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Robert J. Pampel

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## CHAPTER FOUR

# Intercultural Conversations: Honors-Led Partnerships to Engage International Students on Campus

ROBERT J. PAMPEL  
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

At a time when many universities are interested both in enrollment growth and the prestige of academic selectivity, international student recruitment and honors education emerge as popular strategic initiatives on college campuses. An influx of international students can enhance campus culture, fill enrollment gaps, and increase tuition revenue. Meanwhile, a selective undergraduate honors community serves as an exemplar of scholarship and distinction, which may attract academically talented students to the institution. On the surface, these trends appear unrelated. Lee notes, however, that international students are often motivated by institutional prestige and reputation when deciding to study in the United States (317), which suggests the seemingly parallel conversations on international student recruitment and honors education

may intersect after all. This chapter details potential points of intersection to demonstrate ways in which honors programs and colleges can engage international students at home in sustainable and culturally sensitive ways. In the second half of the chapter, I highlight Saint Louis University's (SLU) International Partnership Program, which emphasizes sustained conversations between honors and international students as part of a credit-bearing opportunity within the SLU Honors Program. I situate the program in the context of other honors internationalization efforts, discuss the challenges and opportunities this program presents, and provide data from inchoate efforts to assess the program's effects on students' intercultural competence and sense of global citizenship.

## **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION**

International students represent an increasingly larger share of enrollments at U.S. higher education institutions. The Institute of International Education reports there are 1,078,822 international students in the United States, primarily from China, India, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and other areas of the Global South ("Open Doors Data"). This number has grown nearly eighty-five percent in the last decade, reinforcing the importance of international students on U.S. college campuses. Institutions around the country—from large research institutions to small, private, liberal arts universities—have capitalized on this trend by emphasizing international students in their enrollment management plans.

The financial implications of these student movements are significant. The Institute of International Education estimates that international students contributed \$36.9 billion to the United States economy in the 2016–2017 academic year ("Open Doors Data"). Meanwhile, NAFSA: The Association of International Educators reports that international students support (directly or indirectly) over 450,000 jobs in the United States ("NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool"). In the state of Missouri alone, where my institution resides, nearly 23,000 international students contributed \$706 million to the statewide economy and supported over eight thousand jobs. These figures are impressive, and they drive

administrators at institutions of all kinds to invest heavily in international recruitment on their campuses.

When taken at face value, this financial strategy seems shrewd. As Altbach and Knight observe, institutions often turn to international students in their enrollment management efforts for the financial benefits they confer (292). Their contribution to the bottom line is difficult to overstate, especially at a time when state appropriations have declined and tuition discounting has become more and more common to attract domestic students (Ehrenberg 194–95). Jaschik reports that a large percentage of international students are considered “full pay,” meaning they finance the full cost of their attendance because they do not qualify for federal, state, or institutional aid. Even at institutions that have adopted merit-based aid mechanisms for international students, they often pay higher tuition and fees than their American counterparts. Stephens underscores this trend, reporting that international student recruitment has effectively kept some institutions “in the black” (Stephens).

Despite these encouraging trends, the argument in favor of international student recruitment is not ironclad. Indeed, much of the research on the benefits of international enrollment is found in periodicals that employ anecdotal examples of how international recruitment works at individual institutions (Fischer; Lewin). Cantwell breaks from this pattern in his study on international student enrollment and challenges the conventional wisdom on this topic. He examines data over a ten-year span at nearly five hundred research/doctoral and bachelor’s/master’s institutions around the country to determine whether institutions ultimately benefited from recruitment of international students. His conclusions suggest that research/doctoral institutions often realize higher net tuition revenues than their bachelor’s/master’s counterparts with respect to international students, but he notes that most institutions lack the “visibility, prestige, or programmatic offerings to attract large numbers of students from abroad” (Cantwell 522). Some, he argues, may incur net tuition revenue losses because of the costs associated with recruiting and retaining this cohort of students.

If Cantwell’s conclusions are accurate, what accounts for the rise in international student recruitment on U.S. college campuses

over the last half century? The answer stems, in part, from the efforts of a core group of stakeholders who value international student exchange beyond its financial implications. Smithee offers a helpful catalogue of these stakeholders to illustrate how they influence internationalization on college campuses. The United States government has historically played a critical role in this process. Policymakers control visa regulations and, in some cases, spearhead initiatives, such as International Education Week, that support efforts by higher education institutions to internationalize their campuses. This government intervention dates back several decades. President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" legislation included a bill designed to accompany the Higher Education Act that would have strengthened international ties in higher education. Although the International Education Act of 1966 was derailed by the Vietnam War, this stalled effort demonstrates the extent to which the government may support campus internationalization efforts for strategic purposes. Indeed, during the Cold War and post-9/11, many government-sponsored initiatives have promoted U.S. values and shored up U.S. "soft power" through educational programs, including the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, the Boren Fellowship, and the Critical Language Scholarship.

