Relying on Agile Management to Develop an International Exchange and Dual Degree Program and Navigate the COVID-19 Pandemic

Weiwen Liao, PhD, Elizabeth Prejean, DBA, Carmella Parker, Esq./MBA
Northwestern State University, Louisiana

Abstract

This article identifies the value and practices of agile management in business and higher education and provides a possible agile management framework for universities to utilize while trying to navigate developing international exchange and dual degree program opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework relies upon agile management practices gleaned and shaped at a school of business of a regional university and modifies the process to fit these turbulent times. The article provides an example of a four-step agile process in this School of Business which followed "the Law of the Customer," "the Law of the Small Team," and "the Law of the Network" to develop an international exchange and dual degree program. Additionally, the article reviews the students' feedback to measure the program's impact on their education, life, or cultural experiences. This agile process can be implemented by other universities to develop their international education programs, especially in light of the global health crisis that is gripping the world at this moment.

Keywords: COVID-19; agile management; international education; exchange program; dual degree program

COVID-19 and its Impact on International Education

As coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) marches across the globe, every industry has been impacted in some significant and tangible way. Higher education and its international exchange programs have not escaped the ravages of the global pandemic. Academic institutions' foreign exchange programs were either eliminated or reshaped in a matter of days as the crisis slowly unfurled. Travel restrictions and health risks have threatened to make study abroad difficult. School administrators and students were left to navigate ever-changing federal and international laws that determined their fate whether they had to return to their home country or look to remain in place in their host country. Students lamented the abrupt change of study abroad plans and mourned the loss of the immersion experience, but fully understood the gravity of the moment and complied with the federal rules and regulations placed upon international travel (CDC, 2020; Durden, 2020; Redden, 2020).

Grappling with the "new normal," institutions are still charged with inculcating global competencies in various programs to ensure that their students are well-prepared for the global marketplace. In that vein, colleges and universities will need to either strengthen existing relationships with sister schools or forge ahead to create new opportunities for their students. To do this, individuals in charge of creating dynamic foreign exchange programs may seek creative

alternatives to traditional ones. This is critical because international education remains important to provide global contexts in learning experiences under the guidelines of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International) Standard 13.

> For any teaching and learning model employed, the school provides a portfolio of experiential learning opportunities for business students, through either formal coursework or extracurricular activities, which allow them to engage with faculty and active business leaders. These experiential learning activities provide exposure to business and management in both local and global contexts (AACSB International, 2018, p.40).

Also, these standards mandate which educators supply documentation of engagement, innovation, and impact in business programs. At a regional university underpinning our dynamic curriculum is our commitment to AACSB International Standards through our Assurance of Learning Goals. We have four goals that all our majors should be able to do once they graduate. The four goals are:

Goal 1: Effective Communicators
Goal 2: Integration of Knowledge across Business Disciplines
Goal 3: Critical Thinking
Goal 4: Global, Cultural and Ethical Perspective.

Specifically, our students for Goal 4 should be able to identify global, cultural, and ethical challenges facing management in doing business in the international arena.

How can we carry out this goal in northwest Louisiana? We, of course, accomplish this through assignments, such as multi-cultural projects, simulations, and experiential learning projects, etc. (Liao et al., 2019), but we also, through agile management, work to allow our students to attend schools around the world.

Agile management relates to the quick response between business, industry, and education to the many challenges and changes daily in the corporate climate. Agile, by the face meaning of this word, is the ability to create and respond to change (Prejean, Kilcoyne, Liao & Parker, 2019). It is a way of dealing with and succeeding in, an uncertain and turbulent environment (Agile Alliance, n.d.). According to Project Management Institute (2017), agile can be "an approach, a method, a practice, a technique, or a framework" depending on the situation where it is used. According to Denning (2018), organizations that have embraced agile have three core characteristics: the law of the customer, the small team, and the network.

The School of Business uses this agile process for the development of its international exchange and dual degree programs. One recent example of the utilization of this agile process was to increase our visibility in China. We decided that our students should explore China and allow students from China to learn about the United States via our school. We did so because this exchange would enhance our classroom discussions

and provide tools for both the U.S. and Chinese students to identify issues in the international business arena. As such, our article will explain how agile management guided our mission of developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between our university, and a prominent university in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China, to provide exchange and a dual degree program for these types of learning opportunities. In our article, we will define agile management, relate agile management to our process, explain our course matching process, and share the outcomes of our implemented MOU. Additionally, we will share possible modifications to this process that may be made to cope with the coronavirus pandemic to continue the work of educating our students internationally. We hope that after one reads this article other universities that have not yet developed international higher education partners may implement a similar agile process. In doing so, other universities can, despite the global health crisis, stretch their students' global business imaginations.

