A CASE STUDY: DEVELOPING A STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM IN THAILAND

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Abstract - This paper presents the phase one findings of a two-phased action research study which led to the development of a plan to design a study abroad program for both undergraduate students and students of DECA, a business organization, at the college of business and entrepreneurship of a state university set in a rural area in the Midwest of the United States. The question which guided the research was: How can a study abroad program, promoting career enhancement, be designed to meet the needs of the students from rural agricultural communities? Exploratory data were collected both on campus and in Thailand over two years, and included reflections, observations, informal interviews and conversations, peer reviews, documents and artifacts. Based on the findings, a plan emerged with three sections: 1) making instructional decisions, 2) creating learning by experience, and 3) updating logistics. The instructional decision section was further categorized into three areas: 1) career enhancement, 2) personal growth and management and 3) community collaboration. These categories led to the design of a course promoting learning by experience by directly engaging students with another culture in Thailand. The conclusion is that such programs, when based on needs analysis, become an indispensable part of higher education, workforce and the economic prosperity of the state/region.

Index Terms - Career Enhancement, Global Outlook, Reflection Criteria, Study Abroad.

I. INTRODUCTION

The idea of developing a plan to design a study abroad program for rural agricultural students derived from the unique qualities and needs of such students since these students had a limited global outlook restricting their career prospects compared to students from urban communities. In addition, literature was limited on such locally relevant programs.

The university where the research took place promoted the enhancement of global learning: "Global engagement is critical to the advancement the university, the state of Kansas and our nation [1, p. 20]" thus making it a moral obligation for practitioners to "develop tools to facilitate learning and engage in dialogue to discern the complexities of our global engagement [1, p. 21]".

The three practitioners/researchers who conducted the study had a joint interest in preparing students for the 21st century workforce. Of the three researchers the two researchers (herein after called the principal investigator and the peer reviewer) taught a business communication course in which career readiness was introduced. The course included activities which aimed to improve the career readiness competencies based on the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook 2019 Survey [2] such as critical thinking/problem solving skills, teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, and oral/written communications since these competencies were the top competencies selected by employers. While students showed significant improvements in such competencies, skills related intercultural communication, adaptability, and flexibility always required more attention. The continual observations of the researchers related to in and out-of classroom interactions were that students needed to be better prepared in skills related to one competency, global outlook. The consensus was that global outlook was not an easy task to be acquired in a classroom model. Conversations with students revealed that they felt the gap and continually inquired how they could develop their global exposure. Although the campus enjoyed the existence of international students, particularly, during collaborative work, local students frequently disagreed with the way the international students acted in a team environment. The observations were that despite such international exposure, classroom learning did not help students improve their attitudes. Practitioners had an understanding that learning had to be carried over to an international environment where the students could be transformed through experiential learning [3]. There was ample grounded research on the value of study abroad programs and indicated that such programs helped develop and/or improve students' global mindset ranging from adaptability and flexibility to attitudes towards other cultures and be able to work with other people from other cultures.

Taking the student feedback as well as local values and needs into account, the most effective way to acquire global outlook, and enhance skills such as flexibility, adaptability, inquisitiveness and open-mindedness was to design a study abroad program which would create the environment for students to be exposed to global experiences. In

addition, the program would create a learning culture for students to promote the economic prosperity of the state. The additional benefits of the study abroad program would be to improve the other seven competencies set forth in [2] including critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, leadership, oral/written communications, professional/work ethic/career management and digital technology.

The weakness of global outlook became the focus of this research and the researchers initiated the study by reviewing the concepts of traditional study abroad programs, particularly the sections which included career planning. Taking into account the unique traits of the students and the region from which the students came from, researchers discussed how they could use these findings. The digital experiences of the students and their learning styles related to a globalized world in constant disruption were also considered. Although students from rural environments appeared to have a global outlook since they were digitally connected, initial observations and interactions showed that they were local in their values and characteristics and needed the global/intercultural fluency [2] to enhance their careers.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of the literature on study abroad yielded four types of findings which helped shape the initial stages of this study and included 1) the link between study abroad programs and careers including required competencies; 2) three major educational goals related to study abroad; 3) obstacles to study abroad programs; and 4) newly emerging concepts related to a digital world of constant disruption.