Other, more pragmatic reasons inform institutional support for internationalization efforts. Zumeta et al., for example, contend that students must possess intercultural competency skills to survive in the modern workforce. In response, many universities have undertaken massive efforts to internationalize their campuses as part of what Hudzik calls "comprehensive internationalization." Hudzik defines comprehensive internationalization as a phenomenon that includes not only international student recruitment but also "internationalizing" the curricula in academic programs to emphasize global themes, increasing international partnerships for research, encouraging more study abroad opportunities among students, and generally strengthening the global awareness of all university stakeholders.

Hudzik's framework relies on a network of campus services that support international students throughout their lives from

recruitment and their time on campus to after graduation. To achieve comprehensive internationalization and properly support international students, institutions must have a fully functioning international services office that can orient students to campus culture as well as to the U.S. more broadly. They must have physical space to accommodate new students, potentially in the form of dedicated residence halls and lounge spaces for international groups. They must also have faculty and staff members who are properly trained to instruct these new learners on campus. Support staff should include English as a Second Language (ESL) tutors, counselors with cultural competency and language skills, Designated School Officials (DSOs) and Responsible Officers (ROs) who understand visa regulations, and often an overarching chief international officer who can direct these internationalization efforts. Comprehensive internationalization also requires a consideration of how tuition revenues from international students will be allocated. What share of this money goes toward these support services? If international students are simply revenue drivers for other campus initiatives, the campus may not be able to support these students over the long term, which ultimately undermines enrollment growth and fiscal solvency.

These initiatives require investments in many areas, including faculty development, student and academic support services, and diversity training. Thus many scholars (Brennan and Dellow; Dewey and Duff) urge administrators to tread carefully in comprehensive internationalization waters. Absent faculty buy-in, campus infrastructure, and overall administrative leadership, perhaps in the form of a designated chief international officer, institutions may struggle to support their international populations. Of course, none of these initiatives come without a cost, and many of them carry considerable financial commitments. By taking these costs into account, one can understand Cantwell's conclusions regarding the financial risks of campus internationalization efforts.

Nevertheless, the general consensus seems to be that the recruitment and retention of international students are good things, and this process is where one may begin to make the connection to

honors education. Nightingale contends that intercultural awareness is critical to the development of responsible citizens in a globalized society. Both Andrews and Wolfensberger cite university honors programs and colleges as particularly fruitful venues in which to inculcate these cosmopolitan values because of their commitment to humanistic education. As Andrews writes, the brand of “enlightened thinking about the human condition” practiced in an honors context “feeds everything from the spread of recycling and organic farming to the celebration of diverse cultures and new forms of architecture and water wells for the poor” (7). One may conclude, based on these paeans to humanistic education, that internationalization of honors programs and colleges is a worthy goal.

### **COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION THROUGH HONORS**

Wolfensberger observes that honors programs and colleges have always served as laboratories for new kinds of learning, but that they must “invest in new, forward-thinking learning environments and teaching strategies” that account for a new generation of learners (281). Honors educators have succeeded in recent years in bolstering their study abroad options to promote global citizenship (Ransdell and Cobane). The NCHC’s previous monograph on international honors education, *Preparing Tomorrow’s Global Leaders: Honors International Education*, rightly celebrated the honors community’s success in short-term study abroad ventures, but the same spirit of innovation and cultural curiosity can drive honors internationalization initiatives on campus. There are many strategies a program or college might pursue to support an institution’s comprehensive internationalization efforts. In the sections that follow, I discuss a few of the ways honors programs have addressed this important challenge of “at home” internationalization by capitalizing on international student enrollment in the U.S.

Perhaps the most direct means of internationalizing an honors college or program is to admit international students. Such was the strategy of the Columbia College Honors Program under the guidance of Dr. John Zubizarreta. In an interview on Columbia’s internationalization efforts, Zubizarreta shared with me how

his program recruited several cohorts of students from Vietnam in recent years. These students were introduced to the institution by way of a former international student recruiter who was the spouse of someone in the upper administration. Thanks to this fortuitous connection and the administrative support to pursue an international recruitment strategy, the program enrolled sixteen Vietnamese students from 2014–2018.

