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SUSTAINING AN INTERNATIONAL MBA PROGRAM



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Abstract

International cooperation in graduate business degrees is becoming increasingly common. Changes in academic administration and accreditation and the increasing curricular emphasis on international business affect the desirability of such programs and the ideal mix of institutional partners. Cross-cultural differences in educational systems, standards, cultures and practices exert pressure on consortia relations. This paper documents the implementation of cooperative international degree programs through a case study of the GlobalMBA program (<http://GlobalMBA.unf.edu>) jointly offered by the Cologne University of Applied Sciences, Germany; the University of Warsaw, Poland; Dongbei University of Finance and Economics, China; and the University of North Florida, USA. Additionally, successful strategies for solving challenges of program sustainability are described.

Keywords: International program collaboration, double degrees, cross cultural challenges and opportunities.

SETTING THE STAGE

Over the past two decades, Business education has become increasingly globalized. During the 1990's, American Business Schools began to pay more attention to international business and integrated one or two "international" courses (e.g. International Management or International Marketing) to the study programs. A combination of student demand and faculty interest led to the creation of minors and majors in international business. The number of international business majors offered in the US and Canada skyrocketed from 62 in 1995 to over 600 today. Beamish [1989] documents the beginning stages of this process, Folks [1999] describes the evolution of the process and Scherer et al. [2003] summarize its latter stages. Arpan [1993] identifies the degree of international understanding inherent in each stage.

Around the turn of the millennium, US Business Schools began to offer a broader set of study abroad opportunities [Lashbrook, 2002; Hudzik, et al. 2003]. In addition to the traditional semester abroad, a new type of short-term, faculty-led study tour became popular. Such programs offered several advantages. First, they provided students with a comfortable way to study abroad. Not only would students have an experienced, respected faculty member set up and lead them through their international experience, but they would travel with faculty members they already knew and liked, creating another incentive for participation. Second, the shorter duration of faculty-led programs meant less time away from work and loved ones. It also all but eliminated the need to speak a second language.

Although many institutions had always offered semester abroad programs, the number of participating students remained small. The reasons why American students did not, and still do not, enroll in study abroad programs in large numbers, are well-documented [Salisbury, et al., 2009]. In the past, inadequate foreign language skills often were a major obstacle. This is slowly changing, not because American students are learning more languages, they are not, but rather because, responding to demand, foreign Business Schools now routinely and increasingly offer programs that are partly or wholly taught in English. As a result, US students can study abroad in their native language.

In fact, foreign Business Schools typically offer degree programs with more international content than US Business Schools. Most programs [at foreign Business Schools] require competence in a foreign language, and many require a high proficiency in a second language (often English). In Europe, most business students are required to spend at least a semester studying and/or interning abroad. Indeed, the European Union (EU) has long supported such efforts through its ERASMUS/SOCRATES program.^a EU support comes both in the form of student stipends and in the form of an infrastructure that makes study abroad easy for both students and institutions. Schools that wish to exchange students in the EU only need to exchange their ERASMUS/SOCRATES identification numbers while US schools are typically required by their governing and accreditation bodies to create and sign a bilateral student exchange agreement with each foreign partner institution. Thus, [European] students are free to select a foreign

institution and be assured admittance. In contrast, American students are typically limited to a small number of exchange partners, or they must select the expensive option of a for-profit company that offers study abroad courses.

Although student services at European universities are generally limited when compared with US institutions, administrative offices for ERASMUS/SOCRATES students do exist. These offices facilitate student mobility, assist in the often quite complex matriculation process, schedule social events, make travel arrangements, etc.

EU institutions are leading the US Business Schools in offering double-degree and joint-degree programs. One example is the long-standing *Applied Languages Europe (ALE)* program.^b Undergraduate students study for one year in three different countries where courses are taught in the respective languages and at graduation receive diplomas from all three institutions. The Bologna Process,^c whose aim is to have a standard model of undergraduate and graduate education across all EU members, is another example of the EU's facilitation of academic cooperation between universities. Bologna also offers a simple process for offering joint degrees, such as the one that the *University of Warsaw (UW)* and the *Cologne University of Applied Sciences (CUAS)* issue in the *GlobalMBA*.

Recognizing the importance and the value of such integrated, cooperative degree programs in 2006, the EU and the US changed a funding mechanism for participation in exchange agreements by providing generous annual stipends to students. Previously, the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE)^d grants provided assistance in setting up student exchanges and providing stipends to students participating in them. After 2006, the program explicitly encouraged the development and offering of Trans-Atlantic cooperative degree programs.