Literature Review

The Characteristics of Agile Management

To begin, we decided that there should be a deep dive into the essence or characteristics of agile management. According to Denning (2016a), in an agile organization, "self-organizing teams" are continuously providing new value for customers. Work is done in a repetitive format with continuous interaction from small team members working together using resources of the organization to complete projects in short timelines which is essential in business today. It also allows teams to work autonomously and creatively increasing loyalty and efficiency in the organization. The organizational structure of the team is different from the traditional bureaucratic teams because the traditional organizational bureaucratic structure cannot respond to fast changes. All teams work to solve problems as quickly as possible, but the agile team can solve immediate and long-term problems quickly. Also, agile management's primary process is different from traditional management because it primarily focuses on delivering innovation and value to customers rather than making money for shareholders and top executives.

According to Denning (2018), organizations that have embraced agile have three core characteristics:

(1) The Law of the Small Team. Work should, in principle, be done in small, autonomous, cross-functional teams working in short cycles on small tasks and getting continuous feedback from the ultimate customer or end-user. Big and complex problems are resolved by descaling them into tiny, manageable pieces.

(2) The Law of the Customer. The very purpose of a firm is to deliver value to customers rather than to stockholders.

(3) The Law of the Network. An agile organization is a fluid and transparent network of players that are collaborating toward a common goal of delighting customers.

Of the three laws, the first enables the organization to solve problems and update solutions constantly rather than going through long processes to make changes. The second law is the most important –it is the principle that makes sense of the other two and permits the greatest insight into why an Agile organization operates the way it does. Yet, the lynchpin of agile management is really the third law (Denning, 2018), because the customer-focused small team cannot achieve optimal high-performance impact unless and until the whole organization operates as an interactive network. It is when the three laws combine and focus on a common external goal that we get the explosive increment in value that comes from truly embracing Agile management.

Agile for Businesses

These three laws have been readily adopted by businesses. New agile processes allow businesses to flourish quickly and efficiently. The agile process increases team productivity and employee satisfaction while minimizing waste inherent in redundant meetings, repetitive planning, and excessive documentation (Rigby et al., 2016). For Example, Microsoft was able to decrease their production cycles from three years to three weeks by adapting to the agile process. In the process, the physical workspace was redesigned with open space, fresh vibrant colors, comfortable meeting rooms creating opportunities to encourage collaboration in a pleasant and informal atmosphere (Denning, 2015). Agile teams are more efficient giving more time for projects that are often omitted such as quality defects and low-value product features which increase revenue. Senior managers have more time to consider higher-value work such as creating and adjusting the corporate vision; prioritizing strategic initiatives; simplifying and focusing work; assigning the right people to tasks; increasing cross-functional collaboration; and removing impediments to progress with overall benefits to the teams and overall organization (Rigby, Sutherland, and Takeuchi, 2016).

Current businesses need to constantly change to adapt to the environment (Prejean, Liao, Aldredge, Parker, and Kilcoyne, 2020). Agile methodologies are spreading across a wild range of industries. John Deere uses agile methodology to develop new machines. Saab used agile methodology to produce new fighter jets. Intronis, a leader in cloud backup services, uses them in marketing. C.H. Robinson, a global third-party logistics provider, applies agile methodologies to human resources (Denning, 2016c). Mission Bell Winery uses them for everything from wine production to warehousing to running its senior leadership group (Rigby et al., 2016).

During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, companies had to repurpose and adjust quickly and efficiently to survive. Notable organizations made agile adjustments to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic include:
- LVMH Moët Hennessy – Louis Vuitton SE, also known as LVMH repurposed their factories to produce hand sanitizers (Newburger, 2020).

- In a matter of seven days, an impromptu Facebook group of some 300 engineers and medical researchers banded together to design and produce an open-source ventilator using 3D-printed materials and other easy-to-access items (Etherington, 2020). In several nations across the globe, ventilators are in short supply, as demand for the equipment grows in the wake of the spread of COVID-19. The ventilator design will enter the validation process in Ireland, potentially paving the way for adoption elsewhere. Meanwhile, the group, called the Open Source COVID19 Medical Supplies community, is turning its attention to designs for other badly needed medical equipment like masks and sanitizers.
- One of the local breweries in Natchitoches Louisiana repurposed themselves to create sanitizers to remain open and support the community (Cook, 2020).

