

To:

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From: Lynda Robinson
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Re: Travel and Study Abroad Grant

Date: April 10, 2015

My report outlines my experience, learning and how I will apply my new knowledge after attending the Winter Institute for Intercultural Communication; March 9-12, 2015 in North Carolina.

Background:

I attended the training in an effort to learn how to better foster a learning environment that stimulated learning for all students, but with an emphasis on engaging international students in stronger ways, embracing their strengths as learners and looking for ways to create an inclusive learning environment.

In my role as Co-operative Education Coordinator and Instructor for Preparation for Co-operative Education courses, I am continually looking for ways to support students to be successful in the workplace.

All Hospitality Management students must participate in the Prep course and complete a mandatory Co-op work term. With the increasing number of international students in the classroom and partaking in Co-op work terms, I felt it necessary to increase my own intercultural competence, to better understand how I could create a more diverse and inclusive learning situation.

I have struggled to find ways to better meet the needs of my international students, while still engaging the domestic students, who have, at times, expressed frustrating with the pace of instruction and repetition of content.

I wanted to particularly look to provide ways in which learners could enhance their knowledge and understanding of cultural differences, similarities, and perceptions; and provide tools that help students to effectively engage in building and maintaining a more diverse and inclusive classroom community.

My focus was also on identifying strategies, pedagogy, systems, and approaches that would help international students to quickly become familiar with Canadian workplace culture and practices; incorporating a shared learning model, that didn't separate international student's knowledge and skills from domestic students, but distinguished between various workplace and career/employment cultural practices.

The Training:

The courses I attended at the Winter Institute focused on:

- Discussing, comparing and contrasting diversity and intercultural education and training;
- Used a developmental model for sequencing and designing programs
- Address learners developmental stage regarding cultural differences
- Explored the cultural underpinnings of classroom behaviours, expectations and pedagogies
- Examined mental models, and teaching strategies that are research based and inclusive.

The workshops focused on what steps can be taken to develop inclusive teaching with intentional course design.

What was particularly insightful was examining my own intercultural competence (a set of cognitive, affective and behavioural skills and characteristics that supports effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts) Bennett, J 2015.

While I believe that I have some understanding of appropriate ways in which to communicate and interact and understand other cultures, I have much to learn, including a deeper knowledge of my own cultural identity!

It is a work in progress, to enhance my intercultural competence; having a culturally sensitive mindset, skillset and heartset. Understanding how I develop my curriculum, facilitate learning, interact in the classroom, and interact with students, is influenced by my own culture.

After the Training:

Following my attendance at the institute, I believed I would re-design my courses to have separate streams, allowing students to choose between two options, with the same content, but delivered in slightly different ways. I would facilitate a self-assessment questionnaire with students at the beginning of the semester, allowing them to answer questions about their needs, experiences, and background. Based on their responses, students would be given the option of choosing between two separate classes; if students were new to Canadian workplace culture, had no work experience, did not have any experience with career development and job search, they could choose the course option that covered this content in much more detail. If students had worked in Canada, took a high school CAP course where career development and job search processes were covered, then they could choose the other course option. Students would have separate classes initially, but then come together near the end of the semester to participate as a large group in one class.

The intent was to offer choice, and balancing challenge and support with both options to maximize learning. I did not want to create a system of 'us and them', or a student thinking one class was easier or harder, producing separateness. After discussing this possibility with many colleagues and students I began to re-think the design idea, discerning it would create too much distinction and division between the groups.

A few weeks after the training, I attended a session facilitated by Bill Roberson of The Centre for Innovation & Excellence in Learning that focused on Team Based Learning. I was intrigued with the concepts presented and set up a follow-up meeting with Bill, to discuss options and opportunities with team based teaching and my classroom and student challenges.

After a lengthy discussion, it became clear that a team based learning design for the course could address some of the issues around supporting international students, while promoting cross cultural communication, with all students benefiting from this model.

I will be attending the '*Using Team-Based Learning to Promote Critical Thinking*' 2 day workshop through the Centre for Innovation & Excellence in Learning on May 19 and 21, to re-design the Co-op Prep courses which I believe will provide for increased cultural self-awareness and knowledge, supporting students to understand themselves and other cultures more effectively, and ultimately be more successful in acquiring and being successful in their co-op work term and careers.

Using the team based learning model, and the learning from the institute which focused on teaching inclusively, the intent and hope with the course re-design/re-focus is to create a shared learning environment, where student's cultural background and lens is viewed as valuable in a team based learning environment; exposing students in purposeful ways to the value of working in multicultural groups and benefitting from the experience of their peers, regardless of culture.

I look forward to sharing the outcomes of the 'new' course with stakeholders. I would like to thank Dr. Graham Pike and Dr. Dave Twynam for their shared support, allowing me to participate in the Winter Institute for Intercultural Communication.