

Developing Successful International Faculty Led Program

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Faculty Led Programs are study abroad experiences led by university professors. Faculty Led Programs are considered as an opportunity for college students, especially in the United States to attend a short-term international experience (Mills, 2010). Faculty Led Program is an international experience which is different from the traditional exchange or study abroad. The basic difference is that in the traditional exchange programs, the students travel alone and the experience is for at least one semester (Sachau, Brasher, & Fee, 2010). One of the most important advantages of the Faculty Led experiences is that students have the opportunity to travel internationally for a short period of time, experience cultural differences and in some cases, practice foreign languages. Mexican universities as many universities around the world are making efforts to internationalize their campuses. They understand that globalization requires trained professionals and are aware of the importance of international relations (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). To respond to this need, UPAEP (Universidad Popular Autonoma del Estado de Puebla), through the Vice-Rector Campus Puebla, has decided to implement an aggressive campaign to support the institutional goal of achieving 70% of its students attending international experiences by 2015 (UPAEP Development Corporate Plan, 2011). Forty-three students and four teachers traveled to Oklahoma State for a Faculty Led Experience during the summer of 2011. The students have attended programs in robotics, communication sciences, industrial engineering and biotechnology. The purpose of this paper is to describe the process of organizing and conducting UPAEP Faculty Led Programs at OSU (Oklahoma State University) during the summer of 2011. The UPAEP Faculty Led Programs could contribute to the development of the internationalization of higher education institutions in Mexico and the rest of world. The UPAEP Faculty Led Programs at OSU were a success. The success depended on the detailed planning and the proper selection of the professors involved in the process, as well as the solid relationship between OSU and UPAEP. The students' evaluations were very positive, especially regarding the quality of the organization of programs, the staff, accommodation, logistics, academic and cultural activities, level of content and most importantly, multicultural experience. Additionally, the students mentioned that the UPAEP Summer Faculty Led Programs encouraged them to explore new international experiences, learn a new language and develop their personal intercultural competences.

Keywords: Faculty Led Programs, summer programs, international experiences, intercultural competence

Introduction

Faculty Led Programs are considered as an opportunity for college students, especially in the United States

to offer a direct and supervised short-term international experience (Mills, 2010). Faculty Led Programs are different from the traditional study abroad. Study abroad participants travel to their destinations by themselves and the experience is for at least for one semester (Sachau, Brasher, & Fee, 2010). In the Faculty Led Programs, the students travel in groups and the professor is with them during the entire program (Mills, Deviney, & Ball, 2010; Sachau et al., 2010). The length of the Faculty Led Programs varies from one to eight weeks. The professors' participations in these programs experiences offer students the opportunity to grasp some knowledge and international experiences from the professors as well (Mills et al., 2010). The professors become a partner and mentor for the students by helping them to learn more about themselves, as well as the world and interpreting the students' international experiences in a context of intercultural competences (Herbst, 2011; Mills et al., 2010).

One of the most important advantages of Faculty Led Programs is that students have the opportunity to travel internationally for a short period of time, experience cultural differences, and in some cases, practice a foreign language. This type of experiences can hardly be replicated in a classroom (Facultyled.com, 2010). Faculty Led Programs also benefit the professors not only by increasing their international relations and intercultural competence, but also by facilitating the communication and interaction with students. The students discovered that the professor can be an example and a mentor (Facultyled.com, 2010).

Almost 250,000 American students participate in international Faculty Led Experiences every year. More than 85% of American higher education institutions offer some kinds of Faculty Led Programs (Whalen, 2008). OSU (Oklahoma State University), for example, organizes more than 50 different Faculty Led Programs each year (School of International Studies, 2011a).

However, these programs are not very popular outside the United States. UPAEP (Universidad Popular Autonoma del Estado de Puebla) in Mexico is an exception. UPAEP is making efforts to internationalize its campuses and prepare their students to live in a global society (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). Moreover, UPAEP is promoting by including internationalization of its campuses and globalization by developing an intercultural competence in their students, professors and staff members. However, this process cannot be supported by Mexican national statistics. There is no reliable information about the different international programs supported by Mexican higher education institutions, as well as the number of Mexican students who participated in international summer or other semester programs. UPAEP, like other Mexican higher education institutions, is designing different innovative alternatives to increase the number of college students in exchange programs abroad. In 2011, UPAEP, through the Vice-Rector of UPAEP Puebla campus, decided to implement an aggressive campaign to support the institutional goal of increasing the number of undergraduate students traveling abroad to 70% of the total undergraduate students at the UPAEP Puebla Campus (UPAEP, 2011a; 2011b). This campaign included the organization of Faculty Led Summer Programs in different institutions around the world. The professors were invited to participate in this initiative late in 2010. The professors designed and conducted eight Faculty Led Summer Programs in the United States, Germany and Spain.