In addition, US accrediting agencies are now explicitly acknowledging the educational value of cooperative degree programs. Research demonstrates that employers value study abroad experiences highly because they document the potential employee's willingness to take risks, ability to adapt to those risks and to succeed in new environments. [c.f. Timiraos, 2006; Warlick, 2007].

Kuder and Obst [2009] suggest that institutions may develop joint- or double-degree programs for a variety of reasons that include the following:

1. Advancing internationalization of the campus
2. Raising international visibility and prestige of the institution
3. Broadening the institution's educational offerings
4. Strengthening academic research collaborations
5. Increasing foreign student enrollments [34].

Given the increasing number of cooperative (i.e., joint- or multiple-degree) programs offered by US institutions [c.f. Obst and Kuder, 2009], it is important to understand the associated administrative hurdles. Steagall, et al. [2004] describe the administrative processes and questions that need to be answered when considering creating such programs. However, when faculty negotiate cooperative agreements, they focus on academics because that is what they know best. However, when programs move from exchange to double degree, the partners ostensibly move from dating to marriage. Furthermore, sustaining such programs offers different challenges. Faculty and staff who originally created the program will eventually change positions or retire, and the long-term sustainability of the program might not be assured. Changing accreditation requirements in one country might create conflicts difficult to resolve. Perhaps most critically, the amount of time and energy required to make such programs successful is enormous. How can Partner Institutions minimize the impact of these issues and still maintain a high-quality program?

COOPERATIVE ACCREDITED GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

In the late 1990s a number of Business Schools around the globe were developing collaborative relationships. Steagall et al. [2004] suggested that of the business schools accredited by AACSB International^e, the premier accrediting body for business schools worldwide, only ten offered truly double-degree programs. Not all of these collaborations involved a US partner. The new millennium saw AACSB enhance its support for both internationalization of its brand and collaboration and development of double-degree programs. In 2009, AACSB had accredited 566 Business Schools globally. A review of the websites of these Business Schools revealed that 75 (13.25%) listed double-degree programs in business.

THE GLOBALMBA PROGRAM

The case study of the 10-year-old GlobalMBA consortium is presented to shed light on how to sustain cooperative degree programs. Common sense can often facilitate finding a solution, were it not so commonly uncommon. Some issues are presented to alert consortia institutions contemplating the creation of cooperative degree programs to the challenges they might have to face. In other instances, a specific recommendation based on the GlobalMBA experience is presented. Before describing that program, the next section describes the proliferation of cooperative accredited graduate business degree programs.

The GlobalMBA program (<http://GlobalMBA.unf.edu>, or see the appendix) is a four-semester, 66-credit (US), and cohort-based program offered by a four-university consortium that includes the following:

Cologne University of Applied Sciences (CUAS), Germany
University of Warsaw (UW), Poland
Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (DUFE), China
University of North Florida (UNF), USA.

In this cohort program beginning in Germany, a maximum of ten students from each university study together for one semester at each university. The curriculum includes internationally oriented courses, a course on *Applied Intercultural Communication* and the *National/Regional Business Environment* course taught in every country. The program language is English. There are no electives. Graduates earn a UNF MBA, a joint Master of Arts degree from the two EU partners and a certificate of participation from DUFE. For details on the history of this program, see Steagall, et al. [2004].

The GlobalMBA began in 2001 as a three-school consortium that included CUAS, UNF and the University of Provence. UW joined the consortium in 2005. The University of Provence left the program in 2006 and DUFE joined the consortium in 2007, making the trans-Atlantic program truly global.

The GlobalMBA operates on the basis of bilateral exchange agreements. Every semester, students pay tuition to their home university, even when they study at the partner universities abroad. This means that students continue paying the *home university tuition*. It also means that US students' tuition is significantly higher than the tuition of international student peers from partner schools. US students are aware of this before the program begins. All students receive information explaining that national tax and budget structures account for the differences in tuition among partner schools.

