Cultural Barriers to the Internationalization of STEM Education and the Development of Sustainable Partnerships

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Agenda:

• Introductions
  – Northeastern University
  – University College Dublin
  – Downton Abbey

• Perspectives
  – Receiving Office (Upstairs)
  – Academics (Downstairs)
  – Visiting Institution (Distinguished Dignitaries)

• Mini SWOT

• Discussion
Introductions:
Who are we?
Who are you?
Downton Abbey

- British drama series, takes place in Yorkshire, UK between the years of 1912-1925
- Follows the lives of the Earl and Countess of Grantham and their family
- Aristocratic Great Britain: Upstairs and Downstairs culture and lots of visiting guests!
Perspectives from the (receiving) International Office

‘Upstairs’
Upstairs Perspectives:

Choosing the right partners ‘the Guests’

- Strategic mission that fits with your University
- Complementary STEM programmes, goals and mutual benefits
- Existing Academic / Research links between your institutions
- Academic reputation of the institution - accreditation
- Region or country of strategic significance
Upstairs Perspectives:

Unclear Expectations of the Partner - ‘Guests’

- Building REAL sustainable partnerships between Universities
- Identify and confront any obstacles immediately
- Provide clear and comprehensive details of support structures
Upstairs Perspectives:

Difference in Academic & Student Life Structures

- Support structures such as “Peer Mentors”
- Carefully design orientation events to promote integration
- An awareness of cultural differences which will affect transition
Choosing the right Faculty ‘downstairs’

- Champions for Internationalization who engage cross-culturally.
- Faculty with existing international research links and profile.
- Willing to commit time and energy to building partnerships and relationships -travel, curriculum, mapping.
Upstairs Perspectives:

Ongoing collaboration ‘hosting the guests’

- Communication mediums: Skype, meetings at conferences, campus visits
- Facilitating a channel of communication between Study Abroad partners and Academic area
- Based on TRUST—developed over time
- Developing academic champions at both partner Universities- sending and receiving and passing the baton
- Evaluate partnership over time
Perspectives from the Academics at the Receiving Institution ‘Downstairs’
Downstairs Perspectives: Academic “buy in” to Study Abroad

• Clear explanation of the benefits for Internationalization of STEM Education

• Identification of academic champions of STEM study abroad programs
Downstairs Perspectives:
Proper Academic Preparation

- In depth module mapping well in advance of program commencement
- Detailed syllabi outlining not only learning outcomes, but also teaching methods.
Downstairs Perspective:

Continuous Academic Oversight

- “Real time” monitoring of the performance of incoming students
- Design effective tutorials to monitor performance.
- Specific support systems – Associate Dean, Course Coordinators.
Downstairs Perspectives:

Seeking Academic Feedback

- Direct feedback sessions with students at different times in the semester
- Follow up feedback from home institute academics to see if changes are needed to module choice.
Perspectives from the Visiting University

‘Distinguished Dignitaries’ or the ’Guests’
Guests Perspectives: Making the Connection

- How new partnerships are considered and created:
  - “Friends” of “Friends”
  - Conferences
  - Strategic interest

- Impact of their inception
Guests Perspectives:

Choosing the ‘right’ institution

- Understanding “our culture”
- Communication Style
- Trust and Respect
- Motivations
- Costs!

Northeastern University
Guests Perspectives:

Finding a STEM Partner

• Matching key STEM Courses:
  - Anatomy and Physiology
  - Biology
  - Chemistry
  - Physics
  - Psychology
  - MATH!

• Labs!
Guests Perspectives:

The partner should be flexible

- Is the partner open to feedback and flexible with their “Interior Design”
Guests Perspectives:
Adaptability throughout the Relationship

• Sustainability of the relationship; People come and go 😊

• Debriefing a program: What worked? What needs improvement?
  - The soup was great, but the dessert was not really good…
  - Would you attend another ‘dinner party’ there?
MINI SWOT

Complete a SWOT analysis of the following: *Internationalizing STEM education from the perspective of your chosen Downton Abbey role:*

1. Receiving Office (Upstairs)
2. Academics (Downstairs)
3. Visiting Institution (Distinguished Dignitaries)
MINI SWOT

For example: Attending the Forum on Education Abroad

STRENGTHS: Professional development, learn new skills

WEAKNESSES: Staying present, managing back home

OPPORTUNITIES: Making new connections, networking

THREATS: Getting tricked into attending sessions about Downton Abbey 😊
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Northeastern University

Large Group Feedback

1. Receiving Office (Upstairs)
2. Academics (Downstairs)
3. Visiting Institution (Distinguished Dignitaries)
Final Thoughts...

Cora, Countess of Grantham: (smiling)
*Are we to be friends then?*

Violet, Dowager Countess of Grantham: (after a very long pause)
*We are allies, which can be a good deal more effective.*
From Break-Out Groups

**Strengths:**
- Tailored program
- Accommodating facilities
- Fills a gap in better or more focused programs on a platform complementary to other disciplines
- Improved faculty mobility and communication
- Science is universal
- Time running

**Weaknesses:**
- Opportunity
- Threat
- Concern

**Visiting Guests**
- Increases S.A.
- Diverse demographic
- Increased marketing
- Increased internationalization
- Additional research opportunities
- More students out of U.S., classroom miscommunication
- Curriculum differences

**S**
- Internships/clinical
- Prof. networking

**W**
- Gathering enrollments