**Making Critical Connections:**

**Teaching International Development in the Liberal Arts**

## INTRODUCTION

Beloit College and Colorado College were funded through the ACM FaCE grants program for a two-part workshop on teaching international development in the liberal arts. The impetus behind these workshops was two-fold: First, to discuss, design and implement strategies towards the interdisciplinary teaching of international development. Secondly, to link this interdisciplinary teaching more deliberately to students’ study abroad experiences.

Overall goals for the January and May workshops:

1. to discuss how a liberal arts education can best be used to critically examine , approach and engage in development topics/projects at both local and global levels
2. to work collaboratively with various disciplines to find a “common language” through which liberal arts instructors can teach development
3. to discuss effective means of providing students with an understanding of development that integrates various disciplinary perspectives and innovative teaching practices
4. to share information and resources through which we can encourage students to engage in a more deliberately focused study abroad experience; independent research projects; volunteer opportunities, and internships at either that international or domestic levels
5. to learn how best to prepare students for making career choices in development through dialogues with career services professionals, study abroad program representatives, service learning institutions, etc.
6. develop an ACM wide website devoted to teaching development; the website may include sample syllabi, teaching modules, recommended reading lists, list of ACM faculty and their research interests/specializations and other relevant information

## CHICAGO WORKSHOP

January 11-12, 2011 Chicago, IL

**Participants:**

**Jennifer Esperanza**: Beloit College, Anthropology; **Martin Farrell**: Ripon College, Political Science; **DiepPhan**: Beloit College, Economics ; **TakeshiIto:** Colorado College, Political Science; **Molly Margaretten:** Ripon College, Anthropology; **Monty Roper**: Grinnell College, Anthropology and Global Development Studies; **Pedro de Araujo**: Colorado College, Economics; **Daniel Beers**: Knox College, Political Science; **Jean Delany**: St. Olaf, History; **Rachel Ellett**: Beloit College, Political Science and International Relations

**Main activities and outcomes:**

Activity 1: Discussed disciplinary approaches to development; can we find a common language?  
Outcome: Challenges in integrating inter-disciplinary perspectives into teaching international development included:

* “Development” can mean different things to different disciplines.
* We use different languages (i.e. the same word might mean different things across disciplines) and approaches.
* Such challenges only underscored the need to integrate multi-disciplinary perspectives into teaching development.
  + Students want simple answers and anticipate straightforward solutions, but they should recognize that there are no simple answers, especially when they have to integrate different perspectives.

Activity 2: Student Anna Wolf talked about her doing development experience in India, Ghana, and Peru.  
Outcome: Identified challenges in preparing students to do development abroad. Students are often unprepared to face the complexities of doing development at the local level because:

* They may not be aware of the need to take certain necessary courses, or
* Their prior coursework may not have provided them with practical skills that the host organizations desire, such as proposal writing, research, intercultural communication skills, analytical and quantitative skills, problem solving, etc.

Activity 3: Sharing of course syllabi and other teaching materials

Activity 4: Drafting an interdisciplinary development course  
Outcome: Decided to develop a pilot module rather than an entire course

* Created an interdisciplinary module that combines theory with practice and emphasizes skill building (analytical, problem solving, policy decision making, report/proposal writing, presentation) to prepare students to do development
* Chose topic of tourism and development, preferably on a country that currently has an ACM study abroad program
* Rachel Ellett, DiepPhan and Jennifer Esperanza from Beloit College volunteered to co-write a fictional case study, loosely based on an existing tourism and development project in Botswana. This pilot module would then be shared with any interested ACM faculty to implement in their Spring courses.

## COLORADO WORKSHOP

May 19-20, 2011 Colorado College

**Participants:**

**Jennifer Esperanza**: Beloit College, Anthropology; **Martin Farrell**: Ripon College, Political Science; **DiepPhan**: Beloit College, Economics ; **TakeshiIto:** Colorado College, Political Science; **Molly Margaretten:** Ripon College, Anthropology; **Pedro de Araujo**: Colorado College, Economics;**NoerFauziRachman**: Colorado College, Asian Studies; Matt Bakker: Colorado College, Sociology; **Inger Bull**: Colorado College, Director of International Studies Office: **Heather Browne**, Colorado College, International Studies Office; **Antonio Skarica**: Colorado College, International Political Economy; **Michael Schneider**: Knox College, History;**Daniel Beers**: Knox College, Political Science; **Jean Delany**: St. Olaf College, History; **Rachel Ellett**: Beloit College, Political Science and International Relations; **Betsy Brewer**, Beloit College, Director of International Education; **Dana Strand**, Carleton College, French; **Clint Cowan**, Carleton College.