Management leaders who teach that teams with high satisfaction produce more and are more effective in increasing the bottom line for business. Customers changing priorities are the most important part of competition today and having efficient methods of quick delivery is no longer a choice, but crucial to ensure customer engagement and satisfaction. It often requires the engagement of team members from multiple disciplines as collaborative peers which builds mutual trust and respect in the organization.

Employees today are constantly training to keep up with the latest technology in all areas of business. For businesses to compete in the new world of technology and artificial intelligence, it will be necessary to streamline processes and change must be quick and valuable to the customer. Since the agile teams always need to deal with the uncertainties and complexity in the fast-changing environment and solve the recent problems which have not been done before, the team members must develop and enhance new skills in real-time. Learning-by-doing is necessary for the employees in agile organizations (Prejean, et al., 2019). There are many assessment tools including surveys, games, and checklists to determine what stage an organization or leadership team is currently in and the process of transformation into an agile system (Linders, n.d.).

Agile in Higher Education

Even before the pandemic began, higher education institutions worldwide were making changes in the aspects of educational settings, instruction means, teaching methods, international exposures, and culture to be agile to satisfy the more customized learning demand of the students (Liao et al., 2019). They embraced agile to cope with complexity, uncertainty, and fast changes in the market.

The United States

Higher education embraced agile with diverse educational settings, means, and methods. These changes have revised the definition of higher education three times in the 21st century in the years 2002, 2012, and 2017 in North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) under Code 611310 – "Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools." Instruction may be

provided in diverse settings, such as the establishment's or client's training facilities, educational institutions, the workplace, or the home, and through diverse means, such as correspondence, television, the Internet, or other electronic and distance-learning methods (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Classroom instruction also changed to a more agile method as a larger percentage of classes are offered online for the convenience of working students. The emergence of Virtual Colleges/Universities (VCUs) in the United States is an evidence of the change (Prejean, et al., 2019). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of international programs used online learning to deliver course content, connect students studying at different program sites and guide and assess student learning. The pandemic has made it necessary for institutions and organizations to be even more creative in applying online learning for students who have returned to the United States (Whalen, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, while international travels were banned or not applicable for study abroad tours, some universities were agile to apply the technology to give their students virtual international experience. In switch the original study abroad program to a virtual tour with online joint classrooms, virtual live cases and consulting projects, cultural online exchange with local students, and online talks with local companies. Table 1 gives an example of the study abroad program, Global Business Immersion in Indiana University Kelly School of Business (Dakhli & Kovacs, 2020) and how it was adapted to a virtual study abroad program in spring 2020. By applying the technology and designing activities to match the original on-site study abroad program, they switched this program to a virtual study abroad program in spring 2020 so students did not need leave U.S. to get the international experience.

Table 1
Spring 2020 Global Business Immersion Program at Kelly School of Business

Original Set up	Adapted Set up
March 9th – March 18th	March 9th – March 18th
3 credits	3 credits
16 classes on campus	2 classes on campus + 14 classes online
4 company visits	5 company online talks
one case competition with local students from FEA-USP	one case competition with 1 case competition with local students from FEA-USP, ESPM and UNIFESP
cultural experiences	cultural online exchange with local students
sightseeing	no sightseeing

Note. FEA-USP, ESPM and UNIFESP are three Brazilian universities.

Europe

The mindset of agile in education leaders can be traced to the "Bologna Declaration" which was signed on June 19, 1999, by the European Ministers of Education (Prejean, et al., 2019). The Bologna Declaration recognized the highest importance to ensure "higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge" (European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, 1999, p.2). The Bologna Declaration triggered the creation of new administrative procedures, new concepts for the description of curricula (Demartini, Enchev, Gapany, & Cudre-Maroux, 2013, p.5) and brought institutional changes which challenged tradition. For example, in Finland, the reforms emphasized competitiveness, efficiency, and accountability which contested the Nordic welfare state value of equality to build a more effective higher education system, integrate fragmented higher education and research activities, strengthen top-level and priority areas, and enhance the internationalization of higher education (Ursin, 2019, p.67).

Asia

Universities in Asia are also becoming agile through providing students flexibility, experiential learning, and international exposure in degree programs and curriculums.

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). In HKUST Business School, the undergraduate curriculum focuses on broad-based learning with a flexible structure where students acquire multidisciplinary skills relevant to the business environment. Over 80% of business students choose to specialize in two majors. Plus, they can also take non-business minors to broadens their skills and knowledge to meet the employers' expectations once they graduate. They also have plenty of opportunities for international exposure (Study International Staff, 2019).