Zubizarreta believes these students contributed in important ways to the intellectual community within the program. As an example, Zubizarreta cites his experience teaching a unit on heroes and mythology in an honors English class and describes how students from Asia offered cultural narratives that challenged traditional Western models. Students' willingness to share their diverse perspectives and life experiences enriched the discussion and opened American students' minds to alternative viewpoints. According to Zubizarreta, faculty and student affairs professionals also valued the international students' contributions to student life. Some international students even took on leadership roles, such as residence hall advisors, thereby extending their learning as well as the exposure for American students to international students beyond the classroom.

Although the Columbia College Honors Program did not undertake any systematic assessment of the Vietnamese students' experiences, Zubizarreta's close reading of the senior exit survey and his informal communication with graduates suggest the honors program had a salutary effect on them. Students reported satisfaction with the interdisciplinary nature of the program, the opportunities to publish or present their work at various honors conferences, and the structures to promote close-knit communities among fellow intellectually curious students. Based on Zubizarreta's review of the surveys, the Vietnamese cohort of students perceived the honors program as a central feature of their undergraduate education, and they appeared thankful for the distinctive intellectual and social opportunities afforded to them as honors students.

Zubizarreta concedes there were concomitant challenges to face when internationalizing an honors program in this fashion. Like many other honors communities, the Columbia College



Honors Program promotes critical reflection, integrative writing, and collaborative research activity. Anecdotally, Zubizarreta notes, these kinds of activities and projects challenged international students who were not accustomed to this approach to teaching and learning. Additionally, Zubizarreta shared that some of the best international students in the program had to overcome a culturally ingrained view that students should not express their own opinions or challenge their instructors' perspectives in class. Overall, while they eventually learned to navigate the requirements of the Columbia College Honors Program with aplomb, these students were initially uncomfortable in a liberal arts milieu. Another major challenge emerged just a few years after the initial wave of Vietnamese students joined the honors program. Despite the gains realized by the students and the intellectual vitality they brought to the program, international student enrollment stalled when the institution's financial fortunes waned. As a result, the program lost financial support to actively recruit new students from abroad. This problem frustrated the program's efforts to create a global cohort of honors learners. The last wave of Vietnamese students recently graduated from the program, and no new international cohorts are expected to follow.

Zubizarreta's example of international student recruitment brings to mind a few of the challenges associated with international student recruitment in honors. To begin with, the students' academic experiences demonstrate how campus or programmatic internationalization must be pursued in a thoughtful and culturally sensitive way. Honors education emphasizes "new subjects, approaches, and pedagogies" and "active . . . participatory education" ("Basic Characteristics"). Honors students are challenged to inculcate a critical, yet healthy skepticism in pursuit of "enduring questions" (National Collegiate Honors Council Board of Directors). At the same time, they are expected to take an active role in directing their learning and to engage in "creative scholarship" built upon their distinctive interests (National Collegiate Honors Council Board of Directors). On the surface, these qualities should speak to any intellectually curious and academically driven student

regardless of national origin. This idealism and attention to individual growth notwithstanding, many honors programs are crafted in a classical mold and driven by the study of great books. An implicit message exists among these curricula that intellectual inquiry in the Western tradition constitutes a good life, but an undue emphasis on this perspective may exclude international students from the intellectual community of honors education. In addition, an emphasis on active, participatory learning can be unfamiliar and uncomfortable for students accustomed to traditional pedagogy. Fortunately, at Columbia College, honors program leaders recognized how international perspectives could enrich the curriculum even if they meant departing from traditional models or topics such as heroes and myths.

Setting aside the pedagogical divide that exists for many international learners in the United States (Blanco), there are also financial pitfalls that might derail what is an otherwise laudable mission. Brennan and Dellow as well as Forbes-Mewett and Nyland note, for example, that increased revenues generated by international enrollments do not always yield equitable gains for all university stakeholders. When units most responsible for attracting and educating international students do not share in the bounty of increased tuition revenues, they may struggle to meet the considerable needs of this population. If honors programs are to join the march toward comprehensive internationalization, university administrators must consider how they will be supported in this mission.

This concern echoes some of the major reservations that exist in the literature on honors program growth and administration more broadly. Many leaders in the field of honors education have doubts about program growth. In particular, Sederberg and Goodstein worry that expansion may hasten a decline in the academic quality of the program. In the University of South Carolina Honors Program, for example, significant enrollment expansion in the 1990s led to increased demands on faculty resources and a dearth of available courses for students. Sederberg laments these negative trends and ultimately concludes that if an honors program “grows beyond its capacity to provide for [its] core mission, then it . . . will fail” (26).