Regarding the link between study abroad programs and careers, one study of 188 individuals employed a post-study abroad experience in Australia, established a strong link to early career benefits (80-94%), career direction (69%), obtaining the first job (66%), and long-term career benefits long-term career prospects (63%) [4]. A different study [5] described three models of short-term business-related study abroad programs: Summer semester abroad, service-learning trips and a study tour. These models [5] presented three general education goals including a) increasing knowledge, b) shaping attitudes, and c) building confidence. Increasing knowledge would align course topics with sites students visited and promote understanding the culture of the host country. Shaping attitudes would entail increasing interest in the topic and sparking curiosity that can last a lifetime. Students would also gain confidence as travelers.

In addition, major obstacles were also fundamental in developing the plan. Another study [6] examined how effectively study abroad was integrated into student degree programs in New Zealand. The three major obstacles identified were cost, leaving friends and family, and preference to finish a degree first.

Moreover, digital communication has created a new learning culture, differentiating itself from a teaching-based approach to a constantly disrupted environment. As learners adjust to such new environments, it becomes necessary to adjust the educational programs: “In the new culture of learning the point is to embrace what we don’t know, come up with better questions about it, and continue asking those questions in order to learn more and more both incrementally and exponentially” [7, p. 38]. Moreover, embracing disruption meant looking forward to the future, which was defined as a new set of possibilities: “It means making the most of living in a world of constant motion” [7, p. 43].

The environment described [7] is one in which people learn from one another in fluid relationships, via technology such as blogging, where the blogger is commenting on his/her personal interests/observations and interacting with reader comments and external links.

III. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The primary investigator of this action research collaborated with two other researchers to build a supportive network. The primary investigator and the second researcher (herein after referred to as the peer reviewer) were from the college of business and the third researcher (herein after referred to as the external reviewer) was from the college of education. The peer reviewer was also the DECA collegiate advisor on campus as DECA was the designated organizing club for the trip since this international organization “prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in marketing, finance, hospitality and management in high schools and colleges around the globe” [8, p. 1].

All three researchers were also experienced in student internal cognitive processes related to acquiring and /or improving competencies for the 21st century workforce by means of completing a study abroad program.

Qualitative data were collected utilizing the definition of reflection and the reflection criteria as a framework originally proposed by Dewey [9], and later by Rogers [10, 11]. Reflection is a meaning-making process for learners, travelling from one experience to the next, mental connections in the process; it is a systematic process rooted in scientific inquiry; it is a process rooted in a community of learners; and it is a process that values the intellectual and personal growth of all involved [9-11]. Reflection is defined as “a

meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with connections to other experiences" [11, p. 885].

The first phase of this study was conducted over a two-year period, starting in fall 2017 and ending in spring 2019. Data were collected in a cyclical manner both on campus where the researchers taught and in Thailand, the setting where the learning by experience would take place and included reflections, observations, informal interviews and conversations, reviews, and documents and artifacts. The cyclical data collection included five sets of data as follows:

A. Data Collected on Campus (Fall 2017 and Spring 2018)

The first set of data was collected on campus prior to the first field trip to Thailand by the primary investigator, the peer and external reviewers, and included the following instruments.

Reflections: The primary investigator kept a journal to affirm the values and experiences of students and recorded aspects of student needs and values, and how those needs could be met. The daily thinking and writing were systematic in nature and added the much-needed discipline to the plan of the experience. The process served as a focal point, helping the primary investigator to stay on track. Having been trained in Thailand in mindfulness, through reflection, the primary investigator was able to create conversations and interact with the peer and external reviewers to better develop the plan to design the study abroad program. The definition of mindfulness was practicing intentional and non-judgmental awareness by focusing on the present moment [12]. All researchers carried idea books to jot down notes, ideas, experiences which would contribute to the students' overall experience and learning.