One hundred forty-eight students have graduated from its inception through 2010. Perhaps the best indicator of success is that students did remarkably well finding jobs after graduation until the 2008 economic crisis. GlobalMBA graduates have been successful climbing the corporate ladder. One might argue that there is self-selection here, since ambitious, risk-taking students are both more likely to enroll in the GlobalMBA and to succeed in business. However, feedback from alumni indicates that they value the program highly. Indeed, UNF views the program to have been so successful that it launched the bilingual double-degree Ibero-AmericanMBA Program with partners in Argentina and Spain in the spring of 2010.^f

The remainder of this paper examines the challenges the GlobalMBA consortium has faced during its second five years of existence and offers advice based on its response to these challenges. The next section identifies those factors the authors believe to have been most essential for the program's success.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL COOPERATIVE DEGREE PROGRAM

Faculty members often consider the design of the curriculum for a new international degree program as the most difficult part of the process. The GlobalMBA experience has shown that solving the administrative and student-services challenges that cooperative programs pose requires much more attention and energy.

How can the administrative and student-service challenges be successfully met? While it might seem trite, the key to a successful program lies in the quality of the people who run the program and in the strength of their personal relationships. They must be enthusiastic about the program, they must be willing and able to travel to the partner institutions and their superiors must allow them to do so. It is

relatively easy for faculty members to obtain permission and funding to travel abroad annually to develop and administer the program. However, many universities do not afford staff the same opportunity. Indeed, FIPSE's Atlantis program⁹, which funds exchange and cooperative-degree consortia, has identified staff travel as a best practice and requires members to include this in their budgets. The information age's communications advantages have not replaced the effectiveness of face-to-face problem solving. Once counterparts develop personal relationships through periodic meetings, long-distance solutions are easier to implement. In the case of the GlobalMBA, issues left unanswered during face-to-face discussions become increasingly difficult to manage and to resolve by email and telephone communication.

A less obvious, but critical, benefit of student-services staff travel and participation in administrative consortium meetings is the experience and understanding they have of student-service issues. Faculty directors often are unfamiliar with the details of students' lives, their frustrations with travel, registration, financial aid, adjusting to a new living environment, etc. Student-services personnel, in contrast, know students better and understand their concerns and needs well. Examples of important, but often ignored nuance, include coordinating the academic calendar abroad with the home institution's financial aid calendar; setting orientation meetings at the home institution well before students go abroad,^h arranging orientation meetings at partner schools prior to the start of classes. Student-services staff are often the first to learn about problems at the partner institutions and can work with their colleagues abroad to find a student friendly solution. The student-services person provides travel and coursework advice to students and assists in setting expectations. Students are often willing to confide their academic or cultural concerns to student-services personnel and ask for problem solving assistance related to living abroad. After visiting all partner institutions, student-service personnel will be able to present and promote the program to prospective students and parents.

Sending student-services staff abroad may create tensions with those who are not chosen to travel. Some staff members might consider travel as a prerequisite and will want to have "their turn" going abroad. Dealing straightforwardly with this situation is important. A clear job description should delineate the differences between staff responsible for an international cooperative degree program and those responsible for on-campus programs. In addition the administration could explore other ways to provide the latter staff members with international experiences. At the authors' university, this has happened primarily by funding advisors and other staff members to participate in short-term, faculty-led study abroad courses. One side benefit of such a policy is that the staff members, if they have significant student contact, become excellent recruiters, helping to build the number of students engaging in all types of study abroad experiences. Having visited partner institutions, advisors and career services personnel are more likely to promote study abroad opportunities.

CHALLENGES

Challenges fall into four distinct categories: program staffing, inter-institutional communication, university policies and accreditation, and student recruitment. Superimposed are cultural differences, both societal and educational.

PROGRAM STAFFING

An important requirement for success of the program is that each university identify and appoint an academic program director and a student-services professional, two individuals as the skill sets required to do the job well are quite different. The original third partner in the GlobalMBA, for budgetary reasons, was unable to assign a student-services person to the program. As a result, the academic program director had to also do the job of the student-services professional, a task that few individuals are capable of fulfilling. Most faculty do not have the inclination, or the time, to help students matriculate, find housing, or deal with the realities of living in a foreign country. Further, due to the individual (at the partner that dropped out) wearing too many hats, students often feel that the program leader is inaccessible, which sends an institutional message to students that they are not important. Every partner should ensure that it has adequate staffing to provide all of the student services necessary for a well-functioning program. From where can a university get such staff?

Professional advising staffs—at universities with those personnel—are obvious candidates from which to draw. When faculty are the advisors, the university's international center and/or career services staff could be the student-services professional. This individual should have the program as a major job

priority—it cannot be merely one more thing to track. Hence, it is recommended that programs have a person in a staff role take on the student-services professional responsibility.

