

# Universities, Cultures, and Communication:

Improving Europe as a study abroad destination by improving inter-institutional cooperation.



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“A campus at the heart of Europe”

*World Changers Shaped Here*



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# With study abroad, the starting point is difference.

Differences between American and European university systems

Differences in their societal and cultural context

“Physician, heal thyself”: Universities can learn inter-cultural skills as they urge their students to do.

# What are we hoping to accomplish?

Identify constraints and limitations on both sides. What can be changed, what cannot?

Can the transatlantic partner help?

Goal: Equal, partner-like relations between US and European universities.

Method: A constructively critical look at current practice.

# Some significant differences between the two systems

	EUROPE	USA
ROOTS	Home of the university since 1200.	Major development since 1950.
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	Inter-university relations part of what defines a university since 1200.	Post-war development <i>replaced</i> need to go to Europe for university.
STUDY AWAY	Since the beginning. Students follow host curriculum.	Diminished with growth of US system. Now: depends whom one asks.
TYPE OF SYSTEM	Centralized (including de-centralization)	Individual institutional sovereignty (except for accreditation!)

# More differences

	EUROPE	USA
FINANCING	Centralized. Low level of funding.	Highly varied sources and uneven levels.
CURRICULAR APPROACH	Highly-structured programs / foundational courses.	Student choice within required lines / monographic courses (electives).
PEDAGOGY/EVALUATION	Formal. Knowledge-transmission.	Using/applying new material.
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE	Minor importance.	Great importance.



# The big difference

EUROPE: When in Rome, do as the Romans (with the help of the ECTS).

USA: Before going to Rome, worry a lot about curriculum integration and equivalencies.

# Tendency in 2016

The USA is turning more to the world.

EUROPE is turning more to Europe.

# 21st Century Study Abroad: Controlling the Curriculum

From International Cooperation and Articulation Agreements to:

- Curricular Integration
- US Student Programs Abroad

# Historical Issues for US Institutions

- Proliferation of Programs
- Standards
- Academic Credibility
- Registrar and Faculty Perspective on Foreign Study
- Economics

# US undergraduates who want to study abroad now need to consider:

- Time to Degree
- Residency Requirement
- Plan of Study that incorporates foreign courses
- Major, Minor & General Education Requirements
- Pre-professional requirements: pre-med, business, law
- Cost (Opportunity/Dollars)

# Solution 1: US Faculty-led Programs

Requirements/constraints:

- Provider/ foreign university
- Faculty availability
- Higher cost to students
- US office support



# Solution 1: US Faculty-led Programs

## Supposed Advantages:

- Control Curriculum
- Academic Strengths
- Meet student needs
- Involve own faculty

# Solution 2: US Campuses Abroad

Requirements/constraints:

- Financial investment
- Legal, HR
- Favorable conditions in host country
- US standards apply

# Solution 2: US Branch Campuses Abroad

## Supposed Advantages:

- Institutional Reputation
- Faculty participation
- US university is global
- US education with international student body

# Solution 3: Institutional Partnerships

Requirements/constraints:

- Like Academic Cultures
- Reciprocity
- Course Recognition Strategy

# Solution 3: Institutional Partnerships

Supposed Advantages:

- Peers study across cultures
- Multilateral programming

# Local Partners: An Evolving Role

- Mediating cultural difference
- Translating credits, analyzing academic needs
- Identifying institutional constraints
- Supporting the possible
- Managing the essential (contracts, student visas)



# Conclusions

1. Strong inter-institutional relations are grounded in mutual respect between partners including respect for differing institutional goals and philosophies.
2. Years of attempting curricular integration has not increased the number of students able to participate in study abroad. Short term, faculty led programs have, but their cost, labor-intensity and weak outcomes in certain categories limit their future.
3. Future lies in cooperative ventures wherein each side expands on its strengths, offers partnerships drawing on those strengths and innovates in directions in which it wants to grow.

