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# The COIL Institute for Globally Networked Learning in the Humanities

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## Final Report

**Sarah Guth, Program Coordinator**

**9/30/2013**

To our knowledge the documents that came from the COIL Institute represent the first detailed analysis of globally networked learning projects on a large scale. As part of our efforts to capture the results of the course development and implementation experiences of the 100+ Institute Fellows, SUNY COIL staff and COIL Institute staff guided each of the 24 teams that fully implemented a COIL course in completing a detailed case study describing the outcomes of their 18-month initiative. Fellows were given an online template and asked to collaboratively complete the 59 questions divided into 10 sections. Where possible, they were also asked to provide extra documentation such as syllabi, student work, etc. The aim of the case studies was to not only help the Fellows learn more about each other's work, but to also serve as valuable resources for future developers of globally networked courses. 24 out of the 26 teams completed the majority of the template, while nearly half provided extra documents.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
General Information .....	6
Class size .....	6
Language .....	6
Language of instruction .....	6
Students' primary language .....	7
Language used during course collaboration .....	7
Curricula and Technology .....	9
Duration .....	9
Format .....	10
Asynchronous tools .....	10
Synchronous tools .....	14
Assessment .....	16
Institutional Support .....	18
Evaluation .....	21
Student drop-out rate .....	21
Student feedback .....	21
Positive feedback .....	22
Negative feedback .....	23
Recommendations .....	24
Faculty evaluation .....	24
Lessons learned .....	27
The Future of Collaborative Online International Learning .....	30
Acknowledgements .....	34
Appendix 1: Participating Institutions .....	35

## Introduction

In 2010, the SUNY (State University of New York) Center for COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) won a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for a three-year project called the COIL Institute for Globally Networked Learning in the Humanities. COIL (also referred to as globally networked learning or virtual exchange) is not a technology, but rather a new approach to teaching and learning that brings together geographically distant instructors and students from different lingua-cultural backgrounds to communicate and collaborate through the use of online communication tools. The COIL method promotes interactive shared coursework, emphasizing experiential learning and gives collaborating students a chance to get to know each other while developing meaningful projects together. This broadens and deepens their understanding of course content while building cross-cultural communicative capacity through academic and personal engagement with the perspectives of global peers.

Participation in the COIL Institute was open to scholars in the humanities in US higher education institutions. In order to be selected, each institution was required to provide evidence of senior leadership commitment to COIL, at least one faculty member interested in creating a COIL course, demonstrated support by instructional design staff and/or staff from the international programs office on campus, and an international partner institution interested in developing the course together.

A total of 21 US institutions were selected from a national call for participants to design and develop pilot COIL initiatives. Some institutions developed two courses and/or had two international partners. Thus ultimately the Institute included 25 international partner institutions from 19 countries across all of the world's inhabited continents (see Appendix 1 for institutions and locations). Faculty and staff from all institutions were appointed as *COIL Institute Fellows* and led their campus' involvement in this new initiative, eventually developing 24 successful COIL courses. Each of the Institute's Fellows (domestic and international) made a two-year commitment to actively participate in:

- an ongoing online *Institute Commons* utilizing a customized social networking platform where participants were able to network and share experiences throughout the two-year Institute with other Institute Fellows and staff during their course development and implementation (June 2011 – June 2013);
- a 3-day discipline-specific workshops at the SUNY Global Center in NYC to learn about: setting disciplinary-specific learning goals, fostering cross-cultural engagement and dialogue, evaluating the technical support needs of globally networked learning environments, and engaging and supporting online collaborative initiatives as a means to promote and enhance study abroad (Sept. - Oct. 2011);
- a follow-up 8-week online course to build on the globally networked learning ideas discussed in the workshops (Oct. 2011 - Jan. 2012);
- teaching and/or supporting a globally networked course(s) involving partner institutions and students in at least two countries (Jan. - Dec. 2012);
- maintaining observation logs during the implementation of the courses and create a Case Study of the course(s) upon completion;
- the Capstone Event at the SUNY Global Center in Manhattan in April 2013.

Based on the proposed course content, teams were assigned to 1 of 5 discipline-specific tracks: Human Societies, Language and Literature, International Studies, Media Arts and Culture, and Freshmen Foundations. Each track was led by two experts with experience developing and implementing COIL courses in that specific area. Together with SUNY COIL Center staff, an Instructional Design specialist, and Cross-Cultural Communications specialist, these experts provided support and hands-on training in

the design, development, and implementation of COIL courses, with a specific focus on cross-cultural and pedagogical issues related to technology.

**Freshman Foundations:**

Track Leaders: Dr. Rosina Chia and Dr. Elmer Poe (East Carolina University)

Introductory courses in all humanities disciplines that focus on internationalizing the curriculum.