When selecting the academic program director and the student-services professional, several factors are critical. Importantly, each school clearly has a shared vision between the academic program leader and the student-services professional. Any cooperative program will experience misunderstandings and/or conflicts between partners. Faculty and staff at all institutions must be supportive of each other and be comfortable in knowing when they need to consult before answering a query either from a partner, a current student, prospective student or alumnus. They must be timely and responsive. Often, the time differences (not to mention cultural variation in what "promptness" entails) inherent in international cooperation make deadlines shorter than they might otherwise be. Moreover, in some cultures, very little notice might be given at the home institution (and often such deadlines are set by higher-level administrators who do not understand the realities of international cooperation), which requires its partners to provide quick turnarounds. Academic program leaders in this type of environment have to be willing to accept a "high touch" level of interaction. Unfortunately students often wait until the last minute or after a deadline to send an email so waiting several days often won't work. Academic program leaders have to be prepared for supporting their students both at home and abroad on a regular basis.

Particularly for the student-services professional, those with personal study abroad experience are strongly preferred, since they can best understand the challenges that students will face. In addition, they can offer solutions from personal experiences. Further, staff members with a background in student development theory are more likely to anticipate multicultural issues than be forced to react to student challenges posed by a highly dynamic learning environment.

Both faculty and student-services administrators must also be problem solvers. Each partner university will have its own procedures, values and assumptions about what is appropriate and what is not. Often, these perspectives clash. Analogously, every institution has its particular accreditation requirements to follow. In some cases an institution might have two or three supervisory bodies to satisfy (e.g., in the US these might be the state government or private university's board of trustees, the regional accrediting body and AACSB International).

Program leadership is perhaps the most important factor in sustainability. In the GlobalMBA case, challenges for one of the original partners occurred when the academic program director took a new position and eventually led to the school's withdrawal from the program. It is, perhaps, human nature to want to keep control of one's creation. This can be particularly true when one develops close friendships with counterparts at partner universities, and the desire is certainly enhanced when periodic international travel is tied to program leadership. However, it is essential that leadership development for transition always be on the radar screen. There is not always an obvious person to take over for the academic program director; often, someone must be recruited. Given that compensation is typically minimal, finding any interested party, much less one with the right set of skills, can be daunting.

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Communication via email is the standard operating procedure for international programs, just as it has become SOP for on-campus programs. However, communication in the international program becomes more difficult for several reasons. Although Trevino, et al. [2000] suggest the need for multiple types of communication, email solves the vast majority of GlobalMBA issues. Although culturally all partners and students must embrace this medium as time-sensitive in many cases. First, communication protocols must be initiated in student orientations and agreed upon by all partners during face-to-face meetings. Moreover, working to ensure that shared communication values continue during a transition in staffing need to be handled sensitively, yet are critical for long-term success. Trying to resolve time-sensitive issues when one partner doesn't respond to emails can cripple a program. For this reason, it is recommended to use email, including scanned documents, that are accepted as originals, rather than rely on physical international mail systems. The use of the fax machine other than for scanning has all but disappeared. Time matters more in multiple ways. In addition to time zone differences, universities in different countries operate on different academic calendars.

Also, in most countries, when the university is not offering classes, the faculty and staff are also unavailable. Cultural perceptions on what constitutes a timely response to an inquiry also vary tremendously. To ensure efficient communication, the GlobalMBA program has identified several strategies. First, academic program directors and student-services professionals should exchange personal, not just work, emails and phone numbers (including mobile phone numbers, though in some

countries even incoming calls can be quite expensive and might not be reimbursed). Certain issues cannot be resolved via email, and partners need to agree that they can be solved through phone calls or made part of the agenda at face-to-face meetings. They must also agree that their counterparts may contact them even when they are technically on holiday, and commit to helping solve problems when on vacation. Again, in the US culture, this solution seems trivial. However, in other cultures, these requests can be significant impositions. Being explicit about them up front is essential for success. At the end of the day, the importance of the word "partner" cannot be overemphasized. Second, the authors' university hosts a BlackBoard™ site on which all program administrators have posting access. Therefore, important shared documents remain accessible for everyone at all times, and administrators need not worry about where a document they received by email some months earlier might be. The host institution also backs up the site in case documents are inadvertently lost or modified. A separate BlackBoard™ site contains student documents and allows direct communication between any administrator and the students. Further, although multiple teaching styles and methods are appropriate as part of the cultural training that underpins the program, a single collaborative learning platform should be used in order to simplify challenges for students and reduce the likelihood of having conflicting information.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND ACCREDITATION

