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ABSTRACT

Clemson University (South Carolina) has developed an undergraduate Language and International Trade program designed to train students to meet the needs of American firms doing business overseas. Program aims are that graduates know one foreign language, be attuned to cultural differences, have a business training foundation, and have experience living and working in a foreign country. The program offers specializations in French, German, Spanish, applied economics, forest products, international trade, textiles, and tourism. Currently 220 students are majoring in the program, of whom 90 percent are specializing in international trade. During their junior year students complete an internship either abroad or stateside with an international firm. These are arranged by the students themselves, through a professional placement office, or by the university administration. In many cases Clemson has developed agreements with other higher education institutions, chambers of commerce, and civic clubs in foreign countries to exchange students. However, direct placement with firms abroad has been difficult: many firms are not open to undergraduate interns, most American students prefer to intern in summer, and firms prefer to have students work for at least 6 months. Clemson charges no fee for the internship placement. The job placement rate among graduates 1 year after graduation has increased from 48 percent in 1991 to 52 percent in 1993. (JB)

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The Language & International Trade Program at Clemson University  
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A successful undergraduate program at Clemson University is the Language and International Trade (L&IT) program. The significant growth of international business has evoked a need for internationally trained and skilled business people. In turn, schools of business and colleges of liberal arts have attempted to respond to this demand by revising their curricula to include international topics and courses. Instead of engaging in patchwork or cosmetic change, Clemson University decided to develop, from the ground up, a degree program that would meet the needs of American firms doing business overseas. The L&IT program is founded on four principles:

- a) Successful graduates must be able to communicate in at least one language other than their own, and must be able to learn additional languages quickly as needed.
- b) Besides linguistic differences, international business people must be attuned to cultural differences around the world and their influence on how business is done.
- c) International business people must have a significant number of business courses that must include fundamental topics and specialized work in areas of concern to international marketing, finance, accounting, management, law, and economics.
- d) International business people should have the experience of living and working in a foreign country to develop their special skills. The program urges students to fulfill this criterion abroad either by a work internship or by supervised study. The institution assists students as much as possible in gaining this experience.

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It is the responsibility of the College of Commerce and Industry to aid students in meeting the third objective; however, it is the responsibility of the faculty of the Department of Languages who teach in the L&IT program to aid the student in meeting the first and second objectives. The fourth is a requirement for the degree that is built into the program.

The L&IT program is the first B.A. degree program of this type among land grant universities. By combining technical and humanistic elements into a whole, it is a model for other land grant institutions to replicate and may be adapted by any college or university. It is also the first baccalaureate degree program funded by the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE). This \$170,000 grant was vital to the program's development.

Housed in the Department of Languages, the L&IT program offers specializations in French, German, or Spanish in the following areas: applied economics, forest products, international trade, textiles, and tourism. At the program's inception in 1987, the founders envisioned a manageable number of 60 to 80 majors. Such a figure proved conservative. Because of students' realization that America is losing its competitive edge due somewhat to its ethnocentricity and monolingualism, many interested in business studies have flocked to our program bringing the number of majors to 220.

Of these students, approximately 90% choose the international trade option for reasons not always sound. For instance, many say

that the concept of international business has some "glamour," particularly in comparison with international forest products, textiles, or applied economics (a euphemism for "agriculture"). Among the logical reasons given are that the option is not as specialized as the others and that required business courses are prerequisites for any accredited MBA program. Tourism is the second most popular option with approximately 5% of the majors.

L&IT majors, besides a liberal arts core curriculum, take eight upper-level language courses--two are in commercial language. Those choosing the business option must meet a more stringent mathematics requirement than their counterparts: two courses in calculus and one in statistics. The business component consists of three courses in Management; two each in Economics and Marketing; and one each in Accounting, Finance, and Business Law.

Besides its curriculum, the L&IT program is attractive to students because of its internship requirement. After their junior year, majors are expected to intern for a minimum of ten weeks either in a country where the target language is spoken or stateside, if the employer is involved or intends to be involved in some area of international trade--this option is available because Clemson University, a state funded institution, cannot compel students to travel abroad to graduate. Students, realizing what an invaluable experience a work assignment abroad provides, flock to fulfill this requirement during the summer months. Ambitious students take a semester off during the academic year to acquire more work and cross-cultural experience. Sixty percent of interns

fulfill the overseas option. All students interning during the summer months must enroll for a one-hour-course (L&IT 400).

How is internship procurement handled in the L&IT program? In several ways. The ideal and most practical internship is that arranged by students through personal contacts. In such cases, not only is the university exempted from liability and the onus of procurement, but also interns have a richer experience because they usually live and work with those contacts who set up their practica. Another ideal internship for the program is the one a student obtains through a professional placement office. Such an arrangement again reduces our office's involvement. The down side of this arrangement for interns is that these outfits charge fees ranging anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars for jobs which, although prestigious and in line with their majors, often pay no remuneration. The programs' fees usually include room and board as well as university credit. The University of Miami, for example, charges \$3,200 for internships of this type in Latin America and awards six hours of credit. Because of these costs to interns, Clemson University does not charge a fee or require matriculation during this period, thus losing revenue.