<b>Institutions</b>	University of North Carolina at Greensboro - American University of Beirut (Lebanon)*	University of Texas at El Paso - Victoria University (Australia)	The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee – University of Osaka (Japan)
<b>Course</b>	What are Human Rights?	Imagining Nations: Cultural Diversity in Australia and the US-Mexico Border	Confronting National Identity
<b>US Faculty Partner</b>	Alexandra Schultheis Moore	Irma Victoria Montelongo	Jason Christopher Jones, Jennifer L. Watson
<b>Intl. Faculty Partner</b>	Alexander Hartwiger	Effy George	Junko Takefuta
<b>US Support staff</b>	Anita Warfford	Steve Varela, Beau S. Pihlaja	Matthew Russell, Berry Bergstrom
<b>Intl. Programs (US)</b>	Denise Bellamy		Sara Tully

\*The first institution listed is the US institution followed by the international one with country specified in parentheses.

**Human Societies:**

Track Leaders: Dr. Craig Little (SUNY Cortland) and Dr. Krister Håkansson (Linnaeus University, Sweden)

Courses in the social sciences and related disciplines.

<b>Institutions</b>	SUNY Geneseo - Moscow State University (Russia)	Marymount University - Hanze University of Applied Science (Netherlands)	San Jose State University - Kwansai Gakuin University (Japan)	SUNY College at Brockport - Novgorod State University (Russia)	Lehigh University and Drexel University - University of Ghana (Ghana)
<b>Course</b>	<i>Intercultural Communications</i>	<i>The Global Village</i>	<i>Global Youth Culture</i>	<i>Gender Roles Across Cultures</i>	<i>Global Citizenship and Corporate Social Responsibility</i>
<b>US Faculty Partner</b>	Meredith Marko Harrigan	Janine DeWitt, Carolyn Oxenford	Ruth Wilson, Yoko Baba	Barbara LeSavoy	Sarah Stanlick, Tina Richardson
<b>Intl. Faculty Partner</b>	Mira Bergelson	Loes Damhof, Marca Wolfensberger	John Wilson	Elena Lukovitskaya	Daniel Ofori, Kwesi Amponsah-Tawiah
<b>US Support staff</b>	Corey Ha	Sue Conrad, Ted Alvis	Mark Adams	Ann Pearlman	Ilena Key
<b>Intl. Support staff</b>		Tijn Oprins, Ingrid Schutte		Konstantin Krasnoshchekov	
<b>Intl. Programs (US)</b>	Becky Lewis	Victor Betancourt			

**Media Arts and Cultures:**

Track Leaders: Prof. Jon Rubin (SUNY Global Center) and Eric Feinblatt

Courses in film and new media studies; musicology; cultural studies and related disciplines.

<b>Institutions</b>	Swarthmore College - Ashesi University College (Ghana)	Corning Community College - Actors College of Theatre & Television (Australia)	North Carolina Central University, University of South Africa (South Africa) and Royal Academy of Music (Denmark)	National University – Los Angeles Campus and Griffith University (Australia)
<b>Course</b>	<i>Re-Envisioning Diasporas</i>	<i>Voice and Movement</i>	<i>Jazz! Born in America, Created Internationally</i>	<i>Cinematic Storytelling Across Cultures</i>
<b>US Faculty Partner</b>	Sunka Simon	Mary Guzzy	Lenora Helm	James Napoli, Bettina Moss
<b>Intl. Faculty Partner</b>	Mikelle Antoine	Linda Nichols-Gidley	Mageshen Naidoo, Keld Hosbond, Sean Adams, Madeleine Short, Jens Christian Kwella	Hugh Burton, Herman Van Eyken
<b>US Support staff</b>	Michael Jones	Jayne Peaslee	Dan Reis	Del Mackey
<b>Intl. Support staff</b>			Sarah Voges, Jesper Hjarne Olsen, Lana Garland, Charl Du Plessis	
<b>Intl. Programs (US)</b>	Carina Yervasi	James Jansen	Emmanual Oritsejafor	

**Language and Literature:**

Track Leader: Sarah Guth (University of Padua, Italy)

Courses in writing studies; rhetoric; language instruction; literature and related disciplines.

