

# **Globalization of a Marketing Department via Faculty Development: Faculty Participating with EMBA Students in an International Exchange Week**

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*The AACSB accreditation body sees an increasing importance for business schools to develop a global mindset. One way of globalizing a business school is to offer short-term international faculty exchange programs to help educators bring a fresh global perspective back to the classroom. A qualitative study was performed on faculty who participated in one such program. Results revealed an increase in international research collaborations among faculty, new knowledge of challenges & insights about the host country within the faculty's area of expertise, and first-hand perspectives of business via company visits. Experiences, implications, and suggestions for future programs are discussed.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The benefits of global exposure are priceless. It offers not only a glimpse into new possibilities, new perspectives, and new ways of doing things, but also an understanding of why other systems and people operate differently than we do. It allows for the expansion of minds and judgment reduction. The world and how it operates begins to make more sense with each new international experience.

Many EMBA programs have partner institutions abroad (Cornell University's Graduate School of Management with Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business in China, University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School with INSEAD, UCLA's Anderson School of Management with Recanti School in Tel Aviv, and hundreds more). These partnerships allow for EMBA students to spend a period of time abroad with the partnering schools. During the exchange, students get a chance to meet their peers from other international business schools, tour local businesses, attend lectures from local professors, listen to guest speakers (often prominent businessmen/businesswomen), take cultural excursions, etc.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) sees the importance of globalization and expects this of schools applying for accreditation. A passage from their handbook Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation (2017) states, "The school [applying for accreditation] fosters sensitivity toward and greater understanding and acceptance of cultural differences and global perspectives. Graduates should be prepared to pursue business or management careers in a diverse global context. Students should be exposed to cultural practices different than their own" (p. 7). William H. Glick, former chair of the AACSB International Board of Directors and former Dean of Jones Graduate School of Business at Rice University said, "...developing the global mindset and effective approaches to inclusion and diversity will become increasingly important for the future of business schools and businesses" (Glick, 2016).

There are many ways to globalize a business school: Offer classes on the topic, invite guest lecturers, offer student exchange programs, and offer faculty exchange programs. According to Clinebell & Kvedaraviciene (2013), the latter as a globalization method is often overlooked. Investing in faculty cultural development pays dividends in the classroom. Cynthia Miglietti of Bowling Green State University affirms, “Research has shown that the experience abroad helps educators to gain a more global perspective that will enhance business classes” (2015).

For this paper, the author will discuss one particular international faculty exchange program currently in operation, and offer feedback/insights discovered from its evaluation for the benefit of one interested in establishing such a program.

## **SAMPLE FACULTY EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

The EMBA Consortium for Global Business Innovation (<http://embaconsortium.org/>) has a week-long international exchange program which was traditionally solely for EMBA students/alumni, but has since been expanded to include business faculty with the goal of faculty forming connections that transcend borders. This particular Consortium is comprised of ten universities from around the world who participate in offering conceptual and experiential business activities for consortium members during “International Week.” During this exchange, the visiting faculty participate in the same program as the students do, with the only exception being the exchange faculty ambassadors are obliged to give a research presentation on a topic of their choosing to the host faculty.

### **International Exchange Program Framework**

This particular international exchange program is only one week in duration. (Having an international exchange program that is only one week long is quite conducive to work schedules and family obligations, thus making it an easier endeavor than a semester-long program, e.g.) The way it works is this. One faculty member from each of the ten consortium universities chooses a different university from within the consortium they’d like to visit. The host university pays for accommodations and the home university pays for airfare; other expenses incurred are paid for by faculty. The visiting faculty member is responsible for attending at least 50% of the International Week activities/lectures/corporate visits and giving a research presentation to host faculty.

The International Week activities consist of a formal welcome dinner, daily lectures by home professors and/or local businessmen, visits to companies/headquarters/factories, cultural outings, and a formal goodbye dinner. Since the visiting faculty member is only required to attend 50% of the activities, he/she may use the rest of the time to meet with other host faculty to discuss possible research collaborations or just to form potentially fruitful academic bonds.