Goodstein shares this concern, noting that faculty at her flagship New England university, when faced with the prospect of program growth, worried about the quality of instruction in larger courses and their ability to supervise honors theses properly. Quality of instruction and research are among the National Collegiate Honors Council's "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program" ("Basic Characteristics"). To sacrifice these qualities for increased enrollment is to diminish the very nature of honors education.

Sederberg and Goodstein articulated their arguments in the context of domestic student enrollment, and each had relatively positive stories to tell about their programs' responses to program growth. Their basic objections, however, are instructive for the debate regarding international student enrollment. In regard to the additional resources needed to serve international students as part of a comprehensive internationalization plan, these students may need specialized advising from staff or faculty who possess intercultural competence or foreign language skills, especially given the vastly different pedagogical environment international students often face in honors classrooms. Staff and faculty members may even need some training in ESL teaching techniques, and they may require baseline knowledge in student visa regulations to guide students properly in their academic plans. Honors programs may also need to host specialized orientation programs, offer additional mentoring/tutoring sessions for specific classes, and develop special, internationally friendly spaces to help students assimilate to the culture of the honors program.

### **THE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AT SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY**

Not all honors programs can commit to a strategy of direct international student recruitment, whether due to lack of resources or institutional support. Nevertheless, they can contribute to the goal of "at home" internationalization in different ways. At Saint Louis University (SLU), the honors program features an initiative that borrows from these strategies. The International Partnership Program (IPP) places honors students in sustained conversation

with international students on campus as part of an experiential learning component of the curriculum. Students organize their meetings outside of a formal class, often frequenting events on campus and around the St. Louis community. Below is an extended discussion of the IPP: its structure and history on campus, the challenges and opportunities such a program presents, and the honors program's early attempts to assess its impact on students. (A copy of program guidelines is available in Appendix 1.)

## **Program History**

Like many institutions around the country, SLU has had a concerted international recruitment effort for many years. Also like many institutions, the campus culture surrounding international students has evolved over time. In the fall of 2010, one of SLU's ESL instructors observed that her students were not engaged in campus and community life in ways that would enhance their speaking skills. She knew, based on her time as a scholar in Germany, that classroom instruction alone could not produce the kind of engagement and excitement she was looking for, so she created a "friendship program" that would expose international students to fun activities in and around the SLU community. The program was entirely voluntary and enjoyed modest success. American students volunteered to hold regular, but infrequent, meetings with international students.

During the fledging stages of the "friendship program," a senior honors student similarly sought opportunities to engage with international students at SLU. For her senior capstone project for the honors program, she developed the architecture for a program that could bridge the cultural divide. Much like the "friendship program," the International Partnership Program (IPP), as it came to be known, sought to place interested American students in sustained conversations with their international peers. A strategic partnership with the ESL program was the linchpin for both sides in developing accountability mechanisms for students. The honors program could supply eager students who were interested in cultural exchange and service to the SLU community, and the ESL program could offer a

collection of English language learners who could share their global perspectives and who would benefit from language practice with American students.

In its early stages, IPP oscillated between sponsoring specific events for partners, including service trips and community outings, and giving the partners free rein to plan their own activities. The IPP also alternated between prescribing certain topics for discussion, such as family dynamics and American culture, and encouraging students to converse freely. (Some of these decisions are discussed later in the challenges and opportunities section.) In 2015, SLU partnered with INTO University Partnerships, a private company that works with higher education institutions to achieve diverse and integrated international student communities on campus. The honors program now collaborates with the newly formed joint venture, INTO Saint Louis University (INTO SLU), to offer the IPP. As before, the honors program recruits interested students to serve as language partners, and the INTO SLU program identifies international partners at various stages in their language instruction at SLU. Importantly, the INTO SLU program provides the necessary supports for international students that fall outside the honors program's expertise, including visa guidance, space on campus for programmed events, and native speakers to troubleshoot issues. The IPP enrolls roughly forty students per semester.

## **Program Structure**

From its origins as a voluntary friendship program, the IPP became a credit-bearing experience that counts toward fulfillment of honors program requirements. The course (HR4850) is part of a slate of required experiential credit opportunities, such as research and internship credit or study abroad, that encourage students to learn outside the classroom. The purpose of these required credits is to compel students to place extracurricular experiences in the context of their chosen major, their vocation, or their own cultural understanding.

