Integrating International Business and Liberal Arts Education: The Southern Cone Studies Program

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ABSTRACT. In recent years, the Association of American Colleges and Universities has urged educational institutions to focus on preparing students for life as well as for rewarding careers. The typical compartmentalization of courses and separation between general education and professional curricula aggravates this challenge. Furthermore, the prominence of emerging economies in the global marketplace requires that educators develop curricula that go beyond global awareness and help students gain knowledge and skills to function effectively in an increasingly globalized world. This paper presents the undergraduate Southern Cone Studies program as a viable option for integrating business and liberal arts education within an international context. In addition to a description of the program, the benefits for students, faculty, and the institution are discussed.
Suggestions for implementing, modifying, and adapting the program at other institutions are also provided.

**KEYWORDS.** International business programs, study-abroad programs, integrative educational programs, interdisciplinary education

Among the challenges that colleges and universities face is the need to prepare students for a world that is increasingly uncertain, requiring leaders who can think critically and balance multiple and often conflicting perspectives. The typical compartmentalization of courses and separation between undergraduate general education and professional curricula aggravates this challenge. By integrating liberal arts and business courses within an international context, the Southern Cone Studies program at St. Mary’s University addresses this challenge. The program’s components, benefits, implementation, and its adaptability in other educational contexts are addressed in this paper.

**THE NEED FOR INTEGRATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

The need to offer specialized professional programs that prepare students for specific careers has contributed to a college education that is increasingly fragmented, a problem that is particularly acute at liberal arts colleges and universities. Kahn (2002, p. 55) summarizes the goal of liberal arts education well:

Ultimately, a liberal education is intended to be transformative and liberating. Through a variety of experiences that stretch from first year through senior year and occur both inside and outside the classroom, a qualitative change takes place. Liberal education provides the typical eighteen- to twenty-one-year-old student with a bridge to adulthood and liberates them from the shackles of narrow perspectives and prejudices arising from both over-specialization and a failure to put knowledge in dialogue with values.
Similarly, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in a recent report has urged academic institutions to focus on preparing students for life as well as for rewarding careers. Colleges and universities are challenged with educating students so that they become “intentional learners who can adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from different sources, and continue learning throughout their lives” (Greater Expectations National Panel, 2002, p. xi). The report further states that a liberal education “has the strongest impact when studies reach beyond the classroom to the larger community, asking students to apply their developing analytical skills and ethical judgment to concrete problems in the world around them, and to connect theory with the insights gained from practice” (Greater Expectations National Panel, 2002, pp. 25-26).

AACSB International has echoed the need to provide students with an expansive, interdisciplinary education. Since AACSB International mandated that universities and colleges introduce international business education as a key requirement for accreditation purposes, there has been increased interest in the specifics of what these types of courses would contain. For example, in a recent report, AACSB International states that multicultural and diversity understanding is required in undergraduate degree programs (AACSB International, 2006, p. 15). Clearly, global awareness is insufficient as a goal for successful internationalization of business curriculum. Similarly, Sarah Beaton (2001), Branch Chief of the International Studies Team at the U.S. Department of Education, has emphasized the need to develop multidimensional business education programs that incorporate languages, business and economics, and culture. According to Beaton, these types of programs are crucial for U.S. companies to compete effectively in the global marketplace.

Although many U.S. business schools have internationalized their curricula, too often their efforts remain at the global awareness stage and lack meaningful integration between general education and business courses. Awareness, while important, is simply the first step in the internationalization process. Awareness gets students to think beyond the narrow confines of their home environment and begin to see the connection between their “world” and that of others (Toyne, 1992). According to Arpan’s (1993) model of levels of internationalization, institutions of higher education should move students from awareness to understanding and, ultimately, to competency. A deeper understanding requires a more integrated interdisciplinary approach that would provide students with a broad knowledge foundation and intercultural
skills that go well beyond traditional business courses. Competency would entail transforming understanding into action, a necessary preparation for students seeking international business careers (Toyne, 1992). Thus, to prepare students adequately, business schools need integrated international programs that go beyond global awareness and are designed to help students attain an international understanding sufficient to function effectively in an increasingly globalized world.