National University of Singapore (NUS). NUS Business School established an academically rigorous yet flexible curriculum with a diversity of global and experiential opportunities. Students are taught to possess multiple skill sets and solve new business problems, so they can excel in a challenging and demanding workforce. The school also strongly focuses on leadership and entrepreneurial education (Study International Staff, 2019).

SP Jain School of Global Management – Dubai. The school emphasizes real-world business skills alongside academic learning, ensuring that graduates are confident and hold the relevant expertise to compete in a global setting. Every business student is required to take up an Action Learning or Entrepreneurship Project where they work with local companies to submit consultant-level reports. Students can also participate in special global learning classes where business frameworks are analyzed and tested (Study International Staff, 2019).

While it appears that higher education institutions worldwide have initiated agile practices, we are unclear if they all follow the three agile laws as described earlier in this paper. According to Matthew Moran, head of the transformation at The Open University, "Universities are being slow to adopt agile development practices, let alone to think strategically about agile

organization" (Linders, 2019). If higher education institutions embrace agile in general management, they should expect further reforms, especially in university and school level to flatten the hierarchical organization and to build the cross-functional teams (Prejean et al., 2019).

Putting into Practice: Agile Process at the School of Business to Build an International Exchange and Dual Degree Program
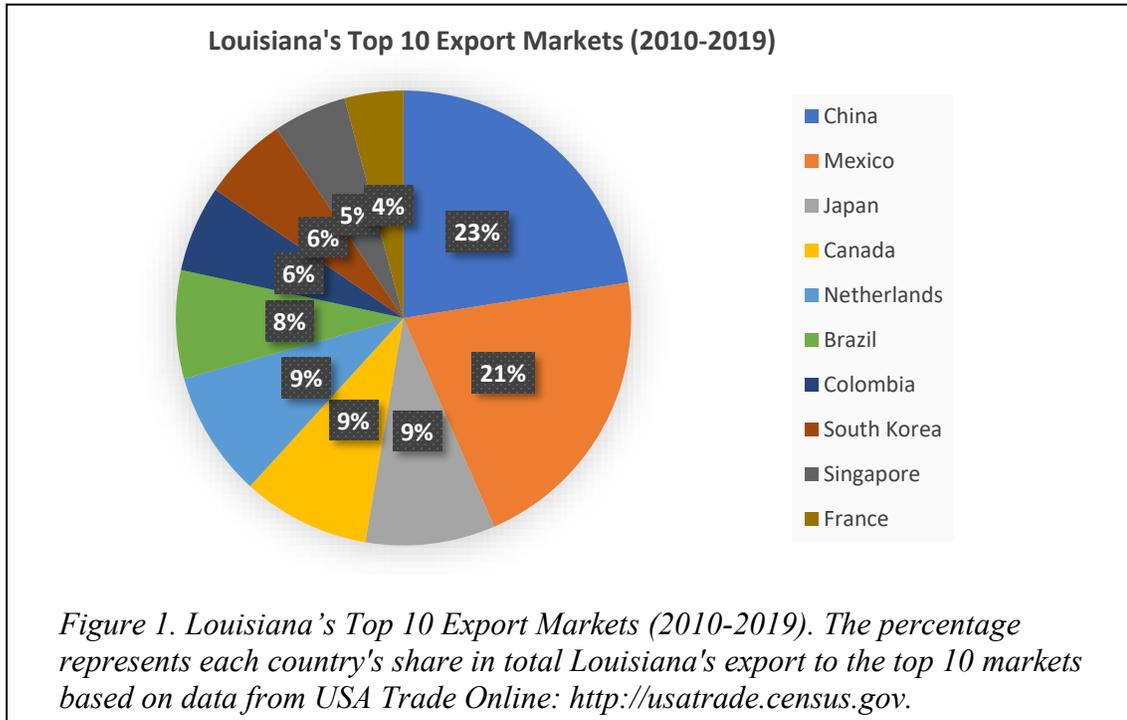
To prepare graduates to enter the 21st-century business environment, as mentioned, higher education institutions have realized global learning is now an essential part of the knowledge and skillsets needed by business graduates (Liao et al., 2019). At the School of Business, the mission includes developing international exchanges and dual degree programs. These efforts are to supply international educational opportunities to our diverse student population. To that end, we continuously seek to enter Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) with various foreign universities that also pursue excellence in education. Each targeted university is committed to the following: preparing students to take on the jobs of the 21st Century, encouraging students to critically think about business problems, providing opportunities to collaboratively work on projects, teaching students how to effectively communicate, exposing students to global challenges and help them to identify ethical issues, and allowing students to learn multi-disciplinary approaches by crossing disciplines.