Students can participate in the IPP at any point after their first semester at SLU. They are matched with an international student as

a language partner based on a variety of factors including age, year in school, major, and gender. Each semester, the honors program develops a schedule divided into five calendar sessions of roughly three-to-four weeks each. Students must meet at least once during each session, with each meeting lasting at least two hours. In total, students meet for roughly ten hours over the course of all five calendar sessions.

During each session, the honors program, in collaboration with the INTO SLU program, features one “sponsored event” to give partners a pre-set opportunity to meet. In some cases, this event, such as a kick-off event with food and icebreaker activities, will be tailored exclusively for participants. In others, the honors program partners with SLU’s International Services office to encourage attendance at events intended for the broader SLU community. Examples include a “Taste of . . .” series in which students can sample cuisine from international cultures, an “American Slang” event to introduce international students to various American idioms, and a Thanksgiving celebration in which students discuss the significance of the holiday and enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving meal with one another. Attendance at sponsored events is not required. Students may plan their own events, which often include dining in and around the SLU campus and visiting city attractions like the zoo, various museums, or an ice skating rink. Students have freedom to decide what an appropriate outing would be. The main requirement is that conversation feature prominently. A movie outing, for instance, is unacceptable unless students spend time discussing the film afterwards.

Beyond the conversation and experience itself, students must document their learning by composing a critical reflection of roughly seven hundred words following each meeting. The honors program provides optional reflection prompts on other topics such as preconceived notions of a partner’s home country, major social/political/economic issues, or understandings of diversity, but students also have freedom to explore other topics of interest. Students participating for a second or third time must enhance their reflections by including references to periodicals or journal articles

related to their conversation or by synthesizing observations from multiple semesters of participation. The purpose of these reflections is to encourage thoughtful consideration of topics like cultural competence, diversity, and global citizenship. Honors program staff members provide developmental feedback on each reflection, but the course itself is graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis. Students who participate in the required number of meetings and complete the assigned reflections pass the course.

## **Assessing Student Learning Outcomes**

The IPP began with the goal to expand students' cultural horizons through conversation. As it grew and found a curricular home in the honors program, goals and learning outcomes followed. Today, the IPP has three goals and four learning outcomes. They are as follows:

### Goals

1. Encourage cross-cultural communication among domestic and international students.
2. Raise cultural competency of conversation partnership participants.
3. Provide a service to the SLU international student population regarding second language acquisition.

### Learning Objectives (Students will be able to . . .)

1. Describe similarities and differences between their culture and the culture of their international partner through a series of reflection papers.
2. Assess their international partner's conversational language proficiency and improvement over the course of the partnership.
3. Discuss the significance of their partnership in terms of changes to or refinement of pre-existing assumptions/beliefs/etc.

4. Examine the cultural lessons learned through the partnership and evaluate how these lessons relate to future goals.

These learning outcomes have existed for several years, and assessment has traditionally consisted of end-of-semester evaluations and close reading of student reflections. Students frequently self-reported, for example, that the IPP contributed “very much” to their learning in terms of cultural understanding, respect for others’ views and perspectives, the importance of diversity on campus, the process and challenges of second language acquisition, and the extent to which culture informs one’s worldview. During the last four years, over seventy-five percent of students described their experiences in positive terms and indicated a desire to continue conversations with partners beyond the confines of the IPP.

Students also wrote persuasively about their experiences in the IPP, particularly in their end-of-semester reflections. One student described how the program was “humbling” because it made her “more conscious of how I present myself to others.” Another student described the IPP as an “amazing experience” that provided an “opportunity to broaden my horizons and learn another culture.” Another recent participant observed how his international partner proudly greeted him during their final meeting with evidence of a speaking success. As the student observed, “In our last meeting he had become frustrated as he could not pronounce the word [statistics] . . . and informed me that he would practice. True to his word, he pronounced it clearly.” One of the most lucid reviews by a student regarding his learning outcomes came from a student who observed the mutual gains he and his partner realized over the course of the semester: “I, a SLU student, was able to build my own confidence in dealing with other cultures while expanding my own worldview. [My international partner] was given a person with whom he could feel comfortable speaking and sharing his culture, all the while helping with the development of his language skills.” These qualitative reviews of student reflections supported the results of the honors program’s limited survey efforts to assess learning outcomes in the IPP. We recognized, however, that such qualitative reviews were limited in scope and explanatory power.