<b>Institutions</b>	Rochester Institute of Technology - American College of Management and Technology (Croatia)	SUNY Corning Community College, - Belize University, (Belize)	SUNY Empire State College - University of Victoria, (Canada)	SUNY Empire State College - Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain)
<b>Course</b>	<i>Writing Seminar</i>	<i>Global English Composition</i>	<i>Planet Hip-Hop</i>	<i>Spanish / English</i>
<b>US Faculty Partner</b>	David S. Martins	Ryan Hersha	Himanee Gupta-Carlson	Nataly Tcherepashenets
<b>Intl. Faculty Partner</b>	Rebecca Charry	Ubaldimir Guerra	Janni Aragon	Florence Lojacono, Richard Clouet
<b>US Support staff</b>	Michael Starenko	Jayne Peaslee	Hui-Ya Chuang	Hui-Ya Chuang
<b>Intl. Programs</b>		James Jansen		

<b>Institutions</b>	Texas Tech University and MyongJi University (Korea)	Texas Tech University and Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (Germany)	San Jose State University and Kagoshima University (Japan)
<b>Course</b>	<i>Technical Communication</i>	<i>Science Fiction and Modern Society</i>	<i>Japanese and American Culture</i>
<b>US Faculty Partner</b>	Kelli Cargile Cook	Bruce Clarke	Yasue Kodama Yanai
<b>Intl. Faculty Partner</b>	Sokjin Yang	Dirk Vanderbeke	Katsunori Takeuchi
<b>US Support staff</b>	Brian Still	Brian Still	Mark Adams

## International Studies:

Track Leaders: Prof. Wayne Te Brake (SUNY Purchase) and Asst. Prof. Yonca Koksal (Koç University, Turkey)

Courses in History; Political Science; International Studies; Area studies; and related disciplines

<b>Institutions</b>	Coastal Carolina University - Universidad in Galapagos (Country)	SUNY Cortland SUNY Buffalo State College Manchester Metropolitan University (UK), Babes Bolyai University Romania),	SUNY Cortland and Anadolu University (Turkey)	University of Cincinnati and Universidad de las Americas Puebla	George Mason University and National Research University-Higher School of Economics (Russia)
<b>Course</b>	<i>Global Environmental Politics - Galapagos</i>	<i>Transatlantic Public Administration and Policy</i>	<i>International Development and International Migration</i>	Feminisms in Comparative Perspective: Immobilities, Inequalities, and Transnationalisms in North America	<i>Experiences from the 20th Century</i>
<b>US Faculty Partner</b>	Pamela L. Martin	Keith Henderson, Henry Steck	German A. Zarate	Anne Sisson Runyan	Steven Barnes
<b>Intl. Faculty Partner</b>	Diego Quiroga	Frank Carr, Annabel Kiernan, Natalia Cuglesan	Kagan Ozdemir	Marianne H. Marchand	Irina Filatova, Oleg Budnitskiy
<b>US Support</b>	Jennifer Shinaberger	Beth Burns	Robert Babcock	Carolyn Stoll. Olga Sanmiguel- Valderrama	Rick Reo, Anne Schiller
<b>Intl. Programs (US)</b>	Geoff Parsons	Laurie Buonanno	Mary Schlarb		Cheryl Choy

As part of the work done in the Institute each of the 24 teams that fully implemented a COIL course was asked to complete a case study describing the course. Fellows were given a template on Google Drive (see Appendix 1) and asked to collaboratively complete the 59 questions divided into 10 Sections in as much detail as possible. Where possible, they were also asked to provide extra documentation such as syllabi, student work, etc. The aim of the case studies as explained in the template was “to understand what our peers have accomplished [... and serve as] a valuable resource for future developers of globally networked courses who can learn from the collective experience of the Institute.” 24 out of the 26 teams completed at least 50% of the template and nearly half provided extra documents. Some teams carried out the task collaboratively whereas others only have the ‘voice’ of one or two members of the team (usually on the US side).

Fellows were also asked to keep observation logs on the online Institute Commons as they implemented their courses. They were given the following prompt via email:

We feel that everyone can benefit from learning about your collaboration as it unfolds. In this way you can also receive feedback from the rest of us. We propose that each team post weekly in the Commons about their course, as a kind of course journal, but these posts can be quite short - just a couple of paragraphs each week. Their focus can be what worked well and what did not work well in your course each week. Or you can raise other issues that are important to you. Assessment is another area we might want explore together. Ideally the responsibility for posting would be shared amongst your team.

Fellows carried out this task to varying degrees and, like the case studies, though they were asked to keep the logs collaboratively, often there were posts from only one team member.

The aim of this report is to summarize the learning that took place over the two years of the Institute in order to allow Institute Fellows to reflect upon their own experiences and those of their colleagues, as well as to disseminate the lessons learned through these experiences. The report was written based on an analysis of participants’ case studies (see the coil.suny.edu website for the complete versions) and observation logs when available. Since Fellows did not always provide complete information, the data provided in the report is approximate.