Observations: All faculty researchers had been living in the rural community where the university was located, and due to their wide array of experiences knew first-hand the types of students enrolled in the undergraduate programs. In addition, during the two academic years, 2017-18 and 2018-19, because the principal investigator and the peer reviewer were teaching business communication as well as career readiness, they were able to observe student interactions, conversations in and out of their classrooms.

Informal Interviews and Conversations: The principal investigator used a snowballing strategy and informally interviewed other practitioners, the department chair, colleagues with study abroad experiences, and students. The conversations went from one person to another depending on the context. No set questions were used in order to create spontaneous discussions. The principal investigator took mental notes, and following the interviews and conversations, added them to his journal further making sense of the conversations. Sharing the notes with the peer and external reviewers helped make sense of the data.

B. Data Collected in Thailand (Summer 2018)

The second set of data was collected during the first field trip in Thailand by the principal investigator. This trip included an extensive involvement of a network of Thai personal friends and professionals since the principal investigator was an in-country specialist to Thailand where the study abroad trip would take place. The network of friends was part of the researcher's undergraduate studies as well as a career in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at a U.S. cultural center, private high school and two universities in Thailand. The first field trip to Thailand included exploring the country and consulting with local experts to make informed decisions on the plan and program. During the trip the following sources were used for data collection: Reflections and conversations, visits to potential activity sites, and collection of artifacts and documents.

Reflections and Conversations: The principal investigator reflected on the following questions and had conversations regarding these questions with local experts: What other mechanisms exist to plan on-site events? What are the major risks involved with the trip? In what other ways can the learning be applied to study abroad?

Visits to Potential Activity Sites: The visits included 1) Bangkok and the Museum of Siam, 2) The Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station, and 3) the city of Chiang Mai.

Bangkok: Acknowledging that the students from rural agricultural communities may never have travelled internationally, particularly to a megalopolis like Bangkok, materials were pre-collected to assist in the transition from a rural to urban environment. Photos of the Bangkok public transportation system (subway and above ground railway) were taken, including entrances, exits, ticket purchase sites, interior views of passengers, posters and advertisements. Both systems were bi-lingual in print and announcements. In addition, an English language public transportation app was identified for download. Students would also download a popular app used in Thailand, Line, in order to keep in touch in-country with one central system. The principal researcher also investigated a process to adapt existing U.S. phones or arrange the purchase of inexpensive Thai phones for the Line app and mobile connectivity to the internet.

Photos of the Bangkok hotel were taken, along with a sample menu and the menu of one Thai restaurant where students would eat. Potential temples were visited and assessed. In addition, a public river boat transpiration system, with potential stops at sites, was identified.

The Museum of Siam: The Museum of Siam defines Thainess as three elements: The King, the Nation and Buddhism. Photos of museum artifacts, and the interactive exhibits were taken. A museum scavenger hunt sheet was developed. Furthermore, the plan included an officer in the immigration police department to address students on the concept of the nation, one of the factors identified as Thainess.

The Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station: This rural area had a strong influence of hill tribe cultures [13]. To prepare students, photos of the station and agricultural sites were taken, as well as photos for the nearby hotel where the students would reside. Moreover, photos were taken of hill tribe villages and village life. Many hill tribe cultural artifacts would be used in the pre-departure course. King Rama IX and Queen Sirikit established the station to discourage the growing of opium and to provide self-sustainable skills to the local hill tribe population in production of cold weather plants such as fruits, vegetables, and flowers. The agricultural station was a not-for-profit business. The site was a social enterprise project to improve the lives of local citizens. Students would explore projects and engage in teamwork activities to develop cross-cultural awareness.

Chiang Mai: Hotels in Chiang Mai were inspected, and one was selected which met student needs including a swimming pool, easy walks to restaurants and the night market. One elephant sanctuary tour was included as well. Specific sites in the city were identified.