As mentioned above, each university has its normal procedures, rules, guidelines, etc. Often, these are informed by accreditation requirements, but occasionally they have simply become ingrained processes. Clearly, a multi-school program has no chance for success unless all institutions are willing to be open-minded regarding these constraints. This is not to suggest that universities can, or even should, relax any rule that stands in the way of international cooperation. However, without a win-win, problem-solving approach by administrators, cooperative degree programs should not be sought. The first recommendation, then, is for the program developers to educate the appropriate administrators about such differences and to proactively provide solutions to administrative obstacles. Again, since personal relationships are important, an effort should be made to connect key administrators to visiting consortium delegations whenever possible. Inviting them to important program events (e.g., thesis defenses, alumni gatherings) can also help in this process. In this area, the key characteristic of success is flexibility. US accreditation processes are often years in the planning involving data collection and documentation. Processes in other countries may be more *ad hoc*, and as a result, all participants must be flexible and prepared to respond to requests in an immediate manner if the situation requires it.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The purpose of cooperative international degree programs is to provide a unique educational experience for appropriate students. Although student participation should be a no-brainer (at least from the viewpoint of the faculty who created the program), in practice, student recruitment is a difficult challenge. In the case of the GlobalMBA, the program requires that students commit to a fifteen-month program of study, during which they will be out of the country for approximately eleven months. While abroad, students will not be able to work. Students need someone to spend time helping them think through their specific issues and make a good decision whether to apply to the program. Students are also weighing the financial burden of being abroad for a significant amount of time in comparison with a local MBA program. They are also very concerned about the level of support services that will be available to them while abroad. A large piece of the recruitment is talking to students about what to expect in the program (e.g., classroom environment, academic challenges, and cross-cultural teaching styles) but also the social aspect (e.g., finding housing, making friends, and feeling at home while abroad.) The authors' university has tried various models, but only when it assigned student recruitment to one individual did it meet its 10-student enrollment target regularly. The recruiter is also the student-services professional for the program. Most students don't know if they are strong enough to apply for a program like the GlobalMBA. Much of the recruiter's job is to follow up (several months after initial phone calls) with students who have expressed an interest in the program. Students perceive that the level of attention and service they receive in the application/recruitment process parallels the service they will receive once they are accepted into the program. This level of interaction between the recruiter and the prospect helps facilitate the transition from prospect to student once a student is accepted into the program. A side benefit of this model is that the students who apply to the program are certain that they want to be in it, contributing to a high acceptance rate when offers are made. The added advantage to this model is that the recruiter can be the coach, advocate and, most importantly, screener. Because the recruiter is not involved in selecting

and interviewing candidates, the GlobalMBA has not experienced any conflict of interest in the decision-making process. Moreover, the profile of GlobalMBA students has improved, and the number of substandard candidates that are not offered interviews has declined. Most importantly, this has led to a higher yield rate of application and acceptance from prospects.

One issue that had come up periodically was that recruiters at the various partners were allegedly giving different information to their groups of students than their counterparts provided. This practice contributed to student confusion and frustration. To solve the problem, the authors' university created and hosts the official program website. Although each university has created its own country-specific promotional website, these sites have a marketing purpose only. They link to the official site for informational content. The aforementioned confusion and frustration is now a thing of the past. The website was more important for recruiting than for admitted students. For this reason <http://GlobalMBA.unf.edu> only contains recruiting materials; all detailed programmatic information has been moved to the BlackBoard™ site. The key is that as soon as a student is admitted by any of the partners, UNF must get them a user ID so that they can begin to access materials through BlackBoard™.