## General Information

### Class size

Based on the data from the Case Studies, a total of about 650 students took part in the COIL Institute. The average class size (16 students) was relatively small compared to more ‘traditional’ courses at many institutions. Nonetheless, there were classes that ranged from 4 students (independent study) to 40, and one US institution was paired up with 3 classes of Japanese students to accommodate the large number of US students in the course. Fellows were also asked if the number of students was ‘typical’ and the majority of those who said it was not indicated that the group was smaller. In addition to lack of confidence using English (non-US partners), fear of the international aspect (US students only), and a general fear of technology, teams also commented:

*we placed an intentional limit of 20 for technological issues (number of computers) and to create a more intimate environment that would foster discussion and collaboration*

*it was voluntary, and an extra course in addition to compulsory ones*

*we had to start the term a few weeks early*

*it was a new course*

A partner university in Ghana was the only institution that reported a larger class size citing that, in contrast to the fear of international collaboration mentioned above for US students, their students were very enthusiastic about the opportunity to connect with students in the US.

## Language

### Language of instruction

Many of the US institutions sought out non-US partner institutions where English was used as a language of instruction (e.g. in Turkey) in order to facilitate the collaboration. Table 1 shows that a majority of the COIL Institute courses were carried out with institutions where teaching took place in English (37 out of 45 who replied, including the US institutions).

Table 1: Language of Instruction at Participating Institutions

ENGLISH	37	ENGLISH AND JAPANESE	1
JAPANESE	1	ROMANIAN, GERMAN, HUNGARIAN, ENGLISH	1
KOREAN	1	ENGLISH AND SPANISH	1
SPANISH	1	ENGLISH AND DANISH	1
RUSSIAN	1		

### Students' primary language

In all of the non-English groups there were students who were bi- or multi-lingual, i.e. they spoke their primary/native language, English, and often other languages or dialects. Whereas many of the international partners explicitly said their students were multilingual, e.g. “the students in my class were for the most part multilingual, with varying degrees of fluency in each language”, several of the US partners stated that their students were monolingual and none mentioned multilingualism.

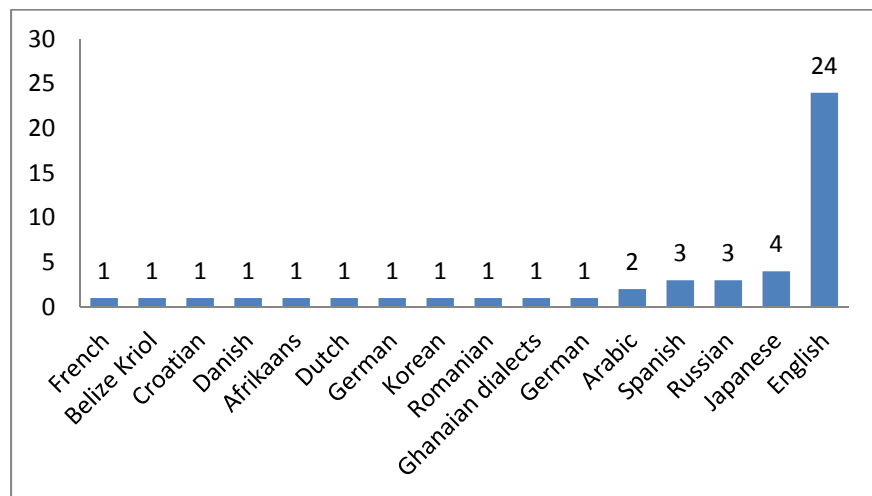


Figure 1: Students' primary language per exchange.

### Language used during course collaboration

All of the courses took place in English except for two bilingual language courses, US-Japan and US-Spain, and a US-South Korea course where students used predominantly their own native languages (English and Korean) but collaborated through images and video. In some courses students' native languages emerged spontaneously at times (e.g. US-Croatia) with explanations provided in English and in other courses the US students were encouraged to learn some basic words and greetings in their peers' language. In the course between the US and Belize, students were introduced to a couple works of Belizean literature, which included a mixture of English and Belize Kriol. Students from a university in Ghana spoke several different languages so, although the COIL course was carried out in English, tasks were created to have students reflect on language use and their own mother tongue using VoiceThread<sup>1</sup>.

Overall US teams were pleasantly surprised by the English proficiency of their foreign partners, with just a few exceptions. One US team reported that the speaking/listening fluency of the international students “was adequate but varied from proficient to struggling” and another that their peers abroad were “fluent enough to fully participate in scaffolded activities, but perhaps not enough to confidently participate in spontaneous activities.” Although some non-US students were attending English medium institutions, a faculty member in one such course noted: “English language is always a challenge/barrier for a few students in every course, particularly in formal writing, and academic reading.” A faculty member of an English linguistics course in Russia noted that rather than linguistic differences being a problem, “if anything, differences in communication styles and/or nonverbal communication were more impactful.” Indeed, even in courses that engage cohorts whose both native language is English,

<sup>1</sup> VoiceThread is a web-based application that allows users to have an asynchronous audio conversation (somewhat like leaving messages on an answering machine). Users can have conversations using any mix of text, images, videos, documents, and presentations. See <http://voicethread.com/>



communication styles can be conditioned by cultural background and institutional cultures. When the international cohort is made up of non-native speakers of English this simply becomes more complex. For example, a US faculty who paired with a class in Ghana noted that the international "... students had not been exposed to lengthy texts with a heavy emphasis on critical studies and theory (whether in English or another language)" and "only one third of [their] class contributed regularly and in depth to our weekly online writing activities." Rather than English proficiency being the cause of failed communication, the former comment may indicate the presence of different educational styles in the two countries and the latter both different institutional cultures and a lack of consistent Internet access in Ghana.