Students in a pensive mood at the end of a semester in the IPP might overestimate or underestimate the value of the experience, which could skew the accuracy of our assessment.

In an effort to assess student learning in a more longitudinal fashion, we instituted a pre- and post-survey during the spring 2018 semester; it asked students to diagnose their self-awareness, skills, and knowledge related to interpersonal and intercultural communication. In building the survey instrument, we consulted several sources, including the Association of American Colleges & Universities VALUE rubrics (“VALUE Rubric Development Project”), but we were ultimately inspired by a rather obscure instrument—the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment developed by the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (“Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist”). (A sample of the honors-adapted survey can be found in Appendix 2.) We wanted to see the extent to which students’ responses changed from the beginning to the end of their participation in the IPP. Overall, forty-eight students participated in the IPP during the spring 2018 semester. Thirty-three students responded to the pre-survey and fifteen students responded to the post-survey. Although the end-of-semester response rates were lower than desired and despite the fact we did not capture unique identifiers to facilitate student-by-student comparisons, two interesting and related conclusions emerged.

First, students who responded to the initial survey ( $n = 33$ ) tended to evaluate their cultural competence high prior to beginning the experience. On seventeen different items across the three dimensions (knowledge, skills, and awareness), an average of ninety-two percent of participants responded with “Always/Very Well” or “Fairly Often/Pretty Well” to the prompts. That is, these students believed themselves to be able communicators across different contexts, aware of their cultural blind spots, and confident in their knowledge of themselves and others. These initial results were at once surprising and expected. Of the thirty-three respondents, nineteen indicated on the survey that they had “significant exposure” to people of different cultures before beginning the partnership. Based on prior experience, they might evaluate their

cultural competency highly and adjust to the expectations of the IPP with little difficulty. Alternatively, as we expected, the intimate nature of the IPP could expose gaps in their knowledge and lead them to reassess their skills, knowledge, and awareness with respect to intercultural exchange.

We saw this second phenomenon reflected to a small degree in responses to the post-survey ( $n = 15$ ). While students still tended to rate their knowledge, skills, and awareness highly, over half of the survey items (nine of seventeen) exhibited declines. For example, students, on average, reported lower levels of awareness related to personal, ethnic, cultural, or racial identity and lower confidence in skills related to demonstrating proper respect for the culture and beliefs of others. The results suggest the IPP had a humbling effect on students who might have overestimated their cultural competency prior to beginning their conversation partnership. Some survey items exhibited increases, such as confidence in the ability to interact respectfully with individuals and groups and an overall acceptance of the uncertainty inherent in cross-cultural communication. These increases in average responses reflected a more complex understanding of cultural differences, including an awareness of implicit assumptions held about people of diverse backgrounds.

The results above represent nascent assessment efforts for a program that has, until the 2017–2018 academic year, operated with the acceptance that limited qualitative review of student experiences was sufficient to demonstrate the program's worth. Therefore, the results above should be interpreted with caution. Much work remains to understand the effects of the IPP on students' awareness, skills, and knowledge related to cultural competency. For example, as we refine the survey and achieve higher response rates, we aim to determine how students' academic interests correlate with responses, whether students from different parts of the country respond differently, and how students' class standing influences their perceptions. In addition, we hope to distribute the survey with more intentionality by assigning unique identifiers to each student to facilitate more statistically rigorous assessment of the results.

Finally, we intend to develop a parallel survey instrument to be distributed to the international partners to assess their learning gains over the course of the semester. The strong bonds forged in recent years with the INTO SLU program bode well for ongoing and more robust assessment efforts.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

The International Partnership Program at Saint Louis University exhibits the spirit of “at home” internationalization that has been the subject of this essay. As the number of international students at the institution has risen, the honors program has developed a mechanism to place its students in continual conversations with their international counterparts to advance a comprehensive internationalization effort, broaden students’ intercultural competency skills, and serve the mission of the institution. Because the IPP does not rely on the direct recruitment of international students, the honors program avoids some of the challenges observed above regarding program composition and curricular structure. At the same time, by formally including an international component in the slate of extracurricular requirements, the honors program affords students space to take an intellectual and social chance to enhance their learning beyond the classroom. As indicated above, the program’s early assessment efforts are encouraging.

Various challenges accompany the successes of the IPP. Chief among them is finding parity in expectations for honors and international students. Honors students participate in the language exchange by earning class credit, which builds in a measure of accountability. They are motivated to hold meetings and complete the critical reflections because their grade depends on it. International students participate based on the interest and willingness of course instructors in the INTO SLU program, but meetings and critical reflections are not always formally tied to their overall course grade. This difference can make for uneven expectations among the participants. One solution is to create a shared course experience so both partners have incentives to meet.