Forty-three students and four professors traveled in Faculty Led Programs at OSU during the summer of 2011, in the areas of robotics, communication sciences, industrial engineering and biotechnology. These programs were organized and coordinated by the UPAEP Liaison Office in the United States (School of International Studies, 2011b).

Due to the importance, impact and success of these programs in the overall UPAEP internationalization program, the purpose of this paper is to describe the process of organizing and conducting Faculty Led

Programs at OSU during the summer of 2011, aiming that these efforts will contribute to the development of the internationalization of higher education in Mexico and around the world.

Theoretical Framework

Faculty Led Programs—Definition and Design

Faculty Led Programs are described as short academic abroad programs (usually from one to eight weeks), where college students travel within a group, directed and supervised by one or more professors from the same institution (Sachau et al., 2010; School of International Studies, 2011a). The students enrolled in these programs have the opportunity to take one or more courses (from three to six credit hours), which includes traveling abroad to one or more countries. Faculty Led professors are responsible for designing and conducting the programs. The professor also travels with his/her students to the selected international destinations. The students participants in Faculty Led experiences have the opportunity to take classes with their own professor and/or professor from other universities around the world. The students also are allowed to participate in different academic activities, such as seminars or workshops, as well as cultural visits. At the conclusion of the experience, the professor is responsible for the students' evaluation (Fabregas-Janeiro, Kelsey, & Robinson, 2011; Facultyled.com, 2010; Herbst, 2011; Mills et al., 2010; Western Washington University, 2011).

Different literatures suggest several strategies to design Faculty Led Programs. The complexity of these strategies varies according to the program and the professors (Facultyled.com, 2010; Fischer, 2007; Herbst, 2011; Sachau et al., 2010). However, almost all the authors agree that the first activity in the designing process of Faculty Led experiences should define the duration and destination of the program. The length of these programs depends on the institutional policies and/or final budgets, normally the length of the programs is from one week to two weeks (Fabregas-Janeiro, 2009; Fabregas-Janeiro et al, 2011; Sachau et al., 2010; School of International Studies, 2011a). The most popular destinations of the programs that are designed in the United States are Europe and Latin America. For Mexican students, the most popular destinations are the United States, Chile, Argentina and Brazil.

After the professor determines the length and destination of the program, the next step is to structure the academic content of the program, which includes issues, such as how many credit hours and which courses will be accredited and which professors will be teaching (Herbst, 2011; Sachau et al., 2010). The final step is the budget. The budget should be linked to the length, destination and academic content of the program and it is recommended that it includes as many expenses as possible, such as air and ground transportation, lodging, meals, professor expenses, fees, personal support and emergency fund (Facultyled.com, 2010; Fischer, 2007; Herbst, 2011; Mills, 2010; Mills et al., 2010; Sachau et al., 2010). Once the budget is approved, normally the university's Department of International Programs and the professor who is in charge of the course start promoting the course among the students.

Sachau et al. (2010, p. 659) suggested some additional activities, while designing a Faculty Led Program, the activities are: (1) identifying the place to visit; (2) checking with the Department of State (in the case of the United States), if there are any restrictions to travel to the location selected; (3) contacting the Office of International Programs at their own university; (4) finding itineraries for each of the selected sites; (5) contacting a travel agent; (6) creating a preliminary itinerary; (7) estimating the cost and budget for the course; (8) requesting authorization on campus; (9) contacting the office of scholarships and financial support; (10)

setting the objective of the course; (11) developing the syllabus and recommended readings; (12) contacting the possible places to be visited; (13) recruiting students; (14) ensuring that students enroll in (the) courses; (15) supporting students to apply for financial support; (16) ensuring that students pay deposits; (17) applying for passports; (18) applying for visas (if necessary); (19) verifying the need of vaccines; (20) ensuring that students have completed their payments; (21) carrying out counseling sessions; (22) finishing itineraries; (23) buying international identification cards and health insurance; (24) developing an emergency plan; (25) collecting the disclaimer's forms; (26) collecting emergency contact forms; (27) traveling with the students; (28) accompanying students during visits and classes; (29) ensuring that students have received their financial support; and (30) evaluating the program and students.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Faculty Led Programs

Faculty Led Programs are a valuable tool in supporting the internationalization of higher education institutions and can potentially support the development of intercultural competence of students and professors. Short-term summer programs increase the number of college students traveling abroad (Facultyled.com, 2010; Mills et al., 2010) and they could be used as a tool for recruiting students to different colleges (Mills et al., 2010). International programs in general and Faculty Led Programs in particular show a commitment of higher education institutions to offer students a global education (Bennett, 1993; Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Fabregas-Janeiro, 2009; UPAEP, 2011c).