The overspecialization of business curricula has led to undergraduate business programs becoming too compartmentalized into rigidly defined disciplines. As a result, students do not get the required exposure in academia to adequately function in the real world (Smith, Hornsby, and Kite, 2000). Although discipline-based teaching can improve the analytical skills of students (Borg and Borg, 2001), they cannot easily impart the tools necessary for the students to deal with uncertainty in an environment characterized by globalization, multiculturalism, and rapid change.

The difficulties of integrating liberal arts and business education are not new. In the late 1970s many undergraduate business programs started to expand business course requirements for graduation, thus making it difficult for students to acquire the breadth and depth of a general education. According to Lewis and Roth (1993), these curricular changes contributed to the development of American business practitioners who may have excellent specialized business skills but who lack the “knowledge and habits of thought” that would enable them to use these skills effectively in the global marketplace. Lewis and Roth (1993, p. 6) remind us the following:

Such knowledge and habits of thought were in earlier times the rightful attainment of every truly educated person, founded on a solid liberal arts education and expanded and reinforced by elders and peers in the workplace. That this is no longer the case is due in part to the fact that workplace elders and peers themselves lack the appropriate general knowledge, particularly of global social and cultural contexts, and have forgotten its importance amidst the clutter of computer generated data, hyperspecialization and resistance to the general, the qualitative and the value-laden that is too frequently characteristic of modern corporations. But is also due to the fact that we, the educators, have sacrificed the formative liberal arts experience that our students so badly need to what frequently amounts to little more than job training and have done so, in part,
because we ourselves have forgotten or come to mistrust the foundational sources of our own knowledge and habits of thought.

Another factor that has hampered curricular integration is the sequencing of courses. Many academic institutions design curricula that persuade students to fulfill their general education requirements in the first 2 years of college and focus on specialized courses in their chosen degree in the last 2 years. Not surprisingly, professors notice that business students tend to disassociate the courses they take as part of general education requirements from the business courses they consider important for their careers. Often, they consider liberal arts courses, such as foreign language and political science, as simply “filler” courses until they begin to take the business courses that they view as important after graduation. Chew and McInnis-Bowers (2004, p. 59) stress this point when they note that “students hurry to get across the bridge to the other side of the river, the ‘useful side.’” Furthermore, they emphasize how “bridging has served to further validate the separation between the liberal arts and business, particularly in the mind of the student” (p. 59). Thus, they support designing curricula that blend rather than bridge liberal arts and business courses.

These issues become even more challenging by the need for colleges and universities to differentiate their programs to attract students owing to increased competition. In essence, liberal arts colleges and universities are faced with the dual challenge of providing a transformative experience for students, while providing professional programs that are relevant to students and their career choices. The Southern Cone Studies program at St. Mary’s University is an attempt at blending undergraduate business and liberal arts education using an integrated approach that emphasizes academic rigor as well as a practical orientation.

**THE SOUTHERN CONE STUDIES PROGRAM**

The focus of St. Mary’s program on the Southern Cone region of South America entails an understanding of a part of the world that is changing rapidly and where there is potential future growth. The three countries that are central to the program—Brazil, Argentina, and Chile—are viewed as attractive countries for investment and business opportunities. Goldman Sachs’ economic report issued in 2003 has made investors rethink their strategic plans for future business growth. Under the
acronym BRIC, Goldman Sachs included Brazil (together with Russia, India, and China) as one of the largest emerging markets with potential for accelerated economic growth. Although Brazil’s economic growth was checkered in the past, it has shown clear recent signs of stability and growth, with a 4.9 percent growth in GDP in 2004, 3.3 percent in 2005, and expected growth of 3.5 percent in 2006 (Brazil, 2005). Argentina, a country under major financial crisis in the late 1990s, has also shown a strong economic rebound. Domestic and international investments have increased from $29 billion in 2004 to $41 billion in 2005 and the forecasted economic growth rate for 2006 is over 7 percent (Sanchez, 2006). Chile, viewed as a reliable partner for U.S. business by the International Trade Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is considered the most open economy in South America. Chile’s 2004 trade agreement with the U.S. means that 85 percent of trade between the two countries in consumer and industrial goods became duty free and duties on other products will be phased out over a 12-year period. The significance of this trade agreement is highlighted by the fact that U.S. companies have exported as much merchandise to Chile as to India from 1993 to 2003 (U.S. Commercial Service, 2003).