Targeting a Market - "The Law of the Customer"

In crafting our international exchange and dual degree programs, we insist that two universities in international education programs meet the requirements of our Assurance of Learning Goal #4. The goal encourages students to take advantage of going abroad studies as well as attract foreign students who wish to come to the United States to learn and partake in the myriad of cultures represented in each area. Students are invited to explore the ethics, religions, political stances that may be different from their home political, economic, and legal systems. This exchange of ideas is an invaluable credit in domestic education with a global perspective.

When higher education institutions decide to go global, the process is similar to a business going global through the international market through export and import. By identifying the value of MOUs for our students and driven by the need to deliver the value to our students through international exchange programs and dual degree programs, we have, albeit by happenstance, come up with a formula to set up these valuable MOUs. The first step is to ask these two questions: Where should be our target market to "export" our students and "import" foreign students? And how can we enter this market?

Here is how we successfully answered said questions back in 2015-2016. We noticed that China had been the No. 1 export market for Louisiana since 2010. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Louisiana's Top 10 Export Markets (2010-2019). The percentage represents each country's share in total Louisiana's export to the top 10 markets based on data from USA Trade Online: http://usatrade.census.gov.

In Louisiana, 96% of the workforce is comprised of Louisiana residents who must be prepared for an evolving economy (Board of Regents, State of Louisiana, 2019), including our largest export market. Therefore, at the time we were searching for a partner for an international education program, we decided, given the data, to select an institution in China. Finding a partnership in that locale was imperative because we strongly believed that our business students should have access to the knowledge and skills of the largest foreign trading partner of Louisiana.

Connecting with a Partner - "The Law of the Network"

To achieve this stated goal, we reached out to find a partner for a new MOU through networking. The Law of Network is a powerful law that provides dialogue on an impressive scale that allows for exchanges of ideas and from that, the tools to transform into being agile and nimble to respond to facts as they change.

As such, the two aspects of the network: one is that we reached out through an external network to find a Chinese partner – Shenzhen University (SZU); another is the supporting internal network in the university for us to complete the task. The internal network included the Office of University Affairs and the College of Business and Technology's Dean's Office. These two offices provided the necessary authority to create the program and empowered us to make the decisions required to facilitate the program. Thankfully, the external network was established utilizing emails and WeChat, the Chinese version of Facebook. This platform also provides the option of video and voice chat. On the other hand, our internal network was established via emails and heavily relied upon face to face communication.

Therefore, the next step for us was to establish a connection with our Chinese counterpart. As soon as one of our professors, a citizen of China, onboarded with the School of Business in the University in 2015, she started reaching out through her networks looking for a strong Chinese university to partner with the University.

Early in 2016, she received word from the College of Management at Shenzhen University. SZU is in Guangdong Province in the south of China. The city of Shenzhen was the first Special Economic Zone of China, the frontier of China's Open Policy and marketing economy since the 1980s. Shenzhen is also the neighbor city of Hongkong. SZU consists of 24 colleges, more than 37,000 students on campus, and 3,704 employees (2385 faculty members). The University established collaborative relations with 289 overseas universities ("General Information about Shenzhen University", 2020).

Their response was incredibly positive as they were indeed interested in partnering with us to establish an international exchange and dual degree program. The team immediately began to take shape to get to work on the MOU.

Matching the Curriculum- "The Law of the Small Team"

As soon as both colleges agreed with working on an MOU, the University formed a small team for the curriculum matching process. The small team occasionally used emails and heavily relied upon face to face communication.

The team decided that the next step was to identify the major that would work best with the targeted institution. We typically looked for the most flexibility in deciding the academic curriculum. We reviewed the variety of upper-level electives to accentuate studies in business analytics, computer information systems, finance, international business, marketing, management, or any combination of these areas. The team decided to work exclusively with the Business Administration major. Figure 2 below are the courses needed to obtain a bachelor's degree in Business Administration at the University. A student must complete 120 hours of instructions.

The SZU team, led by the Associate Dean for International Affairs in the College of Management, provided us for the following documents:

(1) Two Degree Plans including the objectives of the major, the degree requirements and the detailed curriculum: one plan for the regular business administration major class; another plan for the all-English business administration class in which business courses were taught in English.

(2) Conversion of Grade, Grade Point, and Integrated Score.

(3) Elective Course List of Science.

(4) Elective Course List of Arts.

(5) Course Descriptions on our request.