Artifacts and Documents: A range of items were assembled for instructional use: physical copies of the Bangkok Post, the English language newspaper of the country; tokens and cards from the transportation system in Bangkok. Moreover, for the study of Buddhism and spiritual beliefs, several artifacts such as spirit houses, images, religious symbols, were also collected. Multiple copies of the river boat transportation system were collected. Thai movie posters were also collected representing Thai history and culture. Sample products produced at the Royal Agricultural Station were also purchased.

These artifacts would be used during the on-campus course to introduce the experiential learning early onwards, to try to minimize stress out of a global exposure experience.

C. Data Collected on Campus (Fall 2018 and Spring 2019)

The third set of data was collected on campus after the first field trip and included reflections and conversations. Reflections: Utilizing the data and artifacts collected on the field trip, and the required college of business syllabus template, a draft plan emerged. A one-credit hour course would be designed to be offered on campus; and a two-week in-country program entitled course-in-action would be offered in Thailand. The visits would include Bangkok and the Museum of Siam for Thainess, the Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station, and Chiang Mai and based on conversations with Thai government officials, activities at the Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station were included in the syllabus.

Conversations: At this point, most of the data came from conversations with the peer and external reviewer. The peer reviewer, who was the DECA advisor on campus, knew first-hand how such a trip would benefit the students. The external reviewer was an expert in internationalization, study abroad programs and international career readiness. During this phase of data collection, all three researchers brainstormed on the draft plan which would enhance the global learning objectives.

D. Data Collected in Thailand (Winter Break 2018)

The fourth set of data was collected as part of a second field trip in Thailand and included the validation of the experience of the principal researcher confirming the draft study abroad implementation plan.

The data were made up of conversations in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and at the Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station, and confirmed the draft in-country implementation plan. In addition, the First Royal Factory, the production site of the agricultural products from the agricultural station, and the Fang Museum, centered on the local town, employees from the town and the history of the Royal Factory, were added to the program. Photos of the new sites were also taken.

E. Data Collected on Campus (Spring 2019)

Finally, the fifth set of data was collected on campus and included documents and conversation to finalize the study abroad plan. Based on these data, a study abroad program responding to the needs of the local students was finalized.

Documents: Three types of information were collected and reviewed: 1) the university study abroad policy requirements, 2) the U.S. State Department travel regulations, and 3) information on the largest economic driver of Kansas and the region, agriculture.

First, the researchers collected information on the university study abroad university policies and completed forms to ensure compliance. As required a proposal including the details of the study abroad program with an all-inclusive budget travel was submitted. In addition, the form identified the researchers who would accompany the students to Thailand and be present during the trip. Another requirement was pre-travel identification of hospitals and doctors at all sites visited. In addition, the purchase of medical insurance by students was required. Students were also responsible for obtaining their passports. The program also had a cultural component with global learning objectives. Funding was a fundamental part of the program. DECA, as the collegiate business club, would make it possible to obtain funding from the university student government association (SGA). As required by SGA, upon completion of the program, students would host an open forum detailing their experiences and learnings.

Second, the researchers registered to receive continual updates regarding U.S. State Department travel advisories in order to ensure a safe program.

Third, the researchers determined the largest economic driver in the region to ensure that the plan and program would benefit both the students and the state of Kansas [14]. Kansas produced wheat, grain, sorghum, beef and dairy products. According to the Business Roundtable [15], international trade supports just under 400,000 Kansas jobs, or 1 in 5. There are 3,400 state exporters, with 84% being small and medium-sized companies of 500 or less. Kansas exports to 190 countries, with Canada, China and Mexico acting as the largest importers. Reflecting the agricultural nature of local communities, the state primarily was composed of small towns of less than 1,000. As seen in [15, 16] the 2019 state population was just under 3 million, with the largest urban areas being Wichita (390,000), Overland Park (186,000), Kansas City (151,000), and Topeka, the state capital (127,000). The population of the town where the university understudy was located was 23,000 [15]. The university in question had 4,500 on-campus students, with 7,000 online students. Hispanic enrollment was about 1,000. The majority of the students were from small rural towns of less than 1000. Many were first-generation college students and a large number utilized state and federal loans. The overwhelming majority of students also worked a part-time job.