Even though Faculty Led Programs, along with traditional academic study abroad programs, require students to move out of their "comfort zones", they help students achieve professional development goals, such as the development of intercultural competences and positive attitudes towards people from other cultures. International experiences help students to improve their self-esteem and confidence and foster collaborative relationships between teachers and students. These experiences also increase the students' abilities to work effectively with people from different cultures (Bennett, 1993; Fabregas-Janeiro et al., 2011; Mills et al., 2010; Sachau et al., 2010).

However, organizing international programs also involves risks and requires additional institutional and personal commitments (Facultyled.com, 2010; Mills et al., 2010; Sachau et al., 2010). The faculty selection and training, the students' orientation and the development of a viable emergency plan are some of the key components to the success of the programs (Fischer, 2007). Inexperienced teachers are a risk to the success of the programs, mainly because the success of the program depends on the experience and leadership of the professors, particularly if they are traveling to developing countries (Fischer, 2007; Mills et al., 2010; School of International Studies, 2011). Other limitation to consider when discussing Faculty Led Programs is the lack of financial aids. Coca-Cola Company and UPAEP Foundation are among the few financial aid sources. Only few students have the opportunity to receive some support for their international experiences (The University of Texas, 2011; UPAEP, 2011a).

Development of the Project

Participant Institutions

UPAEP. UPAEP is a private university which was founded in 1973 and has three campuses: Puebla, Tehuacan and Merida. The main campus is located in an old neighborhood "Barrio de Santiago" in Puebla,

Mexico. UPAEP offers over 50 undergraduate degree programs, eight of which offer dual degrees with the collaboration of City University of Seattle. UPAEP graduate school offers 33 master's programs and 30 of those programs offer dual degrees with the collaboration of OSU. Additionally, UPAEP offers 13 doctoral programs. At UPAEP, the enrollment for the fall semester in 2011 was over 9,500 students in the undergraduate programs and 3,200 in the graduate programs (UPAEP, 2011a). UPAEP has 1,100 professors. Ninety-five percent of UPAEP's undergraduate academic programs are accredited by external academic organization. UPAEP is one of the best universities in Mexico and its quality has been recognized by many accrediting national agencies (Pabellon Mexico, NAFSA, 2009; UPAEP, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c).

OSU (Oklahoma State University). OSU (Oklahoma State University) is a land-grant university located in the state of Oklahoma in the United States of America. OSU was founded in 1890, with the main objective of teaching agriculture and mechanics (A & M). OSU student's population for fall semester in 2011 was over 35,000 in the undergraduate and graduate programs. OSU has 7,400 employees on four campuses located in Stillwater, Tulsa, Oklahoma City and Okmulgee. OSU is organized academically in colleges, such as engineering and architecture, education, administration, agriculture, veterinary science and arts and science (Oklahoma State University, 2011).

Background

UPAEP and OSU started their academic relationship by signing a MoU (memorandum of understanding) in 1992. This memorandum has set the framework to start the academic collaboration between both institutions. In 2002, both universities started to offer exchange opportunities for students and faculty members. Specifically, for students' exchange, a MoU has been signed by both universities in 2005 in order to capitalize this relationship. UPAEP decided to open a Liaison office hosted by OSU. OSU and UPAEP have a strong academic relationship and have developed a number of projects and academic exchanges. The development of Dual Masters Program in 2006 is one amongst the most notable projects (Fabregas-Janeiro & Nuno de la Parra, 2011) and Faculty Led Programs in 2011.

Development of the UPAEP-OSU Faculty Led Programs

Planning Process—Before the Authorization of the Programs

At UPAEP. For the first time, in UPAEP international history in November 2010, the UPAEP Academic Vice-Rector, UPAEP International Academic Programs Advisor, the Director of International Programs and the Director of the UPAEP Liaison Office in the United States decided to offer Faculty Led summer programs for summer 2011. This committee has held meeting every week and reached the following agreements to develop Faculty Led Programs at OSU: (1) UPAEP will organize Faculty Led Summer Programs at OSU in 2011; (2) UPAEP's students who enrolled in the Faculty Led Program will take one class from their UPAEP professor (in Spanish or English) and one class from OSU professor (in English); (3) Faculty Led summer programs at OSU will last four week programs; (4) The Faculty Led Summer Programs will begin on Saturday June 4 and end on Saturday, July 2, 2011; (5) The target and ideal number of students per group will be 12; (6) One UPAEP professor will be traveling with each group of the participants; (7) All the UPAEP professors will be invited to participate in the experience and the evaluation of their proposals will be reviewed by UPAEP Academic Vice-Rector; and (8) The proposals presented to UPAEP Academic Vice-Rector must include the contents of

each of the subjects to be taught and the number of credits that would be considered in each of the Faculty Led summer experience, and UPAEP Academic Vice-Rector has made public convocation to design and conduct Faculty Led summer programs and received 16 proposals and eight of which were able to be concretized. Four Faculty Led Summer Programs were approved for OSU, which were robotics, biotechnology, communication sciences and industrial engineering.