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FIRST YEAR                                               SEM. HRS.
Business Administration 1800 ...............................3
Computer Information Systems 2000 ....................3
English 1010, 1020 ..............................................6
Fine Arts 1040 ....................................................3
History 1010, 1020, 2010, or 2020 ...................3
Mathematics 1020, 1060 .....................................6
Natural Sciences¹ ................................................6
University Studies 1000 .......................................1
                                                                  31

SECOND YEAR                                            SEM. HRS.
Accounting 2000, 2010 ......................................6
Business Administration 2120, 2200 ..................6
Business elective² ...............................................3
Economics 2000, 2010 .......................................6
English 2110 ......................................................3
Finance 2150 .....................................................3
Psychology 1010 ...............................................3
                                                                  30

THIRD YEAR                                              SEM. HRS.
Academic elective³ .............................................3
Business Administration 3250, 3270 ..................6
Business elective² ...............................................3
Computer Information Systems 3100 ..................3
Finance 3090, 4200 ...........................................6
Management 3220 ..............................................3
Marketing 3230 ..................................................3
Natural Sciences¹ ...............................................3
                                                                  30

FOURTH YEAR                                            SEM. HRS.
Academic elective³ .............................................3
Advanced business electives⁴ ...........................18
Business Administration 4900 ............................2
Management 3580, 4300 ....................................6
                                                                  29

Total Semester Hours for Degree ....................120
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Figure 2. Curriculum of Business Administration. From the University Catalog (2016-2017), p.93.

We selected their BUAD major All-English class to recruit the dual degree students under the MOU because, for these students, Shenzhen University had required their business courses taught in English, usually by professors who had overseas experience and English proficiency. We hoped this would help ease the language barrier when they came to study at the University, and they would be successful in the University.

Figure 3 is a screenshot from the all-English BUAD class Degree Plan of SZU. It indicates the credit hours required for the degree. The translation of Figure 3 is that SZU requires 155 credit hours for a bachelor's degree in management, including 39.5 hours in university core, 52 in business core, 43.5 hours in elective courses (including at least 33 hours in business electives and at least 6 hours in science electives), and 20 hours in Innovation, Entrepreneurship Practice and Student Development.

课程类别	最低学分要求	附加要求
公共必修课	39.5	
学科专业核心课	52	
选修课	43.5	其中，学科专业选修课最低要求33学分，理科学分最低要求6学分。
创新创业实践与学生发展	20	
总学分	155	

Figure 3. SZU Credit Hours Requirements for A Bachelor's Degree in Management (Business Administration Major, All-English Class)

The SZU team was also agile. They worked with us in every inquiry and question we sent to them promptly and responsively. There was a 12-hour time lag between two universities, that was, the daytime in the University was the evening in SZU. Two teams took advantage of the time lag and worked seamlessly online and in-person daily toward the completion of the MOU.

The University's small team was empowered to decide which SZU courses were good matches for the University's courses. We reviewed the course lists, had extensive communications with the SZU team, and used a team member's knowledge as a former business professor in China to ensure the proper courses were selected to satisfy the degree requirements.

Completing the MOU - "The Law of the Small Team" and "the Law of the Network"

To complete the MOU, after many hours of oral deliberations over course match work, both teams agreed on the document. The University's small team then finally physically presented our agreement to the Dean and Vice President of the University. There were little modifications to the document and no changes to the courses selected for substitution. After this process, the President of the University signed the MOU.

After the University completed signing the MOU, four original printed copies of the document were mailed to SZU by post office express mail for countersignatures. The digital copy of the document was emailed to SZU at the same time. In Shenzhen, the MOU was countersigned by the dean of the College of Management and the university president, then submitted to the Chinese Ministry of Education for approval. The Ministry of Education approved it after the reviewing process.

Implementation and Feedback

Implementation of the MOU

We started to market this program in spring 2017 and welcomed the first two exchange students from Shenzhen. Of course, they experience a different culture and had some cultural shock. We worked with our University, especially the International Student

Resources center, to solve their problems, including teaching them how to use a community kitchen. They participated in class and campus activities with curiosity, surprise, and joy. They spread good words for the University when they backed to Shenzhen.

Next year in 2018, SZU got more applications for going the University as exchange students. They selected two students again. The two girls had extensive engagement in campus and classrooms. One student made a presentation on the University with satisfaction and good memories when SZU hosted an annual meeting to promoting all their exchange programs. Our member of the small team also helped the University's International Student Resources Office to market this program to the U.S. students. In 2019, SZU decided to send two graduate students to us. We also sent one student to Shenzhen. Thus, this program has a real meaning in "exchanging" and bought benefits to both universities. Figure 4 is the implementation timeline of this MOU.