Language proficiency did, however, lead to challenges in communication in some cases. The non-English speakers often felt more insecure than their US peers and did not contribute as much as they might have if the course had been carried out in their own language. In some cases the synchronous discussions seemed to be more intimidating to the non-native speakers whereas for other groups students seemed more relaxed with real-time verbal communication and were ashamed of their written skills in English. It would be interesting to investigate this further in order to better understand whether these are due to cultural differences, e.g. written tradition vs. oral tradition in different societies, or how English is taught and used in society, or simply individual differences. Offering students different modes of communication seemed to help solve these differences in comfort with communication styles and modes. Teams also developed other ways to help overcome these challenges such as:

- careful planning and implementation, building modules with this consideration in mind;
- the need to avoid colloquial vocabulary and filler words (e.g. "ya know") on the part of the US students, to slow down speech speed and to avoid, or at least be able to explain, subtleties in language use and choice;
- "communicative skill" training namely the use of gestures, and other non-verbal cues to verify understanding
- developing general language awareness, particularly amongst the US cohorts and using moments of misunderstanding for learning;
- pointing out to the US students that their peers were at least bilingual and quite often multilingual.

The following excerpts from a US-Russia exchange highlight the fact that faculty might also perceive the impact of different levels of proficiency in quite contrasting ways. A comparison of comments from the US faculty and those from the Russian faculty highlights the importance of having input from all members of a GNL course. While the US faculty focuses on being impressed by the Russian students' ability to communicate in English, he does not seem to be aware of how difficult it really was for that cohort.

US perspective	Russian perspective
<p><i>From [my] perspective, the differential language skills had a relatively small impact on the course. I overestimated the problems from language skills and underestimated the problems caused by logistic issues. In classroom discussions, the Russian students as a group more than held their own. I would estimate that they easily did 50% of the talking and usually without any extra prodding--certainly no more than the prodding that was sometimes necessary to get the [US] students talking. The Russian students were slightly less adept in written English and seemed more reticent in the online discussion boards. All in all, I think the Russian students did an amazing job with their English usage in the class.</i></p>	<p><i>From [my] perspective language was a problem. Students with poorer English were not coping with required reading and as a result their contributions were not as good as they would have liked them to be. Some felt shy because of that (though this was certainly not the general problem). Language was also one of the reasons for a high dropout level. Those whose English was better from the start, blossomed, others felt that the course required too much effort without bringing the pleasure of success, and as the course was not obligatory, they simply left.</i></p>

Finally, one comment from a faculty member at a community college who carried out an exchange with students in Australia points out the fact that being ‘American’ or a native speaker of English does not necessarily guarantee that students will feel proficient and confident. She was concerned about how students at her community college view themselves and wrote:

*At [my community college], I observe that many students are not as adept at articulating their experience in writing, although they can verbally express their insights when they feel comfortable. Two students expressed to me that they sometimes felt intimidated by the level of articulation the [Australian] students exhibited in talking and writing about the course work. While this is not specifically a basic language skills issue, it does speak to an issue that I find particularly critical at our college: our students are very sensitive to appearing “stupid” or “foolish” in front of other people, and so they often tend not to speak at all or to share their thoughts freely with people they don’t know well. I observed, both in the audio posts and the written posts in Blackboard and on Facebook, that [my] students tended to limit a lot of their comments to “Great job!” They were more articulate in early audio posts.*

This too would certainly be an area for further investigation, particularly in the context of SUNY where institutions range from community colleges to Research I universities. For example, research that focused on how socio-economic factors influence how students in COIL courses perceive themselves would contribute to improving the quality of these courses.