## **EXPLORATORY STUDY USING FEEDBACK FROM THE FACULTY EXCHANGE**

A qualitative, exploratory research study was performed on the handful of faculty (n = 7) who attended the Consortium’s International Week in 2015 & 2017. The Consortium board of administrators were interested in faculty reactions to gauge effectiveness of the faculty exchange program. Six open-ended survey questions were administered. The questions inquired about participation, interactions, collaboration, value of the experience, ideas, and suggestions for improvement. Results showed 85% of the participants participated in more than 90% of the host school’s International Week activities, despite only being required to attend 50% of them. In addition to the planned activities, 71% of the participants discussed shared research interests and possible future research collaborations. Every faculty member found the program to be a valuable professional experience for them. Some of the comments included:

- “Since one of my research areas is product development with corporate social responsibility, those numerous company visits have substantially helped me understand the real life challenges and scopes related to the process of innovation. Moreover, personal conversations

with CEO/CFO and people at other managerial positions have helped me to chalk out a number of interesting research questions that I would pursue in near future.”

- “I gained much knowledge, insights and respect for the country, its education system, its industrial and financial system and its people. Many of the problems [this country] faces are similar to ours and the respective solutions are therefore applicable. The way that the [local] Business School actively engages with these issues and provide a creative educational approach was a great learning and professional experience of much practical value.”
- “I got insights not just into the challenges and rewards of doing business in the country, but also a greater understanding of the Host School.”
- “...understanding the culture better allows me to juxtapose our marketing methods to theirs offering greater insight for my students when explaining concepts that have cultural/international implications.”

Suggestions offered to enhance the program included: Having a good balance of company types for company visits, better preparing faculty on the expectations of the faculty exchange, incorporating the visiting faculty member into a lecture or discussion panel for the EMBA students, better organizing administrative issues (e.g., visas, times, transportation to/from airport, etc.), and adding more structure to the ambassador lecture with respect to topic, audience, duration, and format. Those considering implementing such a program in the future might heed these recommendations.

### **Benefits**

The overarching benefit is that this program assists in globalizing both the [marketing] department and business college, which is imperative to a business education (and is recommended by the accreditation body the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) (Solomon, 2016). Faculty develop intercultural competencies, ethno-relative attitudes, and a more creative mindset which can foster innovation (Birkin, Hughes, & Brennan, 2014). The pedagogical benefits are that, with international experience, faculty can not only better understand students in class of similar cultures, but they can also augment their lectures with additional perspectives and a less myopic view of their field of study. The research benefits include new collaborations, new ideas to add to the research stream, and new perspective on the cultural implications of one’s existing research.

### **CONCLUSION**

Results reveal that faculty overall found the international exchange program to be quite enriching. The vast majority attended nearly all lectures and corporate visits offered, citing their immense value. Most faculty discussed potential research collaborations and found the adventure sparked new ideas for research and new ideas for the classroom. No negative experiences were noted.

It is recommended that marketing departments, if not entire business colleges, institute an international faculty exchange program of similar framework and offer it at least once a year as part of ongoing faculty development. Those interested in developing such a program should solicit participation from faculty who are not well-traveled and from faculty who have been teaching for so long that their ideas have become stagnant. The best way to learn about business abroad (short of actually conducting business in a foreign country) is to listen to how/what faculty abroad teach, listen to business owners/employees, and visit the businesses to see for yourself. Faculty development via cultural exposure is valuable to all parties involved: The professor, the students, the college, and the host faculty who listen to the visiting scholar’s presentation. Joining/creating a program like the Consortium’s International Week would not only increase the globalization of the department, but could also add life/motivation into tired marketing professors who are lacking vim and vigor in their professional lives. Investing in cultural faculty development should no longer be overlooked as a method of department/college globalization.

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