

## Student Internships

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# Comments from the Editors

**IN THIS ISSUE WE FOCUS ON STUDENT INTERNSHIPS.** The editor of this journal has taught at two universities with well-developed international internship programs; the Hochschule Aalen & Graduate School Ostwürttemberg in Aalen, Germany, and at his current university, the School of Business at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. They both require successful completion of an internship to graduate in their bachelor's level international business programs. In conversations of the editor with students they indicate that the experience is an invaluable learning experience as it prepares them to become useful employees upon graduation.

In this issue, we begin with a paper, authored by the editor of this journal, that summarizes and reviews several articles by Sean Seymour and Julie Ray from Gallup-Purdue University (Gallup, Inc., 2014), based upon the Gallup-Purdue Index, a joint-research effort with Purdue University and Lumina Foundation, to study the relationship between the university experience and graduates' lives. The Gallup-Purdue Index is a comprehensive, nationally representative study of U.S. college graduates with Internet access, conducted February 4–March 7, 2014. According to a 2013 Census Bureau report, 90% of university graduates in the U.S. have access to the Internet.

The second article by Bala Mulloth, Mel Horwitch and Erin Newton, with the CEU Business School in Budapest, Hungary, discusses employers' demands for an increase in learning activities outside of the classroom, and beyond the school's home city. Their example is a short-term abroad, faculty-led study program in New York City that provides students with an immersive experience in the center of modern and innovative management practices and entrepreneurial initiatives. Their paper outlines the program and provides insights, lessons learned and recommendations for the future design of such programs.

The third article by Pascal Cromm and Karin Kadow of the Hochschule Aalen & Graduate School Ostwürttemberg, in Aalen, Germany, points out the current requirement of companies regarding young graduates to possess a sound theoretical knowledge related to their degree program, soft skills, and broad foreign language skills. Solid practical experiences are considered to be a "must", too. In the German higher education system, the acquisition of practical experience is firmly anchored in study and examination regulations as far as "universities of applied sciences" are concerned. Compared to traditional universities, universities of applied sciences focus more on applied research, cooperate very closely with industry, and actually provide the German labor market with almost 60% of the engineering and business graduates. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that there is a mandatory internship for all degree programs, generally in the 5th semester. If, in addition, this internship takes place abroad, it shows that the student not only has proven practical experience but also possesses soft skills competences including intercultural competences and foreign language skills.

In the fourth article, Amanda Bullough discusses the Thunderbird School of Global Management program as helping students increase their global mindset competencies, developing skills with which a global leader influences people who are different from themselves, and emphasizing the importance of including small businesses in students' academic learning experience.

## Reference

Gallup, Inc. 2014. Great jobs, great lives: The 2014 Gallup-Purdue index inaugural national report. <http://products.gallup.com/168857/gallup-purdue-index-inaugural-national-report.aspx>, accessed 21 November 2014.



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# Note on a Gallup-Purdue University Study and Related Articles: Useful Internships Improve University Graduates Chances of Full-Time Work

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**SEVERAL ARTICLES BY SEAN SEYMOUR AND JULIE RAY** summarize a Gallup-Purdue University (Gallup, Inc., 2014) study reported 20 November 2014, based upon the Gallup-Purdue Index, a joint-research effort with Purdue University and Lumina Foundation, to study the relationship between the university experience and graduates’ lives. The Gallup-Purdue Index is a comprehensive, nationally representative study of U.S. college graduates with Internet access, conducted February 4–March 7, 2014. According to a 2013 Census Bureau report, 90% of university graduates in the U.S. have access to the Internet.

## Graduates’ Odds of Being Employed Higher with Internships

Authors Seymour and Ray (2014c) find that internships increase odds of full-time employment, and internships increase odds of engagement at work. Work and internship opportunities in university that allow students to apply what they learn improve the chances that graduates will find work after college. A Gallup-Purdue University study of college graduates finds 71% of the most recent graduates who strongly agreed that they had these types of jobs or internship opportunities as undergrads are working full time now for an employer, compared with 56% of those who strongly disagreed.

This relationship between applied internships and graduate employment should cause some currently enrolled college students to consider how they spend their time between now and graduation day. Seymour and Ray (2014b) report while the number of students taking advantage of internships has been rising across campuses, still relatively few of all university graduates report participating in these internship or job opportunities.

The “employment benefit” for graduates who strongly agreed they had applied internships or jobs in college exists for all those who have earned their degrees in the past four years—regardless of gender, race, type of institution they graduated from, or whether they are the first in their families to attend university. Ray and Kafka (2014a) report from the Gallup-Purdue Index that what students do while in university, influenced by the opportunities their institutions afford them, can be more important than a number of other popularly proposed influential factors, including the type of school they attend.