# A European perspective: Université Catholique de Lille

Thumbnail profile:

- Private institution founded in 1875
- 26,000 full-time students in various schools and faculties
- Focus on personal support and development for its students
- High level of internationalization

# Internationalization : Why?

Our goals reflect the internationalization strategy of most French and continental EU universities

(surveys by IAU, International Association of Universities and EAIE)

- Improving the quality of teaching and learning
- Preparing students to live and work in a globalized world

# Internationalization: how?

## Internationalization at home:

- An international classroom (6,000 international students from over 100 countries)
- Internationalized curriculum, to ensure internationalization for all
- Large offering of classes and curricula in English
- Intercultural communication and third foreign language compulsory in most curricula

# Internationalization: how?

Increasing international student mobility :

- More than 1,600 students abroad through exchange programs
- More than 2,400 students abroad for internships
- 430 international partner institutions including 350 Erasmus partners and 18 US partner universities

**Our challenge is the mobility imbalance**

# How to facilitate cooperation?

From a task-focused to a more relation-focused approach to address:

- substantial differences between USA and EU higher education systems, procedures and funding
- diversity of institutional cultures, expectations





# Barriers to overcome:

1. Funding and regulatory constraints
2. Academic constraints
3. Language proficiency

# 1. Finances

The cost of a semester or year abroad is a stumbling block for many students

- French students do not expect the high cost of health insurance, housing, meal plans in the USA
- US students often study part time and cannot afford to leave their jobs

## 2. Academic constraints

- Selecting courses:
  - Course catalog not available before the beginning of classes
  - Syllabi are not updated
  - Less flexibility in choice of courses (“set menu” vs “à la carte”)
- Transferring credits:
  - ECTS based on workload vs credits based on contact hours

# Course recognition strategy

- Agree on pre-approved tracks
- Organize clusters of 2-3 ECTS courses to meet the transfer requirement of 3 US credits equivalent to 6 ECTS credits
- Customized semester-long courses:
  - A combination of classes taken with French students, and seminars and site visits targeted at students from the partner university

# 3. Language proficiency for incoming students

Our objectives:

- Lowering the threshold for non French majors
- Welcoming students across fields of study

# Language proficiency

- Large offering of courses and curricula taught in English
- Possibility to combine courses in French and in English
- French language courses available at all levels
- Specific courses taught in French for international students

# More options: Co-organization of summer programs

- Summer or short programs developed together:
- Students can “taste the water” before deciding to come back for a semester or a year
- Faculty members and international office staff members develop a closer cooperation
- A way to reduce the imbalance in exchange student numbers

# More options: Dual degrees

- Dual degrees at Bachelor's and Master's level:

Such degrees have to be built on mutual trust and cooperation, which require time to develop in order to guarantee sustainability



# Asymmetries and Constraints

Three asymmetries:

1. Financial - home tuition fees dramatically different on either side of the Atlantic.

Solution found: home-tuition exchange via the Utrecht network towards 13 Mid-America Universities (MAUI).

Disadvantage: 10 places available for 45,000 students.

**Franz Luthi**

Professor and Director of  
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of The University of  
Strasbourg

# Asymmetries and Constraints

Three asymmetries:

2. American Expectations - US students paying home tuition expect more services.

US students assume that a high service level is part of university education.

Comment: Should pre-departure preparation include adjusting expectations in order to get MORE not less out of the experience?

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of micro-management of student problems once abroad.

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# Asymmetries and Constraints

Three asymmetries:

3. European Expectations - many more European students want to go abroad than American students.

Result: imbalanced exchanges, and US universities that cancel the agreement because expensive (in terms of tuition fees not collected).

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# Asymmetries and Constraints

Administrative constraint in the French university system:

Tradition of separation of public and private spheres makes it impossible -- for example -- to contract with non-public or non-university actors.

Solution: Chronic underfunding of the French university is forcing administrative/financial liberalization.

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# Unequal Exchange

1. Unequal basis:
  - a. Superiority (expressed or unexpressed)
  - b. Treat host university like a service provider
2. Unequal objectives
  - a. European students: when in Rome...
  - b. US universities micro-manage students' sojourn but according to home university habits

Comments: The US model is not THE model in the eyes of Europeans but one model among others.  
Should US universities objective for their students become simply to participate in the European university experience?

## Spokesperson

For a renowned European university, linked to many top US universities.

# Universities, Cultures, and Communication:

## Questions for breakout discussions

<b>Identifying institutional constraints</b>	<b>Communication/ Relations</b>	<b>Goals - Contracts</b>	<b>Towards the Future</b>
What type?	What is the tone of communication?	Are goals the same on both sides? If not, is it a problem?	What improvements need to be made?
In Europe? In US?	Communication is at what level(s)?	Do contracts help? Room for improvement?	A role for local actors?
Can/cannot be alleviated, lowered?	How to improve relations?	Exchanges: Is added value the same on both sides?	Would best practices for international relations be useful? The same for both systems (US-Eur)?
Can the international partner help?			