Conversations: Discussions which revolved around finalizing the plan and designing the program yielded the following questions: How beneficial would the program be for the students? What would the learning experiences of the students be? Hypothesizing that this localized program would benefit the students the second phase of this study was also discussed. The second phase would collect both qualitative and quantitative data on the evaluation and assessment of the course and the benefits of the program. The plan was for students to re-take the Global Mindset Inventory (GMI) [16] upon completion of the course-in-action, in-country program, in Thailand. The pre and post GMI would provide data on the impact such programs which would make up the second phase of this research.

Trustworthiness was established by using the five forms of validity for action research [17]: 1) the study developed a plan leading to a study abroad program to find a solution to the problem; 2) through a cyclical approach a variety of perspectives were included in the data collection and interpretation phases; 3) stakeholders were also consulted and the researchers ensured that the study would benefit all stakeholders; 4) through the cyclical process, the researchers felt transformed; and 5) the study was reviewed by an external reviewer had expertise in internationalization and study abroad programs and other practitioners who were experienced.

IV. FINDINGS

Per action research, all sets of data were collected, and analyzed resulting in the emergence of themes, codes and categories which led to the development of a plan and, eventually, the program which was presented in two sections: 1) the one credit-hour course, and 2) a two credit hour course-in-action.

All data were analyzed using the reflection criteria which included reflection as a meaning-making process; reflection as a systematic way of thinking; refection as a form of interactions; and reflection as personal and intellectual growth with a set of attitudes [9-11].

All data yielded repeated themes such as: global learning outcomes, global fluency, value-added learning, intercultural communication competencies, economic prosperity, workforce needs, giving back to the state, empowering students, transforming students, self-confidence, intellectual capacity, integrity, discipline, flexibility, adaptability, mindfulness, meditation, digital generation, preparedness, reflection, curiosity, imagination, personal management skills, project-mindset, openness, and critical thinking.

Findings also included responses to basic questions: Why Thailand? How to incorporate these repeated themes into course-in-action section of the program so students could be transformed? How to expose students to another culture? Which projects would add

value to the student and the region? Since Thailand was a country where meditation and mindfulness were practiced in schools, communities as a way of life, exposing students in digital contexts to such a way of life could help improve their skills such as discipline, focus, teamwork, etc. The themes related to mindfulness, meditation and awareness were incorporated into course activities as part of experiential learning [3].

Based on the reflection criteria [9-11], the themes led to a plan encompassing three sections: 1) making instructional decisions, 2) creating learning by experience, and 3) updating logistics.

The making instructional decisions section included three areas of focus: career enhancement, personal growth and management and community collaboration. The creating learning by experience section was first planned to be tackled by means of a one-credit hour study abroad course on campus followed by a two-credit hour in-country experience entitled course-in-action. The on-campus course would prepare students for the learning experience and course-in-action would immerse students in the experience so students could reflect on and learn from their experiences and try out their learnings [3].

The updating logistics section included using past research findings, and updated information: Funding issues, marketing and recruitment, site visits. It was also decided that one colleague, a certified Thai Guide, would accompany faculty and students during the experience, and assist in the logistics of the trip such as pre-planning, hotels and transportation arrangements.

Regarding funding, findings revealed sources of potential funding which included students, their families, DECA through the student government association, and donors identified by the university foundation. One finding stood out: Funding did not remain stable, could be unpredictable and might lead to a last-minute cost increase to students. The researchers would work closely with the university foundation to identify revenues to back up students who would need additional assistance financially since identified cost was a reason students were reluctant to engage in a study abroad experience [6].