Another challenge is the tension between supporting students through sponsored events or suggested discussion topics and expecting them to plan their own events and drive their own conversations. Students often desire structure, but they voice frustration if they do not have autonomy in the process. After all, the hope is to facilitate relationships that transcend the confines of the IPP experience, and contrived social situations or artificial constraints can frustrate these efforts. Our compromise has been to offer one optional “sponsored event,” which would be an internationally themed on-campus event, per session and provide a set of optional prompts for discussion. Students may follow the program’s suggested structure or depart from it completely. In either case, they will have occasions for reflection and growth.

One final challenge associated with this program lies beyond the honors program’s control, and it relates to the vicissitudes of international student recruitment. Although history shows steady increases in international student enrollment in the United States, including at Saint Louis University, recent political events including the proposed travel ban, divisive political rhetoric surrounding immigration, and negative publicity in the international press related to school safety all influence an institution’s ability to attract international students. Indeed, while the last decade has brought unprecedented numbers of international students to U.S. campuses, Redden reports that overall enrollments at U.S. institutions have declined in the last two years. SLU international enrollments remain strong, but declines could jeopardize the vitality of the IPP.

The IPP also presents intriguing possibilities for the SLU Honors Program. One such opportunity is to elevate the program beyond fruitful dialogue into mission-driven action. SLU is a Jesuit institution with a mission to promote social justice on campus and in the surrounding community. Engaging honors and international students in sustained volunteer work could produce different conversations about the value of service to community, the perceptions of vulnerable populations, and the meaning of social justice. These conversations already occur by happenstance among partners, but they could feature more prominently in a revised partnership structure.

Another growth opportunity for the honors program would be to use the IPP as a vehicle for international student recruitment to the honors community. International students who identify strongly with their honors partners and find value in the kinds of conversations facilitated by the IPP could be offered a gateway to honors program membership, assuming they have the requisite language abilities and intend to complete an academic program and not simply advanced language study at the institution. Their participation in the honors program could bring energy and insight to the overall student population.

## CONCLUSION

Honors education has long been the testing ground for new approaches to learning and experiential education that serves as a model for the rest of the campus community. Internationalization efforts should be no different. Honors programs have succeeded in recent years by facilitating short-term study abroad experiences that enhance students' cultural competency and promote a sense of global citizenship. These efforts should be celebrated and continued, but they must not represent the apogee of honors internationalization. As the French novelist Marcel Proust said, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes" (qtd. in Braid 19). Not all students will travel to far-flung areas of the world during their college experience, but they can still benefit from "at home" internationalization efforts. This chapter describes a few of the ways honors programs can capitalize on international student enrollment trends through curricular and extracurricular programming that piques students' curiosity and gives them "new eyes" to examine their personal and intellectual growth.

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Address correspondence to Robert J. Pampel at  
[robert.pampel@slu.edu](mailto:robert.pampel@slu.edu).

## APPENDIX 1

**Saint Louis University Honors Program  
International Partnership Program Guidelines****Program Overview**

Students may complete up to three upper-division honors credits (one per semester) by participating in the International Partnership Program (IPP). Participants are matched with an international student as a language partner and are required to meet with them at least five times a semester for a total of ten hours of interaction together. Five reflection papers are required along with a completed time sheet to receive honors credit. Honors students may receive up to three IPP credits throughout the duration of their honors program experience, but they are limited to one IPP credit per semester. Students may participate in the program beyond three semesters but will not be eligible for additional credit.

**Honors Credit**

The IPP experience counts as SLU credit and will be documented on participants' transcripts; therefore, students will be billed for IPP enrollment if they exceed eighteen enrolled hours. IPP credit *will* count toward University credits and will be coded as HR4850.

**Participant Guidelines**

The honors program will solicit interest in the IPP one semester in advance of intended participation. Students must complete an online interest form (distributed by the honors program via the weekly electronic newsletter) during the timeframe specified (usually before May 1 for Fall participation and before December 1 for Spring participation). The honors program will register students for the course upon confirmation of intent to participate. First-time participants must attend an orientation session before being eligible to participate. There will be a limited number of openings in the program for incoming freshmen, who will register upon enrollment at Saint Louis University.