## Curricula and Technology

### Duration

Most of the COIL courses carried out as part of the COIL Institute lasted a semester or part of a semester with only 3 lasting more than 12 weeks (see Figure 2). Several courses had different academic calendars, which meant different semester/term starting and ending times. One international team agreed to start the course 3 weeks early to meet the needs of the US institution, which had nonetheless already been in session for a month when the COIL component started. Though the only one to bring this up, this international faculty member noted that he felt his students, who were just beginning their course, had difficulty integrating since the US students had already had time to get to know one another, the teacher and the technology. A few respondents mentioned a lack of flexibility on the part of US institutions to adjust their calendars to the COIL course. Prior to the beginning of the COIL component,

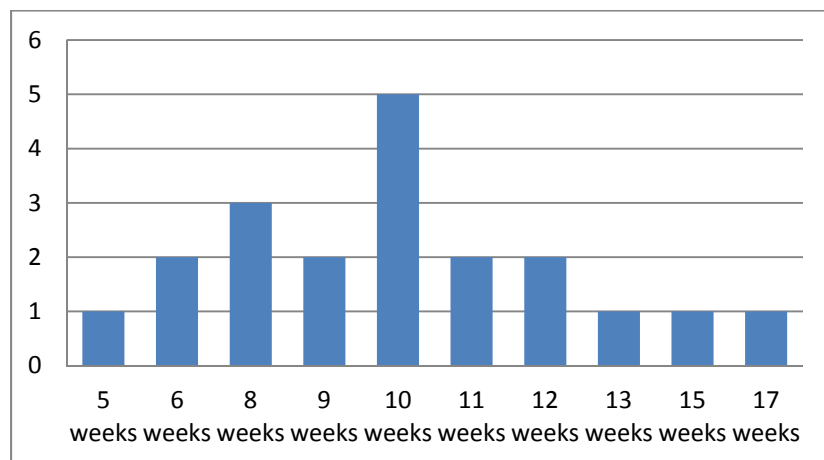


Figure 2: Duration of COIL Institute courses

three teams (both US and international cohorts) carried out tasks to focus on intercultural learning and many used this time to familiarize students with the technology they would be using and to provide information about their partner's culture, language, etc.

In all but one case, when one partner started earlier, the other ended later. In three instances students whose semester ended before their peers' spontaneously continued to connect with one another online or to continue collaborating on work started earlier. In only two cases does it appear both partners included structured pre-collaboration into their course syllabus to connect both groups before the first online meeting. In two cases US partners had their students prepare multi-media (one using video, the other VoiceThread) introductions for their peers to access before the first meeting. In another case, the international faculty member travelled to the US before his course started to address questions US students might have about the collaboration and the US professor travelled to the non-US country at the end of the collaboration (and her semester) to assist in follow up conversations with the international students whose semester was not over. They found these opportunities to meet the respective classes in person to be very fruitful for the course. Many team members found innovative ways to capitalize on the class time before or after the collaborative aspect of the course took place.

## Format

While the international collaborations took place online, most of the local courses met in face-to-face classroom sessions with the exception of one COIL course where both local courses were online courses and two others where one of the partner cohorts was an online course. Team members in this last configuration (one partner only online) expressed doubts as to the effectiveness of this format for two main reasons: first, the cohort of students in distance courses tend to have much broader demographics; second, the nature of distance learning leads to different levels of commitment on the part of the students. All the other courses took place using a blended format on campus mixing face-to-face (F2F) classes with online work, both asynchronous and synchronous<sup>2</sup>, using a wide variety of tools. For example, one of the US-Japan teams described their format as follows:

*Students had face-to-face interactions with three online synchronous sessions between the two campuses. Students worked in small groups developing presentations; they worked individually responding to emails and chatting with their international peers. They shared photographs and movies with their class members and their international counterparts. The [American] students took reading quizzes online, they interviewed youth on campus and in the community who were born in the USA and in other countries. The [Japanese] students conducted interviews with their parents and shared the results with [their American partners] via their Powerpoint presentations, in emails and in synchronous SKYPE sessions.*

## Asynchronous tools

Figure 3 shows that Fellows chose primarily to use cloud based social media tools and one of the institution's Learning Management Systems (LMS), but it's interesting to note that email, though considered an 'old' technology, is still commonly used. Similarly, if we look at the breakdown of the specific tools used (Figure 4) we see that email tops the list together with Facebook, followed by Blackboard (a proprietary<sup>3</sup> LMS), YouTube and Desire2Learn (a proprietary LMS).

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<sup>2</sup> Asynchronous communication means that learners can participate whenever the time is most convenient for him or her (within certain deadlines), e.g. using email or discussion forums. Synchronous communication takes place in real time, e.g. using instant messaging or VoIP tools such as Skype.

<sup>3</sup> An LMS may be defined as proprietary, licensed pay-for software that is often managed by the software provider, or as open source, free software that must be managed by local teams of technicians.

