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Globalizing the Department to Expand Students' Cultural and World Awareness

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Globalizing the Department to Expand Students' Cultural and World Awareness

Jon K. Dalager

Session description

Studies have indicated that students who study abroad have higher retention rates and higher GPAs than students who do not study abroad. In addition, the British Council, together with Ipsos and Booz Allen Hamilton (a market research and consulting company, respectively), recently conducted a study on the Value of Intercultural Skills in the Workplace which found that “employers are under strong pressure to find employees who are not only technically proficient, but also culturally astute and able to thrive in a global work environment.” A 2013 survey of employers conducted by Hart Research Associates for the American Association of Colleges and Universities found that 96% of respondents felt that it was important for employees to have “Intercultural Skills” and 55% felt it was important for their employees to have “Global Knowledge.”

In order to provide students with these skills, colleges and universities need to do more than rely on the activities of the foreign language department or international student clubs. This session will discuss the importance of preparing students for life in a globalized world and ways to enhance their intercultural competence. The presenter will offer ideas that department chairs can use to internationalize their students, regardless of discipline, based on 1) the presenter’s experience as a department chair and academic dean, and 2) the efforts taken by the 25 two-year colleges and 7 universities of the Minnesota State system. Examples of real-life activities include the development of short-term study abroad opportunities, membership in study abroad consortia, exchange partnerships with foreign universities, Fulbright Scholars-in-Residence, faculty exchange programs, classrooms connected across borders through Skype and other platforms, internationalization of curricula, and more. The challenges and successes of each of these ideas will be discussed.

The style of the presentation will be interactive so that the audience can ask questions about the examples presented and can then offer their own ideas or examples of globalization efforts taken by their departments or campuses. The mediated “conversational” format will allow the audience to learn from one another and to take home ideas on how they might provide their students with greater intercultural competency and global awareness.

The target audience for this presentation are department chairs and deans who are seeking ways to provide their students with a global or international experience in order to better prepare them for a global work environment.