One obstacle to recruitment by non-US universities is the entrance exam. In the GlobalMBA, this is the GMAT due to the US business-school's policy. Foreign students taking the GMAT presents three problems. First, in some countries the exam is offered only rarely and then only in one or two major cities per country. This means that taking (and, if necessary, retaking) the exam is both expensive and inconvenient. While those attributes imply that only those who are serious candidates will take the exam, it also means that some students who might otherwise excel on the exam never take it. Second, the exam fee is high, particularly for those in developing countries. Although most of them would pay the fee if they knew they would be admitted to the program, some are wary of paying so much when they can be excluded from the program (due to a ten-student limit for each university) even if they do well. Third, the objective style of the exam is atypical in many educational cultures, so that bright students might not do well the first time or two that they sit for the GMAT. There are also allegations that the GMAT is culturally biased in favor of US students [Dobson, et al. 1999]. The GlobalMBA, driven largely by the US business school, has decided to live with these drawbacks. However the current controversy over the GMAT [c.f. Damast, 2009; Lagorio, 2008] has led the US partner to accept the GRE as an alternative beginning for the fall of 2010. Although this does not solve the problem, it gives students more options. Further, the University of Warsaw, which offers a separate executive MBA in Warsaw in cooperation with the University of Illinois, has created a separate admissions examination for Polish students seeking admission for that program. A related issue is how high to set the minimum GMAT scores for admission. In the GlobalMBA, that score is the same as the minimum for the US on-campus MBA program. The rationale is that setting the score higher might keep out even more good foreign students, while setting it lower might incorrectly signal that the program is of lower quality than the on-campus MBA. Every year the program directors discuss the Warsaw model as an alternative, yet with four schools participating, it makes this more problematic, as does the potential for having different admission criteria for the same program. For this reason, the US-based alternatives remain in place.

Since the program is taught exclusively in English, there is also a question of how to verify the English proficiency of potential candidates. One option is an exam such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL™). However, given the high trust factor among the GlobalMBA academic program directors and the desire to avoid additional costs for foreign students, the academic program directors verify English proficiency as part of each admissions process. No problems have resulted, in part because business students abroad are typically well schooled in English.

OTHER ISSUES

US students are accustomed to having a substantial student-services safety net to support them. Students abroad often are not, and thus their universities tend not to have such systems. Although this is ameliorated somewhat by assigning a student-services professional to the program, there is a strong need to educate both sets of students about which services they should expect to have available at each location. Moreover, the GlobalMBA assignment is typically on top of the other job requirements for the student-services professional, implying that they have little time to devote to handholding, and it is therefore critical that committed staff become engaged.

Given that academic program director and student-services professional travel is recommended and that university budgets are becoming ever tighter, the GlobalMBA charges a flat program fee to every student in the program. The main function of the program is to fund such travel, although it also helps to

fund student activities, such as a weekend intercultural communications workshop that doubles as an icebreaker early in the first term in Germany. For the most part, these are fixed costs so that the per-student fee is low. Collection and administration of the fee was problematic for some partner universities, so the authors' university now collects the fees from all students and processes reimbursements for academic program directors and student-services professionals from all four partners.

High-profile international programs are often the subject of criticism by those not involved. Therefore, it is in the interests of the program to stay in contact with alumni and to follow their careers. Doing so also provides useful information (e.g., starting salaries, job descriptions, career paths) for student recruitment. Unfortunately, given the global nature of the student body, staying in touch can be difficult. The GlobalMBA program has solved this, at least temporarily, through the German partner. They submitted a grant proposal to the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and received funding to host alumni conferences. The funding covered not only the venue and events, but also provided some alumni with travel stipends. Three events have now occurred, with a high percentage of alumni participating and sharing information with one another and with the GlobalMBA program.

Job placement remains a challenge. Although most students have had jobs upon graduation, the fact that students are all at the US institution for the final term makes it difficult for those seeking jobs abroad to find them. For foreign students seeking to extend their visas to work in the US, there is another set of challenges. They must restructure their resumes in the US style, and must also learn how to interview properly. Fortunately, the US University's business school has its own Career Management Center (CMC). GlobalMBA staff have worked with CMC staff to ensure that when GlobalMBA students meet with CMC staff, their particular needs can be met.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Developing double-degree programs that are sustainable is hard work. However, it is rewarding work, which provides unique educational experiences for students. In Figure 1, the authors offer as guiding principles "Top Ten Lessons Learned for Sustaining an International Degree Program" that are likely to be helpful. Perhaps the most important lesson that the students, academic program directors and student-services professionals have learned is that the level of learning in cooperative programs is greater than in any other program. Perhaps the biggest lesson that we learned is how important it is to only engage in these types of programs with partners that you want to work closely with on a sustained basis; you need to share common goals for the program and there must be an institutional commitment to the program that goes beyond any single individual. Develop and maintain mutual respect for one another for when times get tough—and they will. Partners can work through the challenges together. All partners need to communicate and appreciate that communication requires cultural adaptation in certain cases. Although as academics we always have learning goals for our students, we often fail to create these for ourselves. In this respect, program developers need to be adaptable and flexible to each other's needs. These programs are a marriage and therefore longevity will only occur with compromise. Not compromise in quality but compromise in perspective. In order to be successful, programs of this type must constantly look at the view from the other side. The importance of student-services professionals has been emphasized throughout the foregoing discussion. Perhaps this is the lesson that is most important not to learn the hard way. Only through having program leadership that takes the view of the student first and foremost, will sustainability be achieved.