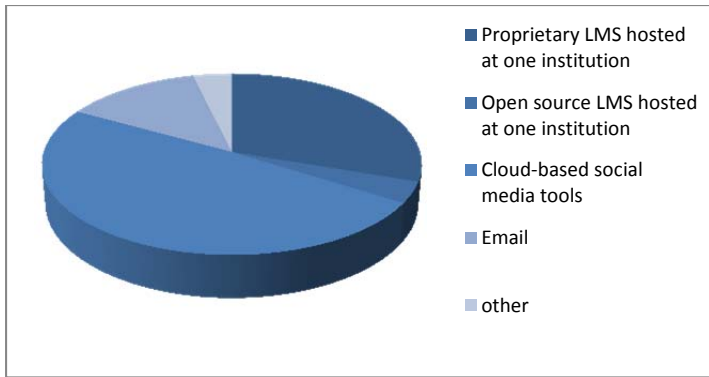


Figure 3: Asynchronous tools used by percentage of use per project

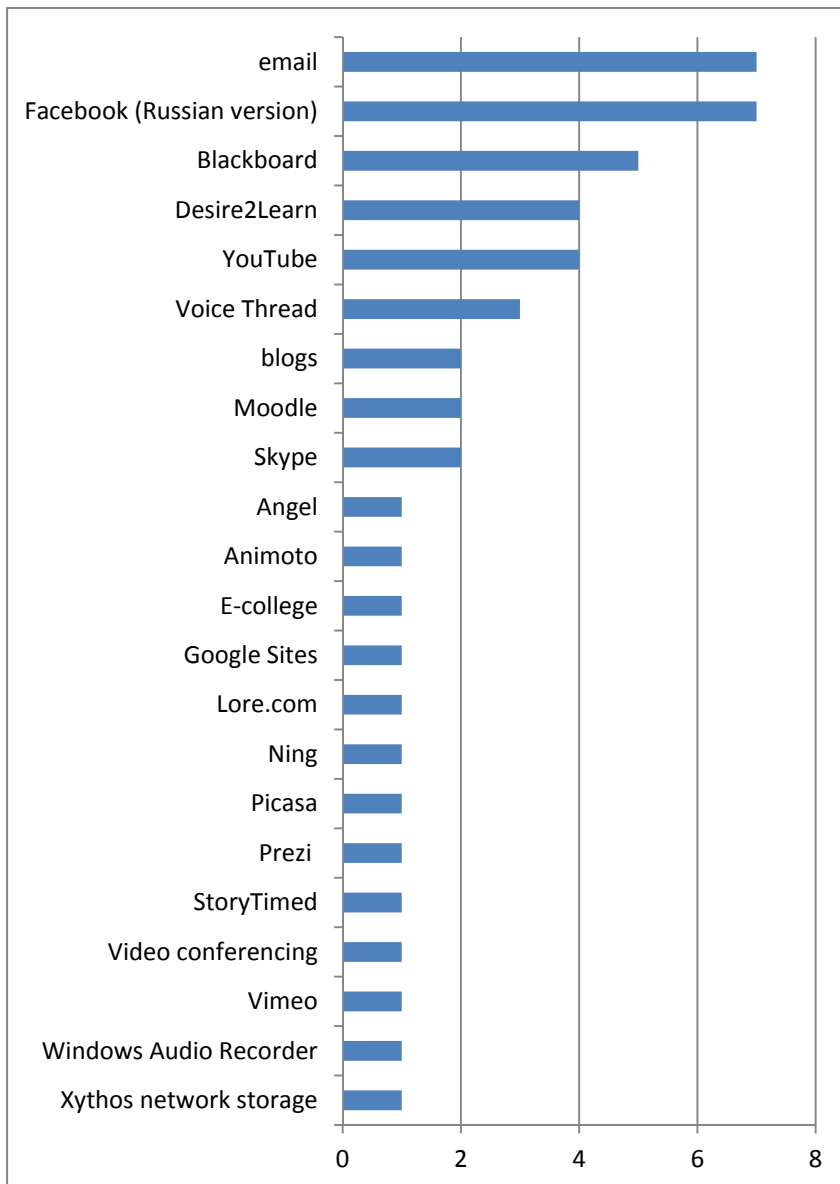


Figure 4: Asynchronous tools used.

If we then look at where the institutional LMSs were hosted, we see that in only one case was that a non-US institution. Most courses experienced some degree of technical problems primarily related to Internet bandwidth and access regarding both institutional platforms and social media tools. As far as the latter is concerned, the problem was related to those teams who wanted cloud-based tools with password-access only; in this case one person (a teacher in the absence of technicians) becomes the administrator of the site and this creates extra work for them and access problems when, for example, institutions have firewalls that block certain social media sites.