Given these economic developments, the Southern Cone Studies program combines interdisciplinary coursework with a short-term in-country experience, and hence helps students gain the knowledge and skills to pursue future business opportunities in these countries. Furthermore, it provides students with a combination of experiences that can lead to developing a worldminded perspective, that is, the development of a more global rather than national perspective in their views of different issues (Sampson and Smith, 1957).

The Southern Cone Studies Program at St. Mary’s University is a truly interdisciplinary international program. Junior and senior students from various majors in business, humanities, and social sciences participate in a three-part program: (1) Coursework in languages and the political economies of the region; (2) A study-abroad experience in either Brazil or Chile and Argentina; and (3) An applied team research project. These three components ensure that the students are well prepared for their in-country work. More importantly, they make it possible to provide students with an integrative program that incorporates knowledge, skills, and application. The structure of the program is demonstrated in Figure 1.
Because the academic aspect of the program is rigorous, students take courses at St. Mary’s University before departing for the study-abroad component of the program. This part of the program is offered during the Spring semester when students enroll in three courses (three credit hours each): (1) An international political economy course that examines the Southern Cone’s political economy within a regional and international context; (2) An intermediate-level language course that prepares students with skills in the target language of the country they will visit (either Portuguese or Spanish); and (3) A research course that prepares students for the team project that they will continue to research during the study-abroad component of the program.

The research course is a unique aspect of the program. The field directors of the study-abroad component of the program team teach the course and direct students in terms of their specific research projects, typically in relation to a particular industry they want to study in either Brazil or Chile/Argentina. In the process, they are exposed to research methodologies that will serve them well in other coursework and after graduation. More importantly, the research course serves as the vehicle that drives the integrative and interdisciplinary nature of the program. Together with the political economy and language courses, this type of academic preparation makes it possible for students to engage more
actively both academically and personally during the study-abroad portion of the program. They are able to participate in lectures and seminars in the country’s language, have a language foundation that allows them to engage in conversations with locals, and have the confidence to conduct primary research in the target country.

**The Application Stage**

St. Mary’s University offers two 5-week summer sessions. The study-abroad component of the program takes place during the first summer session that typically runs from early June to early July. In collaboration with an in-country university, students spend 4 weeks living, studying, and conducting research in either Brazil or in Chile and Argentina, depending on their chosen language. The interdisciplinary nature of the program is reinforced by having two faculty members direct the program at each location: a language field director and a project field director. The language field director helps students prepare for their in-country interviews and reviews the project summaries they write in the target language. In addition, they assess students’ language acquisition progress. The project field director works closely with the students on their respective research projects and evaluates each team’s progress toward accomplishing its research objectives. The research project has the added benefit of serving as a link between the roles of the two field directors. Thus, it also provides an opportunity for professors of different disciplines to learn from each other.

Students gain insights into the country’s economic, political, social, and cultural environments by attending lectures given by local professors and government officials. They also have the opportunity to participate in company visits where they are able to gain insights on the local business culture. More importantly, the research project requires that they interview specific business persons and government officials who can help them obtain relevant information for their research projects. These challenging academic aspects of the program are complemented by living arrangements with local families. Accommodations with local families allow students to gain additional cultural insights, reinforce their language acquisition, and provide opportunities for developing long-lasting interpersonal relationships. Students who meet the requirements of this part of the program (in terms of both country knowledge and language skills) and who complete the applied research project earn three credit hours in a language course and three credit hours in the applied research project course.
The Integration Stage