Findings regarding marketing and recruitment revealed that a plan which relied heavily on social media was elemental as the forte of this generation of university students and was driven by members of DECA. The following social media avenues were identified: Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Blogs, both individually and related to the official Applied Business Studies social media sites. In addition, traditional posters were created by university professional media. Infographics would also be created by students themselves. The study abroad program developed a written student recruitment communication plan. Marketing was branded as #findandkeepajob. The branding was tied directly to the grounded research which established a strong link to early career benefits, career direction, obtaining the first job, and long-term career benefits [4]. In addition, since the job search process was a major component of the business communication class taught by two of the researchers, recruitment focused on on-campus students enrolled in the college of business with departments including Management, Accounting and Finance, and Applied Business Studies which consists of Marketing, Tourism and Hospitality Management and Business Communication. In addition, due to the agricultural emphasis of the study abroad in-country experience, the target students for the program would include those enrolled in the Agriculture and the Agricultural Business Departments.

Findings regarding site visits revealed that since sites could be altered due to unforeseen events, a backup plan had to be developed. Based on these findings new alternative sites were added to the plan.

Regarding findings on instructional decisions, the two courses were developed using Blackboard as the learning management system. A study abroad Thailand logo was designed by the university. The Blackboard course shells contained embedded You Tube videos as well as videos made by the principal investigator on the two field trips, audio podcasts recorded on site, slide decks and reading materials, as well as links to the Bangkok Post, and English newspaper, and the university department Facebook page with links to other podcasts and twitter feeds. Advanced study guide questions for discussions, as well as the syllabi, were also added to Blackboard. The discussions would use Yellowdig, a social platform, embedded in Blackboard.

The course: Per university policy, the modules were a total 16 hours face-to-face instruction. Learning objectives and modules were as shown below and in Table I:

- Describe the process of gathering documents and applying for a passport for international travel (a 30-day visa is issued upon arrival). This action is aligned to building confidence for international travel).
- Evaluate the following Thai business communication traits: Collaboration and interpersonal communication; and intercultural sensitivity, development, and competence. This action is related to shaping attitudes.
- Analyze the following Thai cultural concepts and how they impact Thai communication patterns: The

King, the Nation, and Buddhism. This objective is related to building knowledge.

- Evaluate Royal Thai Social Enterprise. This objective is related to building knowledge.
- Develop a personal blog for use during the Thailand experience. Blogging is a socially collaborative activity in the digital age relying on opinion and reader feedback.
- Work collaboratively to research available opportunities in Thailand and develop an additional list of concepts to explore in Thailand. Based on embracing what we don't know, coming up with better questions about it, and continue asking those questions in order to learn more.
- Assess and reflect on the results of the GMI. This objective is based on shaping attitudes.

Prior to starting the course, the students would take the GMI which had three large categories made up of Psychological Capital (PC), Social Capital (SC) and Intellectual Capital (IC) with subcategories ranging from openness to new ideas, resilience to problem solving and attitude toward cultural sensitivity [16, p. 14]. Students would re-take the GMI upon completion of the course-in action in Thailand to determine the impact of the program.

TABLE I

MODULE 1 ▪Overview of the program including the Royal Thai Social Enterprise, the Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station, the First Royal Factory and Fang Museum. Reflections study abroad ▪Distribution of the Global Mindset Inventory and Reflection ▪Completion of passport application and exchange of experiences ▪Organizational Leadership Behaviors and Traits Case Study ▪Release of links iTunes series of 176 podcasts about life in Bangkok and The Bangkok Podcast: Conversations on Life in Thailand's Buzzing Capital [18]
MODULE 2 ▪Discussion of Yellowdig responses. Yellowdig reflections on: His Wit and Wisdom: Writings, Speeches, and Interviews (Chapter 1: What is Thainess?) [19] Legal/Social/Ethical Case Study with oral presentation
MODULE 3 ▪Discussion of Yellowdig responses ▪Team Brainstorming Project
MODULE 4 ▪Discussion of Yellowdig responses ▪Problem-Solving Simulation ▪Blog Setup

The questions were developed using the reflective cycle [10-11] which included: Can learners recognize what is happening around them and describe and differentiate between cultural approaches without judgment? Are they willing to move out of their comfort zone and experiment? Lastly, are they capable of thinking in multiple perspectives and creating multiple explanations of the experience? Additional examples of such reflective questions included: What do you think about when visiting a hill tribe village? What are the villagers thinking about you? What do you want to learn and what do the villagers want to learn? What are you doing to learn? What are they doing to learn? What incident or event impacted you? What impacted the villagers? [20].

