore best practices and methodologies in incorporating global learning in the classroom, especially how to best use learning technologies at SLU to bridge the distance.

Conversation #3: ACTION & EVALUATION

- Guiding Question(s): How do I create global learning opportunities?
- Primary Goal(s): Build a customized action plan to incorporate global learning possibilities into classrooms, programs, and departments – for face-to-face, online, and blended classrooms.

Framework: Five Is of Faculty Engagement in Internationalization

Throughout the conversation series, Lisa K. Childress' taxonomy of the "five Is of faculty engagement in internationalization," initially mentioned in her book [The Twenty-first Century University](#) (2010), inspired many of the participants' questions, case studies, series' guests (e.g., ITS), and conversation starters.

1. Intentionality
2. Investments
3. Infrastructure
4. Institutional Networks
5. Individual Support

“Globally Engaged”: Findings from the Conversation Series

Emerging Themes from the “Globally Engaged” Conversation Series

Throughout the three conversations held during the spring 2013 semester, a recurring question emerged: **How does/can the University build capacity for, support, and sustain global educational opportunities and partnerships?** It became clear that faculty see this question as one that only the upper administration can answer and are interested to see these issues addressed more specifically in strategic planning and future leadership initiatives.

Specific themes also emerged around this central question and the “five I’s”: **infrastructure and capacity-building, centralization versus de-centralization, networking and information-sharing, and other issues**, such as accreditation; the administration’s goals; support of various types; and strategic plan and scalability for globally-engaged learning partnerships at Saint Louis University.

Infrastructure and Capacity-Building Challenges

- **Technology Issues:**
 - Issues often arise related to tool (in)compatibility between SLU’s adopted technologies and those of the international partner(s). SLU’s learning management system (e.g., Blackboard) and other learning technologies may not operate as fluidly or seamlessly with the partners’ adopted systems.
 - There is often limited, inconsistent, and/or unavailable technical support (multiple time zones create problems for support coverage hours, system outages and upgrades, etc.). Often, distance-only students have difficulty getting the technical support they need.
 - There are often limited, inconsistent, and/or unavailable training opportunities for students and faculty who are not physically present on the St. Louis or Madrid campuses.
 - There may be cultural issues to consider related to the type of technologies used (e.g., SLU is a Google campus, but not all countries / cultures have the same relationship to Google that the U.S. does; some SLU faculty prefer to use Skype for synchronous distance interactions, but there may be safety concerns for international guest lecturers who do not feel free to speak on camera).
 - Physical classroom technology on the St. Louis and Madrid campuses do not always facilitate easy synchronous interactions with those virtually present in other distance locations.

- **Administrative Issues:**
 - It isn’t always clear that there are sufficient and consistent administrative resources to support the logistical / operational aspects of recruitment, admission, registration, financial support, etc. for the various programs that bring in new students from around the world.

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- Faculty and/or programs that work closely with global partners often do not know what administrative support (if any) is available to them.
 - Many participants were unsure whether there is a central authority that governs institution-level concerns for global education. Several expressed concern that there is not sufficient, high-level investment in the infrastructure needs related to achieving high-quality global educational initiatives.
 - Several participants wanted to better understand the accreditation implications of distance and/or global degree offerings.
 - Most participants were unaware of what, if any, legal considerations might need to be made with formulating agreements with external, international partner groups.
- **Academic Support Needs:**
 - Distance students (whether “global” or not) seem to receive little or no support from student support services, libraries, disability resources, English Language Learning, etc. If SLU is to become a real force in global education, this is an important area for increased resources and capacity-building.
 - **Intercultural Competence Needs:**
 - Faculty, staff, and students alike often need assistance developing intercultural competence. Faculty often work toward this in their own courses; while there are occasional campus-wide workshops or discussions on this broad topic, much more is needed to foster intercultural competence across all areas of the University.
 - **Community-Building Needs:**
 - Many participants expressed a desire to know more about what other programs, departments, and colleges are doing in the area of globally engaged education. Those interested in creating global learning would like to be able to learn from one another, to know which faculty already have relationships established with global partners, and to hear what does and does not work.
 - Others expressed a desire to better understand how they might get started in global education, where they might look for partners, etc. More community-building with faculty and staff who already work with such partners / programs would be helpful.

Ultimately, all of these areas of challenge also provide opportunities for the University to be more intentional in its planning and capacity-building, at both a strategic and an operational level. Doing so is essential to enhancing our global educational initiatives in ways that are consistent with the high-quality, Jesuit education the University seeks to provide for 21st-Century learners.

Lingering Questions

While the Reinert Center will continue to offer programs and workshops focused on the pedagogical aspects of teaching effectively in a globally engaged learning environment, our conversation series brought to light a number of lingering questions that need to be addressed strategically, at the institutional level.

Among them are the following questions:

- **Regarding technology:** How might the University provide more robust, wrap-around ITS support for students, faculty, and staff who operate in a 24-7 online, multi-time zone classroom environment?
- **Regarding administrative matters:** How does the University balance the need for a central administrative authority with the need for unit-level autonomy in how global partnerships are established and delivered? How much consistency across units is needed? Desirable? What offices at the University could assist / support / organize efforts to bring a global focus to existing programs?
- **Regarding community-building:** How do programs, departments, and schools best/regularly communicate and find those at SLU who already have globalized learning in place? Where might interested administrators and faculty begin if/when discussions point towards globalizing educational experiences at SLU? How can the institution create opportunities for faculty to learn about others' work in this area?
- **Regarding best practices:** How might SLU learn from regional, national, and international models (e.g., [NAFSA](#), [SUNY COIL](#), etc.) that work, while still staying true to and incorporating the mission and vision of Saint Louis University and the spirit of Ignatian pedagogy?