Although students return home after completing the study-abroad component of the program, they still have additional work to do. Working as “virtual teams,” they finish writing their research reports during the remainder of the summer under the guidance of the field director. Although the research report is in English, each team must prepare an executive summary in the language of the target country. In addition to the integrative research project, students are asked to keep a journal of their experience during the study-abroad component of the project. After they return to the U.S., they each write a reflection paper on what the program meant to them. The main objective of the paper is to get students to reflect on what the experience meant at a deeper personal level, and how it might have changed them in terms of their beliefs and attitudes.

Early in the fall semester, students “defend” their projects to an audience consisting of faculty, students, government officials, and representatives of the business sector. These formal presentations are an opportunity for students to showcase their research projects. As part of their presentations, they must give a brief summary of their project in the target language, followed by a more complete discussion in English. Thus, in addition to serving as closure for the program, this activity highlights the integrative aspect of the program and demonstrates students’ accomplishments. Students have a sense of empowerment since they are viewed by attendees as “experts” on their respective topics.

Assessment of the Program

The three-stage approach used in the Southern Cone Studies program makes it possible for the faculty involved in the program to assess the students’ progress at several points in time. During the preparation stage the professors teaching the language, political economy, and project preparation courses are able to evaluate students’ progress on knowledge and skill acquisition. Course content tests and research project proposals are used to assess students’ progress. In addition, students evaluate each course at the end of the semester by completing the University’s course evaluation survey. In the application stage of the program, the partner institution in the targeted country collaborates with the program director to assess various aspects of the study-abroad program, including in-country program structure, logistics, lectures and conferences, company and government visits, and cultural activities.
Furthermore, the language field director evaluates the progress the students make in their language skill development through structured assignments that are directly related to either the in-country lectures or to their research projects. Finally, the integration stage of the program is assessed through an evaluation of the students’ research projects, country presentations, and reflection papers.

Students who successfully complete all parts of the program receive a Certificate in Southern Cone Studies. The Certificate formalizes the interdisciplinary nature of the program since its completion indicates that the students have met course requirements that combine language acquisition with knowledge of the region’s political economy and business environment. The required research project ensures that there is integration across these diverse disciplines and gets both students and professors from different disciplines to work closely together. The reflection paper provides an opportunity for students to think about how the program changed them personally. Thus, this program not only enhances students’ knowledge and skills but also develops their character and views of others. Additionally, it reminds them that both liberal education and business education are two sides of the same equation. In other words, this type of integrative program results in a transformational learning experience.

**BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM**

The design of the SCS Program provides students with a combination of learning experiences that overcomes several traditional barriers to learning: isolation, time, limited expertise, and rapid globalization (Envick and Padmanabhan, 2006). First, it reduces classroom isolation by placing students in different learning environments that include lectures at government offices and visits to companies in a different part of the world. Second, the combination of preparatory work at the home institution with a short but intense study-abroad component makes effective use of time. Third, bringing together faculty from the humanities, political science, and business overcomes the silo effect and reduces the barriers created by the limited expertise of faculty members outside their disciplines. Finally, the focus on emerging markets as the targeted countries ensures that students gain an understanding of the speed at which globalization is taking place as well as function effectively in the new globalized world. Although currently the Southern Cone Program targets Brazil and Chile/Argentina, the program allows
students to effectively function in cultures quite different from their own. As a result, they are well equipped to deal with situations where other cultures and countries become important in the global economy. In particular, the emerging importance of China and India (in addition to Brazil, Chile, and Argentina) will allow students to transport their knowledge and experiences in one country and environment to other countries and environment.

The program provides additional specific benefits to students. The approach used allows students to gain valuable international experience in a real-time setting. For instance, since students have to deal with projects in a foreign environment, they receive “hands-on” training on how to solve problems that involve additional issues such as language and communication barriers. Consequently, while they are applying their business skills, they are doing so in an environment that requires them to use liberal arts education in an applied manner. It helps them learn critical skills within an international context that have relevance for their professional aspirations. Since students conduct research on specific companies, they have the added incentive to perform well on the project. The in-country presentations contribute to the students’ perceptions that their work is serious and with potential benefit for the companies involved.