Figure 4. Implementation Timeline
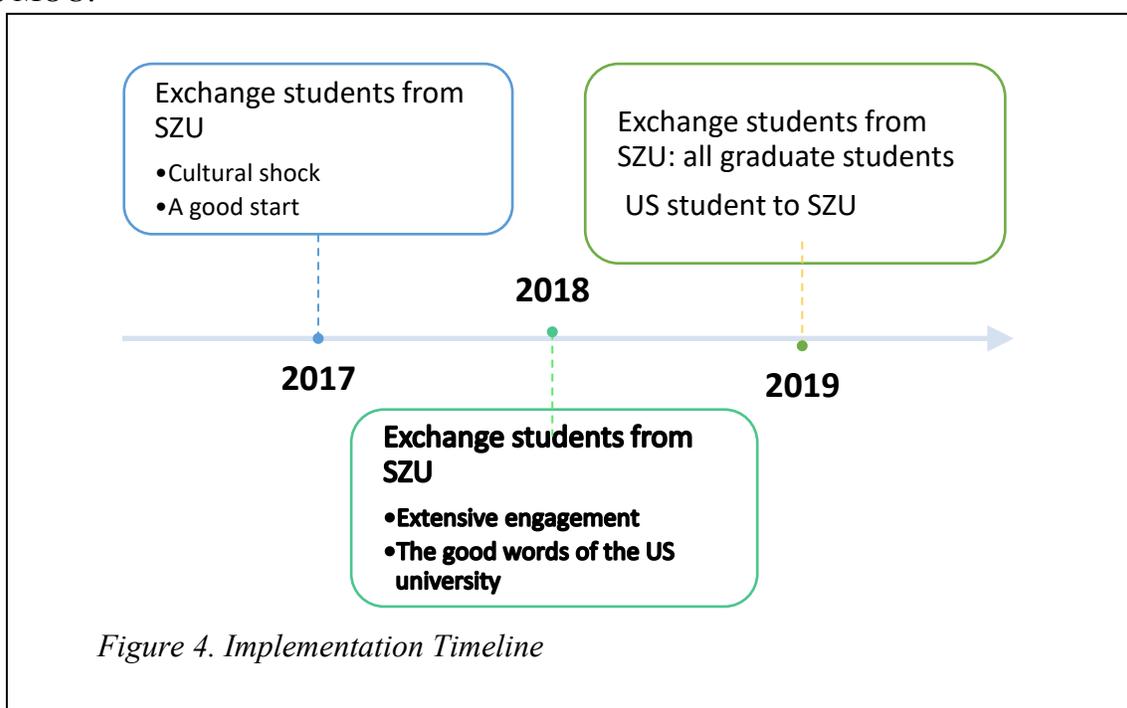
Students' Feedback

We interviewed the exchange students at the end of the fall semester before they backed to China. Interviews were recorded as videos in real time. Students answered the interview questions in their native language then one team member translated the scripts into English. In the interviews, students thought higher education in the US was of high quality and had been longed for an opportunity to study abroad.

The best experience

They felt very lucky to have an opportunity to come to the US. Although they only stayed only one semester with us, they got to know many people and experienced a different culture, which was the best of their experience. One student told us he had been to church every week

where he got to know a lot of international students and professors, which was "a good experience" for him during the stay. Another student said her best experience was that she had got a lot of help from many people around her while she was strange to everything. She especially mentioned her volunteering experience in the Food Pantry. As she told us,

"I joined a volleyball team in the University and got to know my school mates and became friends, so I could learn from them. I am also a volunteer in the Food Pantry. I had very little knowledge and did not know how to do it in the beginning. I am so appreciative that my professor took much patience to explain everything to me. I feel I have become a good volunteer there."

Differences in study

First, the course management system (Moodle) and the paid digital access of course materials were something new to Chinese students. One student admitted that the system was perfect and very individualized and the study in the US was "strongly self-motivated and based on more technologies." The second big difference was their classmates. They found that "a student here usually has a job, that is, the student usually already has some work experience". As one student said,

"In classroom study or research, working with these students who are already a part-time boss or employee will bring more practical knowledge to students from China. Students in China usually only search online for research, but here the students will tell you the real business practice, so your network is different from that in China."

Third, a study in the US was much busier because of the course load. They were required to take at least 12 credit hours (usually four courses) which they felt study here "really needs quite a lot of time". One student said "I have two quizzes and one exam every week. This keeps me very busy every week." Additionally, US courses were more challenging. Those challenges were firstly from the English language, including the accent and the handwriting, as one student told us,

"Courses of my major is difficult, professors' accent is different from the English which we have learned in China, their writings on the whiteboard are quite handwritings which are different from the printing style we usually work on."