## Graduates’ Odds of Being Engaged at Work Higher with Internships

Recent graduates who strongly agree they had an internship or job where they could apply what they were learning in college are not only more likely to have full-time employment, they are also more likely to be satisfactorily engaged at work. Fifty-six percent of employed recent graduates who took part in applied internships are engaged at work—meaning they are involved in and enthusiastic about their work—compared with 33% of those who did not. This higher likelihood of engagement is good for these graduates, because engaged employees feel emotionally connected to the mission and purpose of their work, but it is also good for their employers. Engaged workers are the lifeblood of their organizations. Previous Gallup workplace engagement studies (e.g., Harter, Schmidt, Agrawal & Plowman, 2014) show that business units scoring in the top half of their organization in employee engagement have nearly twice the odds of success, compared with those in the bottom half.

**Table 1. Internships Increase Odds of Full-Time Employment for Graduates**

	Percent employed full time for an employer	
	Graduates 2010-2014	Graduates prior to 2010
Students selecting strongly agree they took part in applied internships/jobs	71%	60%
Strongly disagree they took part in applied internships/jobs	56%	52%

4 February – 7 March 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index, from: Seymour & Ray (2014c)

## Bottom Line

The potential benefits of applied internships are numerous. These graduates are more likely to feel prepared for life, they are more likely to be employed full time for an employer, and they are more likely to be engaged at work. The higher percentage of recent graduates who report taking part in these programs may be a positive sign that more students, universities, and employers are beginning to realize the value of these experiences.

## Survey Methods

Results for this Gallup-Purdue Index study are based on Web interviews conducted February 4–March 7, 2014, with a random sample of 29,560 respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher, aged 18 and older, with Internet access, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

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# Short-Term Faculty-Led Study Abroad Programs—Lessons from the CEU Business School New York City Program

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## Abstract

It is increasingly clear that career aspirations of MBA students are changing. One shift is the type of firms they want to work with. Rather than large Fortune 500 companies, many MBA students now pursue roles with small and medium enterprises, and have entrepreneurial ambitions. Thus, there is a need to expose MBA students to a wide range of managerial and entrepreneurial options. Another major change is location. No longer do MBA students necessarily see their careers limited to a single city, a single country, or even a single continent. Instead, MBA students seek professional opportunities around the globe.

At Central European University Business School, in Budapest, Hungary, such forces have led to an increase in learning activities outside of the classroom, and beyond the school's home city. One significant example is a short-term faculty-led study abroad program in New York City that provides students with an immersive experience in the center of pacesetting management practices and entrepreneurial initiatives. This paper outlines the program and provides insights, lessons learned and recommendations for the future design of such programs.

## I. Introduction

Business schools have been criticized for being insufficiently global and complacent. Their neglect can be seen as a disservice to their students (*Financial Times*, 2011; *The Economist*, 2011). On the other hand, some institutions have kept pace with the changing needs of management education and are redesigning their MBA programs to provide students with a global learning experience. Additionally, the business school educational community is also providing their members with increasingly sophisticated guides on what and how to teach globalization. Moreover, international study experiences are becoming more common (Horwitch and Stohr, 2012; AACSB, 2010).

One important way to educate MBA students for modern globalization and provide an entrepreneurial learning experience is to immerse such students in a pacesetting, global and entrepreneurial city. Such cities are now at the core of so-called "innovation clusters" (Moretti, 2012). Moreover, several theories, including industrial district theories, show that the university and its related activities are crucial sources for talent-

ed and qualified employees (Markusen, 1996; Porter, 1990). As Vorley and Nelles (2008) emphasize, universities do not exist in a vacuum and gain strength from such innovation-rich settings.

In addition, universities worldwide are increasingly providing experiential learning opportunities, such as study abroad programs for their students. In fact, these programs have become a recruitment tool, as prospective students make institutional selection based on study abroad opportunities as well as academic offerings and campus life (Ludwig, 2000). Further, as businesses globalize and the demand for employees prepared for international assignments steadily increases, both students and faculties are recognizing the need to prepare for this new and interconnected world.

Study abroad programs, traditionally defined as all educational programs that take place outside the geographical boundaries of the country of origin, have increasingly gained popularity and interest in the last few years (Ozturgut, 2007). As Kitsantas (2004) states, historically, several studies have provided evidence that study abroad programs enhance students' worldview (Carlson & Widman, 1988), global perspective (McCabe, 1994), cross-cultural effectiveness (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2002), interest in travel, art, foreign languages, history and architecture (Carsello & Creaser, 1976), and increase reflective thought, self reliance, self confidence and personal well being (Kuh & Kaufman, 1984). Chieffo and Griffins (2003) observe that the majority of study abroad programs are now short-term and faculty-led.