The structure of the Southern Cone Studies program provides students with a variety of intercultural settings, from living with local families to interacting with local professors, business persons, and government officials. As noted by Douglas and Jones-Rikkers (2001), exposing students to different cultural contexts in study-abroad programs has a positive effect on their worldmindedness. Although the development of a worldminded perspective is considered crucial for success in international business careers, it does not appear to be developed at business schools, perhaps because the curriculum does not provide a broadening experience (Boatler, 1992). The intercultural opportunities that the study-abroad component provides, combined with the blending of business and liberal arts courses, help create an environment that fosters worldmindedness.

Furthermore, this combination of experiences has the potential to be a transformational learning experience. A review of students’ reflection papers indicates that this program indeed made a difference in their lives. Also, since student teams come from different backgrounds (business, liberal arts, etc.), we find that they learn from each other as well. For instance, they immediately grasp that a problem can be viewed from different perspectives, and there may be multiple solutions to a particular
problem. These learning experiences may not materialize if they only took traditional domestic business school courses within their universities. In many of the reflection papers submitted at St. Mary’s University, students stress this attribute (learning from other students whose background and thought processes are vastly different from their own) as one of the most important benefits of the program.

The program’s benefits are not limited to students. For the program to be effective, faculty involved in the program need to work closely together. Thus, by sharing ideas and working together to help students develop their projects, they can gain insights on how someone of a different discipline sees a particular issue. This type of interaction is important for both the business and the liberal arts professors involved in the program, because it can serve as a catalyst to additional interdisciplinary initiatives and to collaborative efforts that lead to educational programs that are practical, interdisciplinary and liberating. Furthermore, it can motivate faculty to want to learn the subject matter taught by a professor from a different field. For example, participation in the Southern Cone Studies program resulted in a business professor taking Portuguese language classes and a language professor auditing a business course. Finally, respective faculties may use foreign (and interdisciplinary) experiences to change the way they teach other courses in their respective universities, and thus make a difference in the lives of other students who may not have the opportunity to participate in the program.

The program provides benefits to the institution as well. It provides opportunities for universities and colleges to develop valuable corporate contacts internationally, thus making it possible for a U.S. institution to be better known internationally. An enhanced reputation, in turn, can attract more international students to the U.S. institution. Moreover, the corporations involved in the program may end up providing future internships and hiring opportunities to participating students. An additional important benefit is that the model can be adapted to different regions and countries where universities and colleges have institutional partners or can develop future partners. As a consequence, funding opportunities are expanded through the established working relationships with schools in other countries. Such ventures can help secure or maintain AACSB accreditation since internationalization of curriculum is critically important. Additionally, such programs can help enhance the national and global reputation of the university. Furthermore, successful alumni who have participated in such programs may help promote the university to outsiders. Finally, in view of the interdisciplinary
nature of such programs, “turf battles” between colleges and departments can be minimized if faculties from different colleges work in an integrative fashion for the common good.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM**

Designing and implementing an integrated program requires the development of a climate of trust and cooperation among faculty from business and liberal arts. A climate of trust and cooperation facilitates brainstorming so that those involved in the program can establish agreed-upon goals and objectives as well as plan the content of timing of the different components of the program. Ultimately, a well-grounded relationship among faculty from different disciplines leads to respect and appreciation of one another’s disciplines, a necessary step for developing a genuinely interdisciplinary program.

The start-up costs for this type of program can be high. University faculty will need to visit the targeted countries prior to starting the program in order to establish relationships with partner institutions and to develop new courses, such as the research project preparation course. Therefore, faculty involved in the program need the support of the deans from the business and the humanities and social sciences schools. Supportive deans are critical for allowing experimentation with course design and structure (including team teaching). Moreover, deans should support a co-directorship of the program so that professors from both liberal and arts and business are involved in the overall administration of the program.

