

Centralization/Decentralization: the Impact on Quality and Standards

ROUNDTABLE SESSION: ~~P~~ARTICIPATION REQUIRED!

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Session Goals

Facilitate critical analysis of study abroad models on our campuses

Enhance awareness of tensions between centripetal and centrifugal dynamics in university study abroad structures

To see beyond conventional organizational charts

To develop an awareness of the impact of centralized or decentralized models on various aspects of program quality and standards

To foster an appreciation of advantages and disadvantages of various models to facilitate cooperative relationships between constituent units on campus

What is centralization in study abroad?

- Distinctive Feature of centralized models: primary articulation of student participants is with this unit before, during and after study abroad experience
- The classic 'ideal' in which all aspects of study abroad programs and operations are subsumed into a single administrative structure
- Can be a component of a broader 'international office' typically headed by a Senior International Officer
- Linked horizontally in functional ways with other campus units
 - Academic Affairs/Provost/Deans/Departments/Faculty
 - Student Affairs/Campus Life/Health and Safety/International Student Offices
 - Business Operations/Finance/Risk Management

What is decentralization in study abroad?

Compartmentalized structures –

A) Semi-compartmentalized structures

Example: a 'division of labor' model where students are recruited and advised, oriented and monitored abroad, by an academic unit that 'owns' a study abroad program, but all other articulations are housed in other 'support' units, e.g. finance, insurance, safety and risk, housing, etc.

B) Radically compartmentalized models where all student articulations are with a single unit, often replicated among units of similar type/level

Example: programs run by departments or colleges in which central support and/or fiscal responsibility is semi-autonomous and divorced from 'university central' at the operational level

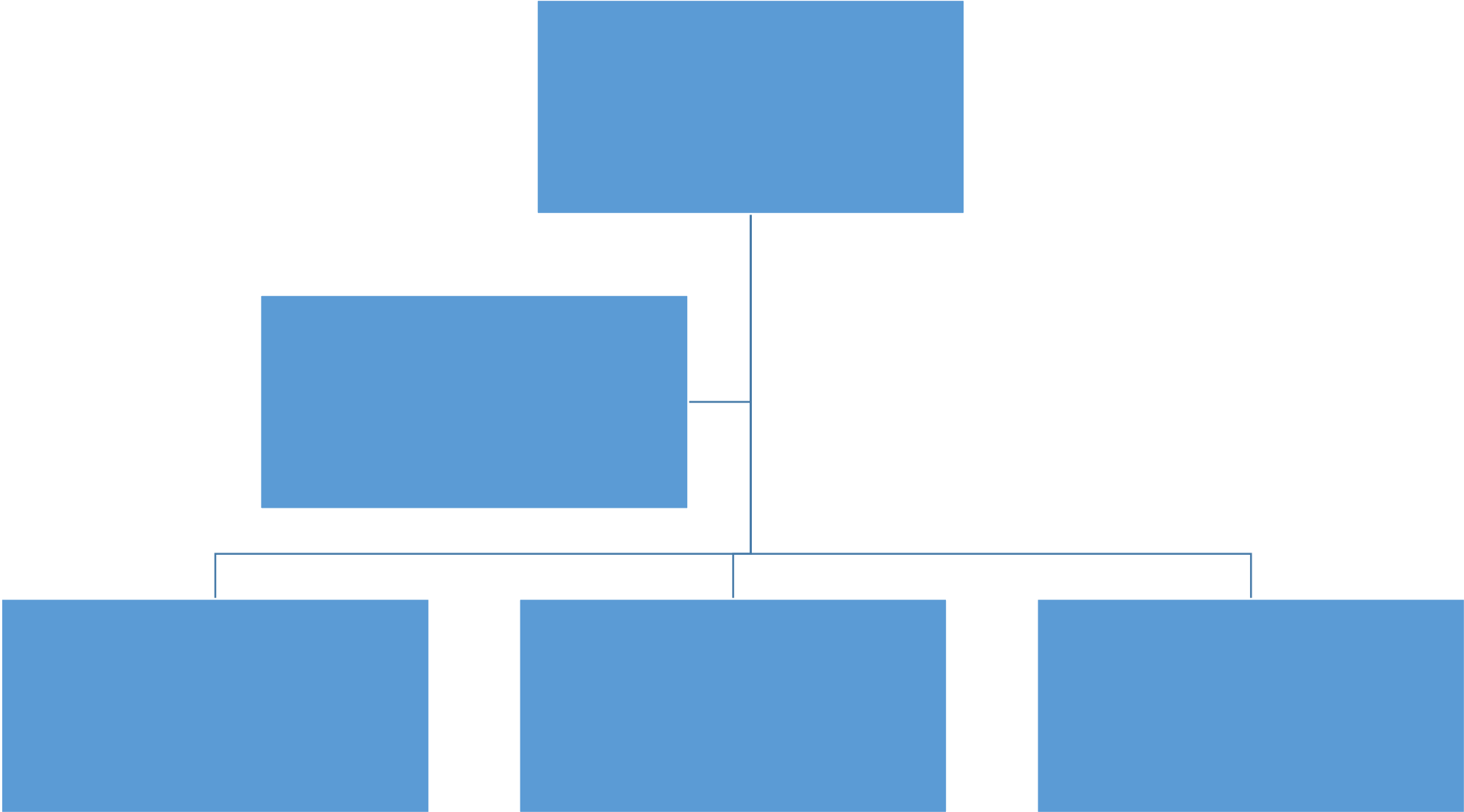
What is decentralization in study abroad?