Anderson et al (2006) provided an examination of literature relating to international programs and found that most overseas programs aim to achieve multiple developmental competencies. This study identified four typical areas that can be enhanced for students participating in an effective study abroad program: academic/intellectual, professional, personal and intercultural. The study also indicated that specific objectives established for study abroad programs vary from institution to institution; academic and intercultural competencies are common to virtually all programs. Academic competency focuses on the specific discipline studied, while intercultural competency relates to the broad goal of enhancing student appreciation of differences among cultures. Along with other studies (e.g. Kitsantas, 2004; Keese and O'Brien, 2011) it is clear that in essence, short-term faculty-led programs provide a unique opportunity for students to step outside the classroom and



learn about the world firsthand, and for faculty to teach and mentor their students through a critical-learning and life-changing experience. Still, due to the multiple focus areas involved, developing a faculty-led short-term study abroad program is more demanding and involves a great deal more responsibility than planning and developing regular on-campus courses (Keese and O'Brien, 2011).

Responding to these trends and opportunities, Central European University (CEU) Business School, in Budapest, Hungary, developed and launched such a for-credit short-term faculty-led program, *Business in a Global City: New York City*, for its MBA students. In subsequent sections, we describe the program and identify critical issues involved in designing and implementing such a successful short-term faculty-led program. We then provide insights, lessons learned and recommendations for the future design of such programs.

## II. Business in a Global City: New York City

*"We want to serve, educate and nurture a global MBA community. Therefore, we believe that learning solely in a single location is increasingly unsuited for this larger purpose. We also feel that, at least up to now, virtual or technology-enabled learning does not provide a sufficiently rich learning experience. It is important for our students to experience an important and different business hub out of the classroom—in firms, cultural events and simply walking the streets of NYC."*

—Mel Horwitch, Dean, CEU Business School

The development of *Business in a Global City* began in 2011 when Mel Horwitch, co-author of this paper and co-lead of the program, became the dean of CEU Business School. One of his mandates was to elevate the school's academic quality and reputation, and also to increase enrollment. Recognizing that exposure to business beyond the Central and Eastern European cities where many of CEU Business School students are from, would be one route to augment the school's curriculum and attract prospective students, Dean Horwitch proposed the creation of a weeklong course in New York City.

### Why New York City?

There are pragmatic reasons why CEU Business School chose to have its first-ever study-abroad program in New York City. The school is a NY-charted institution, and it could leverage its standing as being both a US school and a European school. Because CEU Business School is aggressively trying to improve its academic offerings, it needed to choose a city in which it was feasible to prepare and organize a program from thousands of miles away within a relatively short amount of time: eight-months (from September 2011 when a faculty committee approved the course based on a preliminary description until late-April 2012 when the course would start).

Dean Horwitch and Professor Bala Mulloth, also a co-author of this paper and co-lead of the program, lived and worked in New York City

immediately prior to moving to Budapest and joining CEU Business School. Both have extensive networks of academic and professional contacts they could rely on to contribute to the program with short lead times. Their networks also ensured that they could arrange company site visits with high-level members of organizations. This was an important consideration for the design of the program as it was decided that students would derive much more value from meeting with and talking to executives and founders than by taking tours given by less entrenched members of an organization, which can be the case in some company site visits.

NYC is acknowledged as a global business capital, especially for media, finance, culture and global business management. Program creators believed that through systematic and careful curriculum design, and resulting academic exposure, its MBA students would quickly become more knowledgeable and enriched by having an immersive experience with modern management in a way that simply is not possible in Budapest.

Even more than being the center of leading management best practices, NYC is a pacesetter city in which the future of successful management strategies and principles are being developed today. Therefore, the program emphasized the "New, New York," characterized by three transformational and overlapping pillars likely to change the NYC economy and keep it robust: (1) the rise of clean technology as a major industry and managerial concern, (2) the emergence of a high-tech segment in NYC (including analytics, software, social media, new media, etc.) and (3) the growth of an entrepreneurial cluster comprising for-profit entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs, venture capitalists and private equity.

## III. Structure, Timing and Design of the Course

*Business in a Global City: New York City* began as a combination of a week of study in New York City followed by a reflection session at CEU Business School's campus in Budapest. The essential elements of *Business in a Global City* include company visits across a variety of sectors—from finance and real estate to clean technology and media—and presentations by executives, entrepreneurs, consultants and other professionals who help to give context and perspective to contemporary business issues. The weeklong program is structured into "theme days" with students starting each day with one or more lectures delivered by a NYC-based expert in the day's theme, e.g., consulting, entrepreneurship, private equity. Students spend the second half of the day visiting a company involved in the same theme. (See Exhibit 1 for program schedule.)

When *Business in a Global City* ran for the first time in late April to early May in 2012 during a break in the academic year, 24 students in the executive MBA program and 11 students in the full-time program participated. A 20,000-euro grant from an anonymous member of the CEU Business School community subsidized the cost of the trip, with the funding going directly to students in the form of a 550-euro

voucher they could apply to their costs as they wanted. A staff member at CEU Business School helped students secure visas for the many students who required them to enter the United States. The business school arranged for discounted hotel rates for students at a hotel near Polytechnic Institute of New York University in Downtown Brooklyn where the majority of lectures took place. While students were responsible for paying for their airfare, accommodations and meals, students incurred no additional tuition costs to participate in the short-term study abroad program.