The challenge of start-up costs can be alleviated through grant funds. For example, faculty can take advantage of grant opportunities that target international education initiatives, such as the Title VI programs of the U.S. Department of Education. These grants can be extremely beneficial to schools with limited resources but with a strong motivation to initiate innovative international education programs (for more information on U.S. Department of Education grants, see Beaton, 2001). Non-U.S. schools may be able to obtain funds through their country’s government or other funding sources.

Once the program is in place, however, the costs of the program can be covered through the study-abroad component of the program. Students at St. Mary’s pay a fee that is approximately double the tuition for six credit hours during the summer. In addition to covering the study-abroad costs (including field directors’ stipends, airfare, in-country
travel, accommodations, most meals, in-country program, and cultural activities), this type of fee can also cover some of the administrative costs, such as the program director’s stipend, time release for teaching the project preparation course in the spring, and the presentation luncheon offered in the fall.

Attention should also be given to the size and composition of the student teams. The nature of the integrative applied project requires close collaboration among students. Thus, small teams of two to four students work best. To broaden students’ experiences, team members should come from demographically and sociologically diverse backgrounds (Doyle, Helms, and Westrap, 2004).

The logistics of the program require the involvement of multiple departments and colleges locally as well as partner institutions in the target countries. Consequently, to ensure a successful program, sufficient time must be allocated for planning purposes. Planning needs to start at least 6 months prior to the first time the program is offered and approximately 3-4 months thereafter. At St. Mary’s, for instance, we start the planning process early during the Fall Semester for trips during the following summer. Starting early allows us to advertise the program sufficiently so as to attract students, makes it easier for students to preregister for the preparation courses in the spring semester, and provides students adequate time to work with the financial aid office (or secure additional funding) to pay for the study-abroad component of the program.

Finally, host schools must have the necessary expertise in liberal arts and business areas. More importantly, they must be committed to the mission of the program. If such commitment is not received, or it is misunderstood, then universities adopting similar programs may end up receiving the “tourist” version; that is, students will experience the host country environment as tourists.

SUGGESTIONS FOR MODIFYING AND ADAPTING THE PROGRAM

St. Mary’s SCS Program can be modified to enrich the learning experience of undergraduate students in several ways. One approach could be to involve companies in the target countries during the project selection phases of the program. That is, the participating local firms would take a more active role in the development of the students’ projects. For example, the managers of a company may have a real problem that they want solved or researched. Allowing firms to benefit from these
interactions may increase the probability that they would share more information with the students. In addition, this approach would create opportunities for reciprocity since the managers would gain relatively inexpensive access to potential solutions to their problems. The students, on the other hand, would gain a more applied, hands-on experience.

Toward the end of the study-abroad component of the program, students can present their findings to the firm in the target country, preferably in the local language. In addition to reinforcing language skills and applying knowledge acquired during the program, this type of activity would have the benefit of increasing the “seriousness” level of the projects and the importance of professional behavior. Furthermore, a positive experience for the company would help develop good relationships in the targeted countries, increasing the academic institution’s visibility and enhancing its reputation internationally.

Another possibility is the addition of retired business executives or senior managers from the U.S. to accompany the group on the country visits. This approach would give retired executives and managers a chance to travel and learn about another country, serve as a positive role model for students who may become future business leaders, and stimulate students’ motivation to excel in their research projects.

The program can also be modified to address the needs of the other BRIC countries (i.e., Russia, India, and China) as well as other countries that exhibit rapid economic growth. Furthermore, schools may be able to reach “economies of scale” if they attempt to duplicate the program in various countries simultaneously. For instance, we have students going to different countries yet taking the same preparation courses (e.g., the research methodology course and the regional course) and are examining the possibility of expanding the program to include other countries and regions. Although there are some economies of scale to this approach (e.g., one research methodology course), each targeted country or region requires significant investment in time and money. As an example, faculty must contact host schools and businesses in each country, and the experiences in one country are not easily duplicated in another country from a cost and time perspective.