The most common internship, and one I shall exemplify later, is obtained through linkage agreements between Clemson University and foreign institutions. This arrangement is good for the university and the students. However, it is labor intensive for the program's administration because it must target the institutions, set up the agreements, get internships for the

foreign interns, and arrange for their visas and living accommodations.

University faculty and staff unfamiliar with internship realities have the erroneous notion that firms overseas are receptive to the idea of American students working for them, and that university faculty and staff with international contacts can be called on to help arrange internships. Whereas a well trained, bilingual intern can be an asset to firms involved in international trade, undergraduates, unlike their graduate counterparts, seldom meet these criteria even after graduation. The fact that the majority chooses to perform this requirement during their summer vacation makes them less desirable--corporate managers have repeatedly told us that, for an intern to be "profitable" to a firm, he or she has to spend a minimum of six months in the position. Their reason is sound: it takes six to eight weeks to train an employee in a company. This may explain why the University of Miami recently announced that it is dropping its summer-placement program and is limiting internship opportunities to those students enrolled in their study abroad programs.

Although a small number of university personnel do recruit foreign employers through personal contacts, results cannot always be expected. Experience teaches us that most of these internships are successful. The few unsuccessful ones can become nightmares for the institution. What occurs at times, for example, is that overseas contacts are unable to provide internships with their firms and must rely on those offered by contacts or acquaintances.

Since "the personal touch" is lost in such cases (i.e., the faculty member works through a third party, not his or her original contact), there is not as much commitment by the third party to ensuring a learning and satisfying experience for the intern.

As in Eastern Michigan University's L&IT program, our most common internship is obtained through linkage agreements between Clemson University and foreign institutions such as universities, chambers of commerce, civic clubs, or private firms. For example, Clemson University and the Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología in San Jose, Costa Rica, sign a memorandum of understanding whereby each institution is responsible for placing the other's students in work internships either in the university or in the community. Students work in exchange for room and board and are offered the opportunity of auditing a class at the host institution. Airfare and spending money are the responsibility of interns.

Unlike Eastern Michigan University, which charges a \$500 placement fee (this amount will presently increase to \$700), we charge no fee for this service. We require that students enroll only for a one-hour course. Whereas EMU candidates must also have a minimum 2.75 GPA and prior work experience to be considered, ours must only demonstrate a 2.50 with no required work experience--an EMU administrator recently revealed that placement overseas for their L&IT majors hovers around 3%. In short, we do much more for many more for far less.

Job placement after graduation is a concern to both parents

and students. Annual follow-up surveys of the last three years reveal that alumni meaningfully employed within one year after graduation has risen from 48% in 1991 to 52% in 1993. This slight increase is significant given the state of the economy. The average of temporarily employed graduates is 24%, while that of unemployed graduates is 8%. Remaining graduates, approximately 16%, are enrolled in graduate schools.

In the spring semester of 1991, a Clemson Political Science professor designed and offered a course in Spanish. Entitled "Third World Politics," this course drew most of its fifteen students from the L&IT ranks. Adequate language competency among participants necessarily limited enrollment. The set prerequisite was completion of at least Spanish 202 (second semester of intermediate college-level Spanish). Thanks to this initiative, now L&IT majors not only receive required social science credit, but also have the opportunity to practice their language skills in a non-threatening environment--students in this course are not graded on their foreign language ability, either oral or written, but on the subject matter.

Because political science courses have not previously been taught to American undergraduates in a foreign language, there is a paucity of appropriate materials. Consequently, most of the course's basic readings are in English while readings in Spanish are supplementary, e.g., El Nuevo Herald, a daily newspaper owned by the Miami Herald, and case studies. The instructor lectures frequently early in the course. Class presentations by students



are introduced gradually as students adapt to instruction in a foreign language.

The success of this course has led to the design of two other Political Science courses in Spanish: "International Politics in Crisis" and "Politics in the European Community." The latter is also currently offered in French. A History professor has indicated interest in offering Latin American history and geography courses in Spanish.

Thus, I would like to encourage language colleagues to initiate programs in language and international trade at their institutions. Campus development offices are often more helpful in securing funds for research, equipment, and building construction than for classroom-oriented educational improvement. Academic administrators are usually knowledgeable about funding sources, but lack the time to organize and direct projects. Successful projects can be developed by faculty members who, after all, are the people most familiar with issues of teaching and learning. Developing and starting a program like the L&IT is no easy task. It requires commitment, patience, and endurance. Securing support, particularly financial support is difficult, although not impossible. In spite of the obstacles, the inevitable satisfaction of globalizing a department, an academic unit, or even an entire campus should inspire many. I hope these observations stimulate interest and provide useful tools with which to begin the task.