After signing up for the course, students will be matched with a language partner, a student in the English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program at SLU. In order to complete the IPP successfully, honors students must meet with their partners at least five times during the semester, according to the calendar established by the honors program. Students are required to meet *at least once during each calendar session*. A meeting must be at least one hour to count toward the required five calendar session meetings, though

we strongly encourage meetings of at least two hours. In total, students should meet for roughly ten hours over the course of all five calendar sessions.

### **Reflection Papers**

Students must submit a written reflection by the deadlines listed in the program guidelines for the semester. Since honors credit is granted for participation as pass/no pass, no exceptions will be given for late submissions.

#### *Style*

Reflection papers must be at least seven hundred words (approximately two pages) in length. Papers are due by midnight of the submission deadline. Students must submit five reflection papers total in order to earn IPP credit for the semester. Reflections should include the names of all partners present, along with the time and place of the meeting. Papers should be submitted electronically as a Microsoft Word document to the course Blackboard site. Reflections that do not meet word count or do not fully cover appropriate content will be returned.

#### *Reflection Content*

IPP participation is expected to challenge students to engage in cross-cultural communication, raise their cultural competency, and provide a service to the SLU community. Reflection papers should thoughtfully consider these themes, not simply provide a synopsis of the meeting. A *brief* description of the activity is acceptable but only as a pretext to the larger discussion about cultural awareness/exchange. In other words, reflection papers should demonstrate critical analytical skill. Papers that merely summarize event proceedings will **not** receive credit.

Good questions to consider are:

- How is your partner transitioning to life in St. Louis or the United States, in general?
- How are you and your partner similar?
- How has your perception of your partner's home country changed by speaking with your partner?
- What struggles might your partner be facing currently? What resources might you be able to provide him/her? What might he/she need to succeed?

GREAT questions to consider are:

- How has your partner changed your perspective and/or challenged your worldview?

- What lessons or newfound knowledge did you gain from your partner?
- How is this experience changing you? What will you do in light of this change?

### **IPP Reflection Paper Requirements**

In order to receive credit, reflections must:

1. Be submitted by deadline (as specified in the calendar below).
2. Contain at least seven hundred words (approximately two pages), including a brief (two sentence) synopsis of the meeting location and date.
3. Contain a critical analysis of each meeting, addressing and building upon questions like those above.
4. Use clear, concise language. Document should be free of errors, easy to read, and structured in an organized way.

Submissions that satisfy all of the above conditions will receive full credit. **No** exceptions will be given for late submissions. At the discretion of the honors program, reflections that do not address the stated criteria and/or exhibit poor grammar or punctuation may be returned for revision or **not** receive credit. If requested, revisions must be returned within forty-eight hours of notification. Failure to return a revised draft or submission of a revision that fails to improve upon a previous draft will result in **no** credit.

## APPENDIX 2

### Survey for International Partnership Participants

All International Partnership Program (IPP) participants responded to the survey items below before and after the semester in which they completed the program. Students could respond “Always/Very Well,” “Fairly Often/Pretty Well,” “Sometimes/Occasionally,” “Never,” or “N/A.” This survey was adapted from the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society.

Dimension	Prompt
Awareness	I view human difference as positive and a cause for celebration.
	I have a clear sense of my own personal, ethnic, and cultural identity.
	I am aware that, in order to learn more about others, I need to understand and be prepared to share my own culture.
	I am aware of the assumptions that I hold about people of cultures different from my own.
	I accept that in cross-cultural situations there can be uncertainty and that uncertainty can make me anxious.
	I feel comfortable respectfully asking questions and seeking more information about cultures with which I am not familiar.
	I take advantage of opportunities to put myself in a place where I can learn about differences and create relationships.
Skills	I am developing ways to interact respectfully and effectively with individuals and groups.
	I am able to adapt my communication style to effectively communicate with people who communicate in ways that are different from my own (perhaps in a different language, dialect, etc.).
	I can act in ways that demonstrate respect for the culture and beliefs of others.
	I work hard to understand the perspectives of others and consult with diverse colleagues about culturally respectful and appropriate courses of action.
	I know and use a variety of relationship building skills to create connections with people who are different from me.

## INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATIONS

Knowledge	I can make mistakes in interacting with people from different cultures and nationalities and will learn from them.
	I can recognize that my knowledge of certain cultural groups is limited and commit to creating opportunities to learn more.
	I recognize that cultures change over time and can vary from person to person, as does attachment to culture.
	I recognize that achieving cultural competence involves a commitment to learning over a lifetime.
	I continue to develop my capacity for assessing areas where there are gaps in my knowledge.