The inaugural program included company visits to one of America's largest daily newspapers, a growth equity firm, and a clean-tech start-up. Speakers included a serial entrepreneur, an independent business consultant and a sustainability expert. When *Business in a Global City* ran for the second time, it was in late April to early May 2013, also during a break in the academic year. Twenty-three students in the executive MBA program and four students in the full-time program participated. Instead of providing a grant to all students, the business school funded a scholarship that was given to students who submitted essays describing why they wanted to participate and the circumstances surrounding their need for a grant. Six of the students who applied for the grant received 600 euros each. As part of the scholarship, the students were required to write blog posts about their experience, one prior to arriving in New York City, one each day of the program, and one follow-up post when they returned to Budapest. (Erin Newton, an editor in CEU Business School's marketing department and co-author of this paper coordinated participants' blogging activities.)

As in the 2012 program, CEU Business School staff assisted students as they secured visas for the 2013 program, and there were no additional tuition fees for students to pay to participate. However, the business school did not organize for discounted hotel rates for the 2013 participants.

A notable programming change occurred in early 2013: students were contacted months before the program would run for their input on the companies and topics they wanted to be incorporated into the program. As much as possible, their requests were integrated.

During a week in May 2013, participants in *Business in a Global City* visited an international consulting company, a public-private research center and graduate school focused on big data analytics, and a growth equity firm, among other companies. Most of the lectures, which included speakers from a global pharmaceuticals company and an investment banking advisory firm, took place at the SUNY Levin Institute in Manhattan.

## VI. Lessons Learned

There are several lessons learned from running the NYC-program so far.

First, tacit knowledge of the location is extremely important. CEU Business School was fortunate in having two faculty members who had lived and worked in NYC for several years. As individuals they had developed deep knowledge of the city. They knew from their past professional work and research (both individuals study innovation and

entrepreneurship) that NYC is a fast-changing city. While the large firms, especially in media and finance, remain strong, the high-tech, entrepreneurial community had started to boom, comprising an increasingly large share of NYC's employment. They understood that Mayor Michael Bloomberg's plan to transform NYC into a powerful innovation hub had traction, with many new firms springing up and a new major technology-based university being launched. Professor Mulloth had studied social entrepreneurship and sustainability and Professor Horwitch ran clean-tech executive education programs. So both knew that sustainability opportunities and concerns were also growing areas of endeavors in NYC. Finally, both could tap their wealth of NYC-based contacts to participate in the program.

Second, the explicit design of *Business in a Global City* benefited by a mutually reinforcing balance between best thinking and academics and a large portion of learning outside of the classroom. The general structure of lectures and readings discussed in the morning (often lead by managers and entrepreneurs) and related field and company visits in the afternoon appeared to be powerful as a learning model. The basic assignments were well integrated and supportive of the whole learning experience. Selected readings were assigned for each day, but the emphasis of the thinking was integrative and forward-oriented, focusing on the meaning of the program for the careers of the MBA participants. The students were explicitly asked to consider what they had learned that might be helpful for their careers, and wrote about and discussed what the program had meant for them professionally.

Third, and perhaps paradoxically, the very act of leaving Budapest temporarily to study in NYC, and of then returning to Budapest to complete the rest of the MBA program, actually appeared to refresh students' perspective of their Budapest home campus. Students seemed to have entered the final phase of their MBA program with renewed energy and purpose. Without incorporating *Business in a Global City* into the MBA program, the MBA program overall could have become increasingly routine as it wound down.

Finally, and even more fundamental, program leaders recognized that more time for self-organized activities (as individuals and as groups) would benefit participants, allowing them time to pursue their personal and professional interests, and leverage their time in New York City more fully. For example, many students wanted to explore professional opportunities in particular sectors. Others wanted deeper exposure to the strategies of certain NYC-based firms. And some students who were interested in creating startup ventures in Hungary, or other parts of the world, expressed interest in connecting with entrepreneurial ventures in NYC.

Consequently, after running the program in a one-week format in 2012 and in 2013, and based on overwhelmingly positive student feedback and a desire to build on this success, the school's faculty decided to expand *Business in a Global City* into a month-long, multi-course program. This month-long program took place for the first time in spring 2014. The expanded program was worth significantly more MBA credits. Full-time MBA students attended for the full month; executive MBA students participated for one week, as before. The greatly enlarged

program involved several CEU Business School faculty members and practitioners based in NYC. The longer format, which incorporated many of the same elements of the weeklong program, gave students even more time to be immersed in the New York business world.