Figure 1: Top Ten Lessons Learned for Sustaining an International Degree Program

1. Get to know all partners before starting; remember to think of this relationship as a marriage.
2. Insist that each partner identify at least two committed program leaders to guarantee a smooth transition in case of personnel changes.
3. Insist that each school have one full-time academic program director and a full-time student-services professional.
4. Insist that each partner have more than one faculty member who can teach each course in the language of the program to cover sabbaticals or personnel changes.
5. Persuade the department(s) at each partner institution to view the program as a long-term, worthwhile investment.
6. Develop personal relationships with all partners.
7. Know when communication by email works and when it does not.
8. Meet face-to-face on a regular basis.
9. Communicating openly is essential.
10. Appreciate each other's culture, accreditation and priorities.

Appendix: **GlobalMBA Curriculum**

University & Term Dates	Course Title	Credits toward Degree	
		UNF MBA	European Masters
University of Applied Sciences Oct – Jan	Global Economics and Thesis Seminar	3	
	International Management Accounting	3	
	Business Strategy and Game Theory		3
	Intercultural Communication		3
	Business Environment: Germany		3
	Applied Intercultural Communication: Germany		3
University of Warsaw Feb – June	International Management		3
	International Marketing		3
	Advanced Financial Management	3	
	Organizational Theory	3	
	Management Information Systems	3	
	Business Environment: Poland		3
	Applied Intercultural Communication: Poland		3
Dongbei University of Finance and Economics June – Aug	Applied Intercultural Communication: China		3
	Business Environment: China		3
	International Finance		3
University of North Florida Aug – Dec	Applied Intercultural Communication: US	3	
	Making Decisions with Data	3	
	Modeling and Management of Operations	3	
	Business Environment: United States	3	
	Advanced Business Policy	3	
Throughout Program	Thesis		
Total Credits		30	33

Endnotes

^a This is “the EU’s flagship education and training programme...,” http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm.

^b <http://eurostudiengang.tripod.com/>.

^c This is a process signed by the European Union on June 19, 1999 to coordinate and collaborate in setting higher education priorities in Europe. <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/Bologna/>.

^d For details see <http://www2.ed.gov/FIPSE>.

^e AACSB International was organized in 1916 by seventeen leading American colleges and universities.

The new organization began its accreditation function in 1919 when it adopted its first standards for business degree programs. AACSB standards for programs in accountancy were established in 1980, with new standards and a peer review process adopted in 1991. By 2002, AACSB International membership included about 650 American institutions of higher education, nearly 200 institutions of higher education in forty-nine foreign countries, and about fifty corporate and nonprofit organizations around the world. Formerly known as the International Association for Management Education or American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, the association officially changed its name to AACSB International–The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business in April 2001.

[AACSB International - Program, History - Business, Education, Management, Programs, Association, and Schools](http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1719/AACSB-International.html#ixzz1LKlz2I00) <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1719/AACSB-International.html#ixzz1LKlz2I00>

^f Details of this program can be found at <http://ibero-americanmba.unf.edu/>.

^g U.S. applicants may apply as a single institution or as a consortium of institutions for projects in all disciplines. Since 1995 a total of 162 transatlantic consortia have been funded involving more than 850 European and United States institutions of higher education and vocational education and training. More than 5000 U.S. and EU students have completed programs of study abroad with these consortia projects. Total awards range from two to five years for up to \$456,000 and €428,000. <http://www.h-net.org/announce/show.cgi?ID=173193>. (c.f. http://ec.europa.eu/education/eu-usa/doc1156_en.htm).

^h This may not seem like anything significant but when students are recruited from throughout a country or region and the program starts outside the cohort’s country or region, coordination and managing student expectations is critical.

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