Course in-action (in-country): The purpose of the two-credit hour immersion experience in Thailand was to connect theory into the actual experience. Students would now visit the sites and interact with the culture they have studied in a traditional manner as indicated in Table II.

TABLE II

Day 1	Arrival in Thailand Daily activities include discussions, video or narrative blog entry, Instagram, the Department Applied Studies Facebook page. Tweets
Day 2	Popular communication media in transportation system and transportation by subway and the above ground railway
Day 3	Free day in Bangkok. Potential opportunity to visit a Thai snooker parlor in the evening
Day 4	Museum of Siam: The King and the Nation
Day 5	Bangkok-Chiang Mai. Visit the night market
Day 6	Regional Tourism- Van tour of Chiang Mai popular sites. Socially responsible elephant sanctuary. Discussion of Buddhism with a Thai monk. Discussion of the nation with Thai immigration police. Optional early morning Thai cooking class.
Day 7	Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station, Royal Factory, Fang Museum. Mindfulness meditation with our Thai guide. Over the next days, students will help harvest tea with hill tribes, observe the woodworking training of local villagers, observe production and sale of the agricultural products of the Angkhang Royal Project at the Royal Factory
Days 8 -11	Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station, Royal Factory, Fang Museum
Day 12	Chiang Mai to Bangkok
Day 13	Conduct an After Action Review [21] with four questions: 1) What did you expect to happen? 2) What

	actually happened? 3) What should be done by faculty to improve the experience? 4) What would you personally do differently to improve your experience? Take the GMI [16]
Day 14	Bangkok to Kansas

The two-week course in-action was designed for eight to ten students and focused on career enhancement, personal growth, and community collaboration through cross-cultural business interactions, activities on social enterprise, and Thainess. Career enhancement and community collaboration were planned by means of a social enterprise plan to be implemented at three specific sites in Chiang Mai Province: 1) the Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station; 2) the Royal Factory; and 3) the Fang Museum. In addition, the Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station and the Royal Factory would work together representing a supply chain which aligns with teaching in business.

This experience immerses students in Thai culture which would provide the mindfulness and enhance their personal growth. At the end of the two-week program in-country students would:

- Analyze the following Thai business communication traits: collaboration and interpersonal communication; and intercultural sensitivity, development, and competence. These are topics covered in the business communication course of the department.
- Explain the following Thai cultural concepts and how they impact Thai communication patterns: The King, the Nation, and Buddhism.
- Explain Royal Thai Social Enterprise.
- Develop a personal blog for use during the Thailand experience.
- Assess and reflect on the results of the post-test GMI. The course-in action schedule is shown in Table II.

CONCLUSION

The researchers conclude that no matter what the major of the students, a systematic investigation and an in-depth analysis of the student values and needs are essential in order to develop a plan to design a study abroad program. The theory of the researchers is that return on investment on such tailored programs is that learning by experience in international settings not only adds immediate value to the students' knowledge, skills and abilities, preparing them to better compete for jobs but also motivates students so that they would be able to make valuable contributions to the economic prosperity of their state/region. This theory will be put to use as part of the second phase of the study in spring and summer 2020 which is planned as a participatory action research since this part will include the teaching and learning of the course, the implementation of the program in Thailand, the student evaluation through GMI and an After Action Review. The plan includes collecting both qualitative and quantitative data throughout the course and in-country to explore the learnings of the students and the impact of such programs on students with local values and unique characteristics.

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