The key to a successful interdisciplinary international program is to create an environment where students experience learning in diverse settings, where they use their language skills to interact with people from cultural backgrounds different to their own, and where they are able to use the knowledge and skills they acquire to solve real problems.
CONCLUSIONS

This paper draws upon the experience of one university. The most innovative element of the program is the degree of integration achieved between the business school and the liberal arts school. To the best of our knowledge, no other school of our size (small, private, liberal arts) has achieved this integration. Specifically, we (1) offer courses prior to travel to the targeted host country that are taught by business school professors and by liberal arts professors, (2) integrate language training into the entire process, and (3) expose students to real world business problems that transcend international boundaries, and allow them to provide solutions for such problems. We are not aware of any school that accomplishes these objectives in an undergraduate international program with a short-term study-abroad component. We consider these aspects of our program to be its most unique elements.

In conclusion, the undergraduate SCS program clearly demonstrates that integrated, interdisciplinary programs can be developed and be successful. The three-stage design of the program allows faculty to assess students’ progress at various points in time and from several perspectives. Also, by embedding the study-abroad component within the overall program, students are less likely to assume the role of “tourists” in the country they visit. However, they require that faculty from business, humanities, and social sciences work together in a constructive and collaborative manner to meet the educational needs of students.

Although the experiences of St. Mary’s University may be more appropriate for liberal arts institutions that are committed to developing integrative international programs, other types of institutions may be able to modify this program to meet their needs. Globalization requires that institutions of higher education provide a greater variety of international experiences. Ideally, students should spend a year living in another country to gain a deeper understanding of its culture; however, this ideal is oftentimes neither practical nor achievable. The three-stage approach of the SCS program incorporating a 4-week intensive study-abroad component provides students with experiences that help deepen their understanding of a part of the world very different from their own within a relatively short period of time.

To be successful, this type of program requires the support of university administrators and an institutional environment that is open to internationalization and curricular initiatives. However, administrators of higher education institutions are increasingly aware that the complex, uncertain, and volatile global environment in which students will eventually
work means that the knowledge and skills they need cannot be developed in isolation; they need a solid liberal arts foundation. An integrated international program such as the SCS program is one approach that meets this challenge.

NOTES

1. St. Mary’s University, a small Catholic Marianist liberal arts institution in San Antonio, Texas, acknowledges the importance of integrating liberal arts and professional education as part of its mission. A brief description of St. Mary’s University, its mission, and student population are included in the Appendix. The University Profile and Mission appear at St. Mary’s Website (www.stmarytx.edu). Reprinted with permission.

2. Specific information about the program’s assessment can be obtained by contacting the authors.

REFERENCES


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APPENDIX

St. Mary’s University

UNIVERSITY PROFILE

St. Mary’s University, founded in 1852 by Marianist brothers and priests, is the first institution of higher learning in San Antonio and the oldest and largest Catholic university in Texas and the Southwest.

Personal attention and powerful academic programs have made St. Mary’s, located on 135 acres northwest of downtown San Antonio, a nationally recognized liberal arts institution. With a diverse student population of 3,925 of all faiths and backgrounds, St. Mary’s is home to five schools: Bill Greehey School of Business; School of Humanities and Social Sciences; School of Science, Engineering and Technology; Graduate School; and Law School.

The University provides a Catholic education experience that evokes academic excellence while integrating liberal studies, professional preparation, and ethical commitment. St. Mary’s 184 full-time faculty members, 90 percent of whom hold doctoral or terminal degrees in their field, are committed to student success in and out of the classroom. St. Mary’s offers 44 majors and 70 degree programs, including 11 joint degree programs. The student/faculty ratio of 13:1 permits small class and promotes active learning.

ST. MARY’S MISSION

St. Mary’s University, as a Catholic Marianist University, fosters the formation of people in faith and educates leaders for the common good through community, integrated liberal arts and professional education, and academic excellence.