**Main activities and outcomes:**

Activity 1: International Studies Office preparation for study abroad

* Betsy Brewer gave a presentation on the different types of study abroad programs that relate to international development. She emphasized the fact that increasing numbers of students are choosing to study abroad in the developing world.
* She then proceeded to highlight some of the ways in which Beloit College is currently integrating study abroad into the curriculum. For example, digital storytelling, senior thesis writing, etc.
* Heather Browne from Colorado College then offered some commentary on the challenges students face in selecting appropriate international development related study abroad.
* Scott Carpenter from Carleton College Skyped into the meeting to brief the workshop on recent initiatives at Carleton around integrating study abroad into the curriculum and teaching international development from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Outcomes: Develop closer collaboration between study abroad professionals and faculty. For example, generate information sheets on international development related programs and the concomitant relevant preparatory courses on the home campus.

Activity 2: Students’ reflections on study abroad

* A junior from Colorado College reflected on his experiences before, during and after his study abroad on the ACM Botswana program.
* Faculty then discussed ways in which they could better facilitate students preparation, their research in the field and reintegration of the experience back on the home campus. Pedro de Araujo suggested that faculty supervision of independent research taking place during these kinds of programs was a possibility.

Outcomes: Again, we noted the importance of close collaboration between faculty and study abroad advisors on the one hand, and faculty and student on the other. This applies to each phase of the study abroad experience – before, during and after.

Activity 3: Assessing the implementation of the pilot module across ACM campuses

Outcome:

* Beloit team (Phan, Ellett, and Esperanza), Beers (Knox), Margaretten (Ripon), and Ito (Colorado) reported their results of the pilot module from their classes
* Reported the benefits of having issue-oriented exercises and the appreciation of a multidisciplinary approach to development (team-taught style)
* Reported the lack of issue-oriented exercises and faculty resources for team-teaching and multidisciplinary training in development

Outcome: Please refer to Attachment A – a PowerPoint presentation on the pilot module.

Activity 4: Sharing resources around course exercises

* Esperanza (Beloit) presented an example of a class exercise, “Migration and Refugee Resettlement” from her class “Society and Culture (Intro to Anthropology).” The learning goal is to examine the role of culture at different levels (local, national, global) and from their particular historical contexts. Groups of students are asked to design a fictional orientation program for newly arrived refugees to the local community. Students are given a specific refugee group and are asked to conduct research on the group’s political and cultural backgrounds, assess their needs upon arrival and identify community resources that can help in their transition to life in the United States. A few students who have participated in this exercise have gone on to do internships with refugee resettlement programs and immigration advocacy groups.
* Ito (Colorado) presented an example of a class exercise, “the politics of food: how the US farm bill shapes local livelihoods of farmers not only in the US but also in other countries,” from his class “Environmental Politics of Agriculture.” The learning goal is to explore local, national, and global connections in the causes of poverty and displacement through studying policy on food production and consumption in the global economy.

Outcome: We recognized the importance of this type of pedagogy for building a coherent understanding of multilayered and interconnected issues in international development such as displacement, migration, resettlement and poverty. Students’ learning process should begin with the historical understanding of contemporary issues in international development. Students also learn that culture and globalization add another dimension to thinking about solutions to central issues in international development.

A common goal for many of the workshop participants is to develop marketable skills related to international development, in addition to making the local-global connection. While these skills include research and writing, we are also interested in developing more classroom activities that encourage students to learn more about their local communities (e.g. civic organizations, community outreach programs and resources); to collaborate with community members and to assist local organizations using their skills in ethnographic research, grant writing, statistics, policy analysis, etc. As liberal arts educators, we believe that the communities just beyond the college campus are ideal locales from which students can begin to make connections between the local and the global.

## FUTURE PLANS

Short-Term Goals

* We intend to rewrite and improve the Botswana pilot module in the fall. Conditional on funding and availability, we will hold a one day meeting in September 2011, to rewrite the module.
* We will implement the new and improved module in the second half of the semester.
* We are currently exploring the possibility of presenting the results of the Botswana pilot module experiment at the AACU annual meeting in January 2012.

Mid to Long Term Goals

* Beloit College is now working on assembling an interdisciplinary/inter-institutional team to develop a SAIL proposal in 2012.
* We see this proposal as an extension of the current workshop, because the main activity we propose is to develop more interdisciplinary case studies on international development.
* Ultimately we are eager to continue the case study project in coming years. Slowly accumulating additional cases, culminating in publication of a teaching volume of case studies.