At OSU. Meanwhile, UPAEP Liaison Office at OSU started working to design the programs. The following actions are initiated at OSU:

- (1) Development of the detailed agenda for each of the courses that will be offered;
- (2) Selection and interviews of the OSU professors who would participate in the Faculty Led Summer Programs;
- (3) Selection of the academic and cultural visits for each group of the participants;
- (4) Establishment of the budget;
- (5) Seeking authorization from OSU;
- (6) Interview and selection of the staff support group;
- (7) Interview and selection of program coordinators;
- (8) Reservation of lodging, classrooms and transportation;
- (9) Sending students' invitations letters for the American embassies.

Planning Process—After the Authorization of the Faculty Led Programs

In UPAEP. After the selection and the approval of the Led Faculty Summer programs at UPAEP, the selected professors joined the planning committee headed by the UPAEP Academic Vice-Rector to continue the planning process. The most relevant activities in this stage were: (1) promotion of the programs with students and parents; (2) follow up payments; (3) purchase of airline tickets; (4) purchase the health insurance for students; and (5) orientation meetings.

At OSU. At this stage, OSU's most important activities were as follows:

- (1) Final recruitment of professors and support staff;
- (2) Training of the support staff;
- (3) Designing logo and orderring the T-shirts, folders and promotional items;
- (4) Organizing orientation session;
- (5) Classrooms and dormitories reservations, purchase of meal plans and organizing ground transportation;
- (6) Reserving other services, such as academic visit, cultural visits and social activities.

Development of the Programs

Forty-three students were enrolled and attended four UPAEP Faculty Led Summer Programs at OSU. Students and professor traveled to Oklahoma City on Saturday, June 2, 2011. The programs were successfully conducted without major incidents. The programs began with an orientation session, where the students had the opportunity to meet the program coordinators and staff members. The orientation session covered all the main relevant aspects of the program, including academic and social activities, students' responsibilities, students' dos and don'ts, as well as cultural sensitive aspects. After the orientation session, UPAEP students participated in a rally to familiarize with the campus. The programs were designed to have about 16 hours/lessons per week over four days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesdays, the groups traveled to

organized academic visits according to their academic fields and expertise areas, some examples of these visits were, WalMart Distribution Center for the State of Oklahoma, FlySafty Flight Simulators, valves for companies oil industry, such as ABB, Orchids Paper Products, Stillwater NewsPress, Daily Oklahoman, radio and television stations, Port River Catoosa, greenhouses, lavender and grass farms. During the weekend, the students participated in cultural, recreational and integration activities, such as visits to Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Lake Keystone. The program concluded on Friday, July 1 with a graduation ceremony and a motivational conference. The students returned to Mexico on Saturday, July 2.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The experience of the UPAEP Faculty Led Summer Programs at OSU was very successful. The program's success depended on the detailed planning and proper selection of the teachers involved in the process. The direct involvement of the Academic Vice-Rector was a key component to the success of the program. UPAEP Academic Vice-Rector involved in the process and assigned this project at a priority level. He helped to resolve all the operative, logistics, administrative and cultural issues, especially since the project was a new experience for both higher education intuitions, UPAEP and OSU. Both institutions worked together to develop administrative and academic policies and procedures. Students' evaluations were outstanding, especially in regard to the quality of the program's organization and the selection of the professors and staff members, including graduate students from UPAEP Dual Degree Programs at OSU. UPAEP students mentioned that these courses have motivated and encouraged them to explore new international experiences, learn a new language and become intercultural competent.

For future experiences, establishing clearer guidelines on the responsibilities of students and teachers through the experience is recommended. Also, since over 50% of the Mexican students who participated in the program, traveled internationally for the first time, it is very important to conduct deeper orientation sessions in Mexico before the students arrived at the United States. It also will be useful to conduct open dialogues among students, professors and members of International Programs at UPAEP in order to generate more realistic and accurate expectative of the Faculty Led Summer Program. These meetings should discuss the services included in the services, but not included the program, the academic background and teaching styles of the professors at OSU. It is also recommended to have a realistic emergency plan and special training of packing and traveling abroad, including customs, baggage restrictions, credit and debit cards and visas, among others.

Finally, the success of the program was made possible by the support of OSU, who provided logistics, and the relationships that UPAEP has established through the UPAEP Liaison Office of the United States.

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