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## Exhibit 1. Program Schedule, 2013

Fri. 4/26	Sat. 4/27	Sun. 4/28	Mon. 4/29	Tues. 4/30	Wed. 5/1	Thurs. 5/2	Fri. 5/3	Sat. 5/4	Sun. 5/5	Mon. 5/6
Leave for New York City	Free time to explore NYC	Free time to explore NYC	9:00am–12:00pm: The Rise of a Global Entrepreneurial City	9:00am–12:00pm: Overview Emerg- ing Major Trends in Business Opportu- nities in NYC	9:00am–12:00pm: Professional services industry in NYC: Consulting, Finance	9:00am–12:00pm: Multinational emerg- ing market strategies	9:00am–12:00pm: The Rise & Practice of the Urban Clean- tech/ Sustainability Sector	Free time to explore NYC		Arrive in Budapest
			Lunch on own	Lunch on own	Lunch on own	Lunch on own	Lunch on own			
			Company visits: 1:00-2:30pm: Professional Consult- ing Company 3:00-4:30pm: Advanced Urban Technology Think Tank	Company visit: 2:00-3:30pm: Private Equity Firm	Company visit: 2:30-4:00pm High Tech Business Incubator	Company visit: 3:00-4:30pm: Clean-tech Venture	Afternoon Free for Individual Profes- sional Opportuni- ties		Return flights	(no classes)
		Program Launch: Welcome Drinks	Dinner on own	Dinner on own	Dinner on own	Group Dinner	Dinner on own	Dinner on own		

# Internships Abroad: A Career Booster for German Students

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**BESIDES THE FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENT** of companies regarding young graduates to possess a very sound theoretical knowledge related to their degree programme, soft skills competences, and of course broad foreign language skills, solid practical experiences are considered to be a “must” too. In the German higher education system, the acquisition of practical experience is firmly anchored in study and examination regulations as far as so called “universities of applied sciences” are concerned. Compared to traditional universities, which focus more on fundamental research, universities of applied sciences—which focus more on applied research, cooperate very closely with industry, and actually provide the German labour market with almost 60% of the engineering and business graduates — are very practice oriented; this is reflected among others in the fact that there is a mandatory internship for all degree programmes, generally in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester. If in addition this internship takes place abroad, it shows that the student not only has proven practical experience but also possesses soft skills competences including intercultural competences and foreign language skills.

There are many positive aspects on both sides when it comes to a practical semester. A recent article on the value of internships in the

preparation) the cooperation proves to be valuable for both Brose Company and the students: The company gets to know promising young academics. The students, on the other hand, get the opportunity to enhance their professional and intercultural skills, thus gaining ‘vocational fitness’ for a future international career,” states Ina Laiadhi (2011).

It is the responsibility of individual students, though, through meaningful applications, to find a suitable internship that matches the content and the requirements of their study programme and with it contributes to a high learning effect. Students find support through the professors of their department and the international office of their university. The professors, who at universities of applied sciences appraise and evaluate the students’ internship reports following the internship, all possess longstanding industrial experience in their field of specialisation and thus function as door openers for the students through their own extensive professional networks.

Practical experience gained abroad has an additional value. International experience on the CV is held in particularly high esteem by HR, as it shows that a candidate can adapt to new circumstances and

changing work situations, is flexible, and has excellent language skills. The Trendence Institute that focuses its studies on Germany’s Top 100 Employers notes that in

“Many graduates owe their entry into particularly good jobs with international companies to their internships abroad”

daily national newspaper *Die Welt* (*The World*; Maaß, 2014) states that companies give away potential if they do not tie talented interns to the company. Nurturing them becomes especially important in order to recruit the rare professionals with a high degree of loyalty. Conversely, students get opportunities from doing an internship if companies would be interested in a long-term commitment. In these respects the mediator role of universities is of primary importance.

Companies abroad particularly appreciate the value of cooperation with German universities in that respect, as confirmed by the automotive supplier Brose: “The cooperation between the automotive supplier Brose’s Spanish production site and Aalen University is a success story: Highly qualified, motivated and committed young academics are completing six-month work placements at Brose’s Spanish location in Sta. Margarida for years. Thanks to the professional work of Aalen University’s International Office (ranging from selection to language

the case of successful time abroad, HR can make their own assumptions about having a good deal of initiative, independence, and increased teamwork, which are “skills that every business wants from its employees.” A company like Bosch emphasises in this respect particularly on “the acquisition of social skills such as intercultural knowledge, mobility and readiness for missions in other countries,” confirms Nicolet Eglseder (2014). Such qualities are particularly encouraged by Aalen University in its students and thus various study programmes such as International Business Studies or International Sales Management & Technology mandate internships abroad.

As German industry relies heavily on its high export share, companies know about the importance of obtaining highly profiled graduates from universities who are able to perform on the international business floor. Cooperation with universities is therefore very developed at various levels. Besides their structural presence on boards like the board

of governors, the university council, or technical boards related to the development of study programme syllabuses, company representatives also teach in their field of expertise, especially at universities of applied sciences.