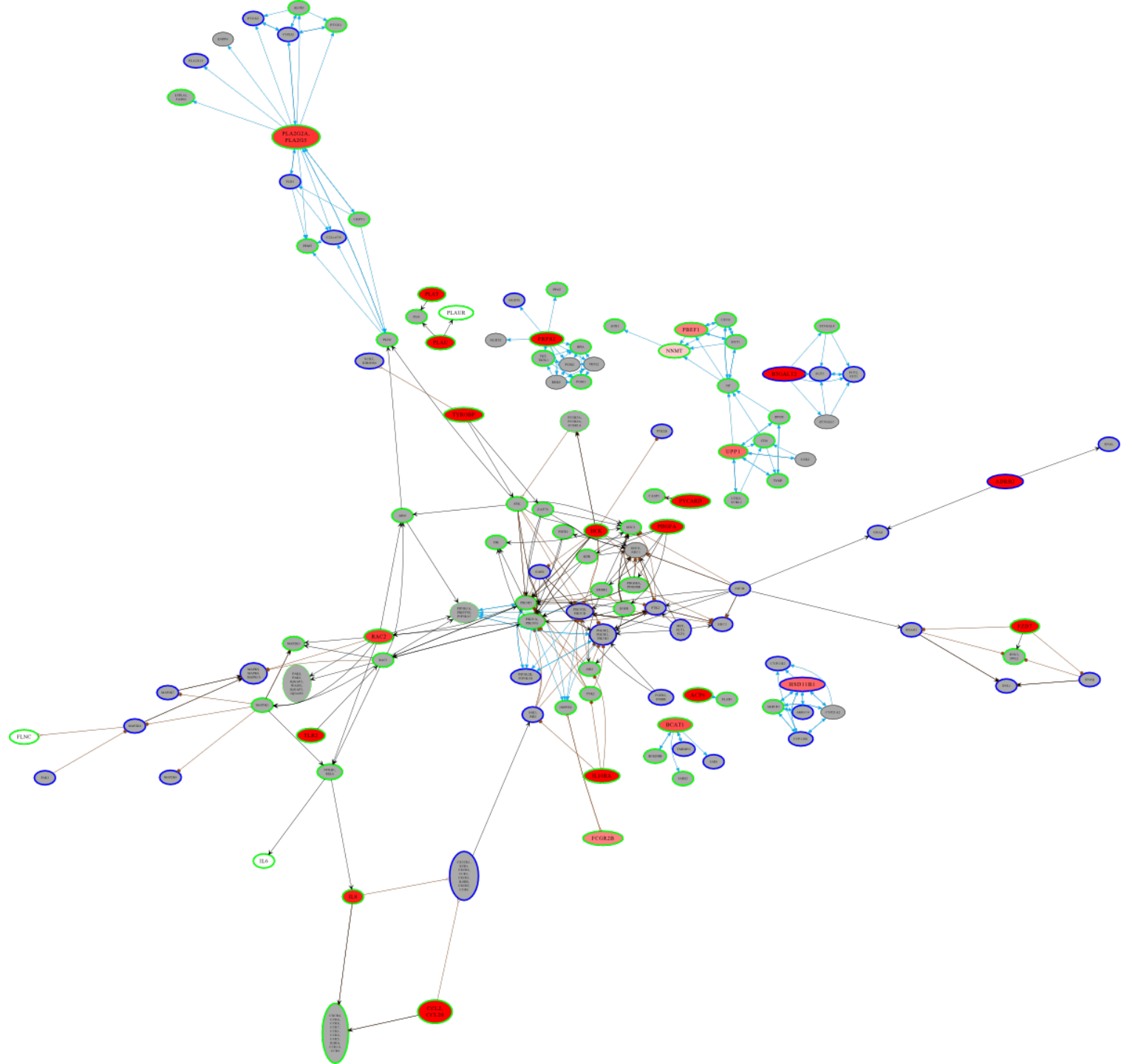
Continued....

- Radically compartmentalized structures
 - Programs run entirely by departments, colleges, centers, institutes, etc.
- Semi-compartmentalized structures
 - Programs 'owned' by departments, colleges, etc. but a 'division of labor' along functional lines
- Intentional hybrids
 - Combination of 'centrally run' programs and compartmentalized programs
- Free-for-alls
 - Few established protocols, intentions, or cooperation between organizational levels and constituent parts

University bureaucracies: Weberian and 'other'

- Classic organizational charts may or may not be organized to recognize or reflect decentralized realities
- Weberian bureaucracies (pursuit of efficiency and rational goals at all levels across all functional domains) don't exist in universities
- Universities are **status hierarchies**, not rational hierarchies
 - a better metaphor is the class-based hierarchy
 - tenure is a major fault line dividing classes
 - tensions between status and functionality reflected in current debate at many universities over the 'corporatization of the academy'





So.... In light of 'reality' at most of our institutions...

- How can study abroad program 'quality' be assessed from the perspectives of centralized versus compartmentalized/decentralized constituencies?
- Standards (such as the Forum Standards) are articulated as universal truths and guidelines – in decentralized models how are they adhered to?
- Without centralized monitoring and a modicum of control is it possible to sustain standards across all constituencies?
- Do 'divisions of labor' contribute to or take away from commitments to standards? A matter of perspective?