Then challenges were from the course content because the US course might be more challenging than a similar course in China. As one student pointed out,

"For example, in the class of International Business, my classmates in China are taking the same class. They were assigned a task as 'Shopping as an agent in Hongkong' while here my professor is leading group discussions to help us create a group report on how to export a product made in the USA. This is a greater challenge compared to my Chinese classmates' assignment because it challenges the capability of teamwork and requires us to consider to whole export process and complete every step-in export."

How did they overcome the challenges?

Students admitted that they experienced challenges from a foreign language, a different culture, more difficulties in the study, and the different lifestyles and habits from their dorm mates. They experienced a cultural shock and learned to be adaptive. One student said she had overcome the challenges in the study by seeking help from classmates and contacting professors further during their office hours. Another student said,

"In the beginning, I was resistant to the local culture and insisted on my own habits and norms. This brought some confusion and trouble to me. Later, I gradually adopted an adaptive attitude and could tolerant these differences because I felt that my purpose of coming here is for exchange. After this, I gradually understood the rules and could get well with others."

Impacts on students' future

While talking about the influence of their study-abroad experience in their future, students have given us many positive feedbacks. The following words are from their interviews:

"I had a different life and learning experience here during this half-year. I have got a broader vision and developed an attitude of patience. I became not to be in a mood of anxiety and worry."

"If you go to a new place and stay in a new environment, you will find a lot of new possibilities and this will influence our attitudes."

"I think the experience here will possibly have a great influence on my future life. The experience in a different culture and in-depth academic research will be good for me to apply for graduate school. Furthermore, I think I will not be afraid of greater future challenges with this 4-month live alone experience."

Conclusions and Implications

In our paper, we identified the agile process, showing its value and practices in business and higher education today and introduced an example of an agile process for developing an international exchange and dual degree program. It can be a simple 4-step agile process as shown in Figure 5. Every step is agile by following the "Law of the Customer," "the Law of the Small Team," and "the Law of the Network."

Figure 5. The Agile Process to Develop an International Exchange and Dual Degree Program

Additionally, the publication of the student's experiences allowed the authors to measure the impact of the program reviewing the results of their educational and life or cultural experiences while attending the university. As such, this international MOU agile process can be implemented by other universities to develop their international education programs, especially in light of the global health crisis that is gripping the world at this moment.

Sharing these hard-won lessons learned and memorializing this process of establishing an MOU with a foreign, yet equally as an agile university can assist individuals that are dedicated to internationally diverse educational opportunities. In each of the laws presented, the main modes of communication were either electronic or face to face; however, as institutions adhere to international, federal, state, and local guidelines to reduce transmission of this pernicious disease, all collaborative elements of the process could be accomplished virtually. Each step, including the implementation phase and feedback gathering process, could be achieved by heavily if not solely, relying upon the electronic platforms that are mutually agreed upon by both institutions. Using today's technology can not only bridge the cultural geographical distance but also serve as a means of forging lasting partnerships that last well beyond the age of COVID-19.

Building on this, it is important for us to continue to learn from each other and share our cultural values collaborating with other countries. It is the expectation of the authors that this management process will be used as a model for other educational institutions during COVID-19 and when all can return to the new normal after the pandemic. It is important to recognize that there is a season for everything and a time to move forward. This is a great example of a group that was able to develop and implement an international exchange and dual degree program and evaluate its success. Though it may not seem possible at the moment, the agile management process requires us to be prepared and ready to adapt and execute a new plan at a moment's notice so that we are ready for the next challenge or pandemic.

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About the Authors

Dr. Weiwen Liao is an assistant professor of management and international business. She is the recipient of the Karl & Linda Moore Endowed Professorship in Business. She has been served on the board of Phi Beta Delta Eta Mu Chapter in NSU since 2019. Dr. Liao teaches International Business and Operations Management in NSU School of Business. Her current research interests include agile management, global competency, and international business education.

Dr. Elizabeth A. Prejean has a Doctor of Business Administration, a Master of Business Administration, and holds a certificate in Human Resources. She is currently the recipient of the Valley Electric/SWEPCO Endowed Professorship in Business while working as an Assistant Professor in Management and serving as the Recruitment Chair for the College of Business and Technology at Northwestern State University.

Dr. Carmella Parker is a Coordinator of Outreach and Special Projects at Northwestern State University's School of Business as well as an Associate Professor. Carmella has been licensed to practice law for over 17 years, and she previously had the opportunity to serve as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Louisiana for three administrations.