Indeed, especially at universities of applied sciences students are very well prepared by a variety of events during their studies for their professional career. Bachelor's degrees prepare them for direct employment on the labour market; practical elements such as lab work, projects, and group assignments, as well as the compulsory internship, are introduced into the syllabuses; also, companies are regularly invited to the university to give speeches on cutting-edge themes and to participate in recruiting fairs. Very often the bachelor's theses are carried out in companies or with support of companies, and students tie their respective links to obtain such final projects within the period of their internship. The transition from the "world of learning" to the "world of working" becomes thus very smooth for students at German universities of applied sciences.

Many graduates owe their entry into particularly good jobs with international companies to their internships abroad. The skills acquired abroad are important not only in foreign assignments, but also with international colleagues within Germany. It is a common goal of higher education and industry in Germany to equip students with comprehensive tools serving all aspects of the requirements for young graduates. This includes not only the knowledge but also the strengths of personality and a sense of responsibility and a positive understanding of both their own and foreign cultures.

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# Increasing Students' Global Mindset and Entrepreneurial Competencies through E-Consulting Projects

Amanda Bullough, University of Delaware, USA

**AS SCHOLARS AND EDUCATORS IN THE FIELD** of international business, we tend to find common ground on the value of helping our students increase their global mindset competencies. By "global mindset," I mean a set of competencies that impact the effectiveness with which a global leader influences people who are different from themselves, in a constantly changing, interdependent, complex, and ambiguous global world (Javidan, Teagarden, & Bowen, 2010). As consumers and perpetuators of global business, I think it's fair to say that we also see the value in the development of new businesses. Global business development includes small and micro-sized businesses that are started all over the developing world, yet are grossly understudied and taught in business schools.

Experiential learning offers an extremely effective way for students to gain the exposure they need to dissimilar others, and to learn the skills and tools needed for new business development (Richardson & Hynes, 2008). Tacit knowledge (knowledge-by-doing over time) cannot be underestimated for entrepreneurial and global business success, and an open learning environment that helps students to develop an ability and flexibility to adapt and modify plans can contribute to the development of tacit knowledge (Honig, 2004).

“*Experiential learning offers an extremely effective way for students to gain the exposure they need to dissimilar others, and to learn the skills and tools needed for new business development*”

But what if your students cannot, or won't, travel to another country? There are real-life circumstances that make global travel difficult or impossible for students at the time when they are enrolled in their university programs (e.g., job/employer limitations, birth of a baby, caring for a family member). I've had many colleagues at other universities tell me that their students are predominately from the local community or state, and enticing them to go abroad presents cognitive and financial barriers. The students and the members of their families are believed to have never obtained passports, or have shown little interest in the global world outside their locales. In my mind, this makes exposure to dissimilar others from different parts of the world all the more critical for these students.

What if you have students who are interested in entrepreneurship but don't have a business idea? Maybe they are interested in starting a business some day in the future but don't have a business idea of their own at the point in time when they take your entrepreneurship course.

The way I've found to tackle both of these educational voids is through electronic-based consulting projects, where students are matched with real entrepreneurs in a foreign country and tasked with researching and revising their client's business plan.

## Emerging Market Entrepreneurs Consulting Course

A few years ago, I designed and implemented a consulting course, whereby I matched small teams of students with a small-business-owner client in a developing country. These clients were previously participants in one of the various business training programs conducted by Thunderbird for Good, an outreach office within the college that provides business training to nontraditional students from emerging markets. All of the entrepreneur-clients in the course were women, because it

was through Thunderbird's women-entrepreneur training programs that I had access to clients in need, although the gender of the client is primarily beside the point.

The consulting course was designed for students who wanted to get more involved

in Thunderbird's women entrepreneurs (WENT) programs, or in social business. In the course, students worked closely with me as they provided free consulting for their clients' business plans and business models. The goal was to conduct research and provide feedback that would help the business owner improve the quality of her business plan, and therefore help her to more successfully secure higher-level funding, like from USAID and other large funding sources.

My students applied their experiences and knowledge from other classes, learned how to write and review business plans, and worked in multicultural student teams. Students also learned the challenges that many developing country entrepreneurs face in their societies, like war,

threats of kidnapping targeted at themselves and their family members, educational limitations, funding challenges, and limitations of physical and technological infrastructure and the supply of power. They also learned additional challenges that women entrepreneurs face in particular, like gender discrimination and work–family conflict. It is important for students to understand these challenges and learn from those who operate in such areas in order to become global leaders capable of promoting sustainable prosperity worldwide. Students also researched sources of capital to help launch or grow these businesses.

### Learning Objectives for the Course

- Experience some of the issues that entrepreneurs, managers, expatriates, and consultants of organizations deal with in complex and quickly changing developing markets.
- Understand the challenges entrepreneurs facing in launching and operating businesses in their societies.
- Learn about the types of businesses started by women in developing countries and how to identify businesses that are critical for societal development.
- Gain experience in consulting with small business owners, share student expertise in business management, and learn from local entrepreneurs what running a business in other countries is like.
- Develop an understanding of matters that affect sustainable economic and social business development.

### Course Format

This course was physically conducted in Glendale, Arizona. A few months before classes began, I contacted my colleagues in search of business-owner clients and business plans. I then narrowed that group of potential clients and emailed a select group of business owners. I began all of this long before the semester began, so that I had time to search for new clients if needed. As I received interest and commitments from business owners, I instructed them to await further contact from me and my students, and I gave them the dates of the course. I also required each business-owner client to electronically sign a participant contract, which was not legally binding, but served as a tangible good faith agreement among all sides. I also made clear that I could not promise that I would have a student team for all of my potential clients, and that this depended on the final enrollment in the course and student interest and experience. I then kept in touch and emailed the potential clients again closer to the start of the semester to ensure they were still interested and available.

When the semester began, I gave my students the options of available clients and instructed them to form teams. It was then up to the students in the classroom to form teams and work with a client whose business was of interest to them and would complement their skills and

backgrounds. All of this was done with guidance from me as needed, although I mostly left it up to the students. Once the teams were formed and clients selected, I emailed the business owners and introduced them to their student consulting team. The students and their clients then developed an electronic relationship, which they nurtured and maintained via email, Skype, and conference call. The students and their client were responsible for identifying their preferred means of communication, based on communication costs, time zones and differences, and their schedules and availability. I intervened only as needed, which was minimal, although the students and business owners knew I was readily available if they needed me.

### Course Requirements

*Mini Case* (20% of final grade): Each student team wrote a mini case on their business-owner client. This was a 2–3 page paper (single spaced, 12-point font) that covered, in general: background information about their client, how the business idea came to their client and how she started the business, details about the business (e.g., type of business, number of employees, the kind of “want” or “need” the business satisfies for its customers) obstacles the business owner faced when launching the business or after the business was open and operating, and any major lessons the business owner learned.

*Business Plan Revision and Recommendations* (40% of final grade): I worked closely with the program managers of the women entrepreneurs training programs at Thunderbird for Good to select worthwhile and appropriate business plans. I selected only business plans from business owners who I believed would be dependable and accessible via email for questions from my student-consultants. Because I unfortunately did not have the resources for ongoing translations, I selected only business-owner clients who spoke English, or had a dependable associate who spoke English. In their signed participant contract, these business also agreed to volunteer their time to other entrepreneurs who do not have access to this consulting.

By the end of the course, students revised the business plans based on research conducted online, with the university librarians, and in consultation with their client. I worked closely with each consulting team in order to: (1) guide the students for the very best possible learning opportunities, and (2) provide the most useful business plan and recommendations for the clients’ businesses.

*Final Presentation* (10% of final grade): Students presented their final projects at the end of the course, using PowerPoint or a similar presentation program. Students were graded on their professional demeanor and their success in leaving the audience with a clear understanding of the business idea and the final conclusion of its feasibility. Students were told to present to the class in a professional manner, as if in a real-life business meeting, meaning that they should dress appropriately and elaborate on the content on each slide. They were given a 30-minute time limit: 20–25 minutes to present, 5–10 minutes for questions and feedback.



*Personal Essay* (10% of final grade): Students maximized their learning in this course by writing a short and personal essay. It is recommended, although not required, that each student take some time to reflect on what they learned after each class and team meeting, and write it down. Each student wrote a 2–3 page personal essay (single spaced, 12-point font) that covered, in general: what they learned during each class or meeting, any new insights (into women's entrepreneurship, developing countries, and entrepreneurship), how they could use this learning or these insights to become a more effective leaders, what they learned that will help them advise developing entrepreneurs in the future, and/or what they learned that will help them advise organizations working to promote entrepreneurship in developing areas.

*Team Evaluation* (10% of final grade): Team evaluations were due at the end of the class, after the students completed all the required work, and submitted with their final business plan projects.

## **Proud Professor Connects Thunderbird Students with Women Entrepreneurs**

In my academic career, I have honestly never been more proud! Through this course, I was able to connect my research interests, my interest in working with women for economic development, and my teaching, all together in a worthwhile way. This course connected Thunderbird MBA and MA students from various different backgrounds themselves, with entrepreneurs from developing countries, who had high growth potential businesses (e.g., a high-end embroidery textiles business in Afghanistan, a natural skin care products company in Indonesia, and a luxury/indigenous massage spa in Malaysia). My students impressed me, even more than I hoped they would.

I knew all along what kind of impact we would make through this course for our business-owner clients. I also knew that each student would finish the course with new insights and skills. What I didn't realize fully was the impact the experience would have on their views of others in the world around them. I have always stood in awe of the women entrepreneurs I work with, because they often face discrimination and discouragement throughout their entire lives, and yet they persevere in the most astounding ways. Even in the most hospitable of developing country circumstances, they face structural barriers. They don't fear negativity, they don't fear failure, and they don't let fear for their lives stop them. I have been moved by learning that my business students are humbled by these women as well, and have learned as much from them as they've given through this course.

## **Highlights from What My Students Shared With Me**

This was a course, for all practical purposes, on business plans, but my students noted they also received a refresher course on product analysis and competition, effective marketing strategies in a foreign and developing country, distribution methods, and how to achieve brand awareness in a completely unfamiliar culture. From this course, without

even leaving our campus, the students told me that they realized the procedural and strategic differences associated with trying to sell a product in an unfamiliar culture and business environment, in the real world, rather than just in theory.

They also learned that there are structural limitations that women face, even in the most positive business environments, like not being allowed to own their businesses outright without a man owning at least some portion, even if he's not a functioning member of the business's start-up or operations. One student commented, "Being a woman in a developing country almost always adds an additional layer of complexity to being an entrepreneur."

Another commented, "[I learned that] when I start my business in the future, although many factors of business success vary according to region (for example, marketing and distribution), there are certain universal things that must exist in order for a business to succeed, such as organization, a good grasp of the numbers, making sure not to grow too quickly before a solid base is established, and the belief that you have something special and different to offer."

As a result of this class, students felt that they became more effective leaders because they now know what questions to ask, what to look for, and the types of recommendations their clients may need. They also learned more about how to advise organizations working to promote women's entrepreneurship in developing countries. Grants that support the advancement of women's businesses are important in developing countries, but consulting on the effectiveness of the business model is also critical for the profitability and growth of the business.

Our male students in the class commented that they now have a better appreciation and understanding of what women in developing countries face with regard to starting and running businesses. They feel that this understanding positions them better for future work within emerging economies.

Several students noted a particularly important lesson: when working to promote entrepreneurship in developing countries, it is necessary to have a local expert from the region.

However, they also learned that you cannot rely on the client to give an accurate idea of the problems his or her company faces. It often takes an outsider with a keen eye to uncover all the elements that need attention in a business – an exercise required in order to write a proper business plan. There may be underlying, root causes for why a business isn't profitable, for example, that have little to do with the problem the business owner initially identified. One student advised consultants to "ask for information in a variety of ways and in multiple contexts, particularly if English is not the first language of the client. Ask politely to avoid badgering the client, but in different ways so that you can obtain the information needed for analysis." Students had questions prepared, but they had not prepared for the possibility that the client would be unfamiliar with some terminology. So they carefully and respectfully explained what information was needed, how it might appear in the business owner's records, and how it would add value to her business

plan. Approaching the client with reasons for the requests made the client more responsive and eager to learn more about the process.

In another example, when one student consulting team asked their client about competitors, they were initially told that the business had no competition. Then, at a later meeting, the client mentioned that the success of her company inspired other individuals to enter the spa industry. So, the students again asked whether these spas were competitors, and were told that they were not. It was only once the team did an analysis of the competitive landscape themselves, drew conclusions from this analysis, and presented them to their client, that the business owner then gave the students a well-researched competitor analysis that she made previously and had been using as a basis for her pricing structure and positioning strategy. It appeared that their client did not clearly understand what a “competitor” was, so she was not able to give my students the information they needed, until they had a conversation under a different context about pricing and what other similar businesses charged. Their business-owner client figured that because these other businesses served a slightly different clientele, they were therefore not competitors. This part of the conversation then led to a whole new conversation about the types of customers the business was targeting and why, pricing, the potential untapped market share, and more.

This example shows that the students learned the frustrating interactions that happen sometimes with clients. They also learned that during a short consulting project, unrealized miscommunication can cause significant delays in learning critical details. They learned how important it was to get to know the client and how she communicated, in order to make the best use of time on the project. They made simple changes to Skype sessions and emails and dramatically increased the amount of data the client provided.

The students also learned that in some countries, people are much less supportive of women in business because their families fear for their security, even though a thriving business could benefit the community. The lack of business associations, education, infrastructure, and security can be crippling for the development of the private sector, and subsequently the economic development of the country. Students learned that when dealing with people in locations plagued with severe adversity, people from developed countries must be able to exercise patience and try to understand that operations in these places may not function as smoothly as we expect.

As a result of the course, my students view these developing country business owners as strong forces to be embraced and encouraged for the development of their countries. A valuable life-long lesson my students learned was that they have as much to learn from people in developing countries as they have to offer. In the case of women entrepreneurs specifically, when the students tried to put themselves in their position and think of how determined they would be after discouragement, roadblocks, closed doors, and failed attempts throughout their lives, they have a new-found respect for just how strong and resilient these women are. This seems to have left some of the students

humbled by how fortunate they have been in their own upbringing. They were moved by how the women we worked with were not only motivated to generate an income for their own personal households, but they also quite passionately want to do what they can to change their whole country and other people’s lives through their businesses.

Some of the students received feedback from the women after the course was completed, saying how helpful their ideas, questions, and recommendations were. It is my hope that these students continue to feel very proud of their work and dedication to their clients!

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