Not surprisingly the support of technical staff made a difference for those with access to it. For example, in one exchange there were four people to support the US teacher (two student assistants, one IT tech and one instructional designer) and one technician in the partner country who was often assisted by the team in the US to resolve tech problems. Faculty who did not have much tech support seemed frustrated by the extra workload and/or lack of expertise in managing the tools. Not surprisingly, there was a higher learning curve when one or more groups of students were using tools and/or platforms they were not previously familiar with. This is precisely why some teams integrated a few sessions for familiarization with the technology prior to the exchange. One faculty from an international institution commented:

*It's our opinion, based on personal experience, that technical aspects of any web-enhanced course are viewed as a problem if it is so for the instructor. It turns out to be obvious that instructors showing enthusiasm with ICT [Information and Communication Technologies] will experience fewer difficulties and transmit that same enthusiasm to the learners. Those who don't may transmit the opposite effect.*

“Some loved it, some hated it.” This comment made by one faculty member speaks to the fact that student preferences depend on many factors from learning style, to communication preferences, to familiarity with the tool, etc. However, using more than one tool and more than one communication mode allowed teams to meet the various needs of different students. Most teams placed themselves somewhere along the following spectrum.



Many Fellows reported having learned that different tools lend themselves to different types of tasks and communication and that these initial courses helped them learn more about which tools are more or less appropriate for their given situation and course aims. Facebook, for example, proved to be useful for coordinating groups of students who were collaborating and were eager to use a tool they used in their personal lives to set up meetings, deadlines, etc. with their international peers. Some cohorts even created groups in Facebook where they could both work on class-related tasks and engage in informal interaction. Fellows seemed to feel that students were more comfortable completing academic tasks, such as commentaries on and discussions of readings, within an LMS rather than on social media tools<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, Fellows found that video conferencing (when and where possible) was very effective for shared lectures and discussions whereas a tool such as Skype was more appropriate for 1-to-1 or small group communication.

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth pointing out that most of the COIL courses used the US LMS and many of the Case Studies were completed primarily by US partners so that the it is unclear how the international partners felt about using an LMS based in the US and what impact this had on their students' work.

One important lesson learnt by almost all Fellows was the need to be flexible. For example, when Facebook was not ‘cooperating’ with the sharing of video that one team wanted, they switched to Vimeo or Youtube. Flexibility also means willingness to learn from what didn’t work according to how it had been initially planned. The only course that had two iterations within the timeframe of the COIL Institute, demonstrates how what we learn in one iteration of a course can help us better adapt the course for future iterations. As the international faculty member commented:

*During the first iteration of the course, the sections at [the US institution] and [the international institution] met fully face-to-face, respectively, with mostly asynchronous but some synchronous online interactions between the [two] sections scheduled throughout the term. Realizing that students needed more experience, instruction and reflection on online learning, we designed a more fully blended format (that is, some classroom time was replaced by online interaction).*

This team was one of 10 that said “yes” they would use the same tools again, though many add “but make the necessary adjustments” as the example above shows. There were seven teams that were either uncertain about their choice or that would use the same tools but with significant changes in the ways they used them. One adjustment that many in both these groups mentioned would be to add a Facebook component in order to foster more informal interactions between students as well as to give them a venue for post-course interaction (something which is rarely available on an LMS where students lose access to online course environment when the course ends). When asked which tools the teams used to create spaces for informal interaction, nine said their LMS and one Facebook. All the others said that they simply encouraged this type of out-of-class interaction and observed that it happened via email (one), Skype (one), Facebook (three) and other social media (three). It is interesting to note that the one team that used solely social media tools made the following observation:

*In some ways, the informal channels between students (Google+ Hangouts, Facebook) helped individual group members connect quickly but made it more difficult for faculty to identify disconnects and troubleshoot. As faculty, we did not have access to groups and could not tell how much interaction occurred. Not having access delayed our ability to address any communication disconnects that unfolded during the semester.*

This echoes many faculty members’ commenting that a drawback to using these tools is the lack of control teachers have, e.g. who has done what, when, how many times, etc. From the case studies it appears that for US teams, tracking student activity online is a necessary part of student assessment. Tracking interactions in order to gather data on student behavior is a common way to evaluate online courses, but in order to do so, practitioners need to understand how they can gather data and which methods they can use to collect relevant data. Many faculty are eager to promote the use of social media but do not have a full understanding of how they can use these tools in an academic context. The use of social media in the context of COIL courses has clearly presented new challenges to practitioners who need to defend their work based on criteria that have not yet been accepted in ‘the institution’. One other lesson learned about social media is the importance of choosing tools that can be considered reliable because they have, for example, existed for a long time or been used extensively in educational contexts. For example, one team that used a relatively new tool reported that “[t]he updates modified the layout of the site, changed the locations of several functions and led to confusion for the faculty and students.”

To sum up Fellows seemed to have learned the importance of flexibility, patience, support and much trial and error when using technology for collaborative online international collaboration.

## Synchronous tools

As can be seen in Figure 5, free solutions were preferred over pay-for solutions for synchronous communication between classes and students, although Figure 6 shows that a third of the teams actually used both types. It is also interesting that for nearly every team synchronous meant audio

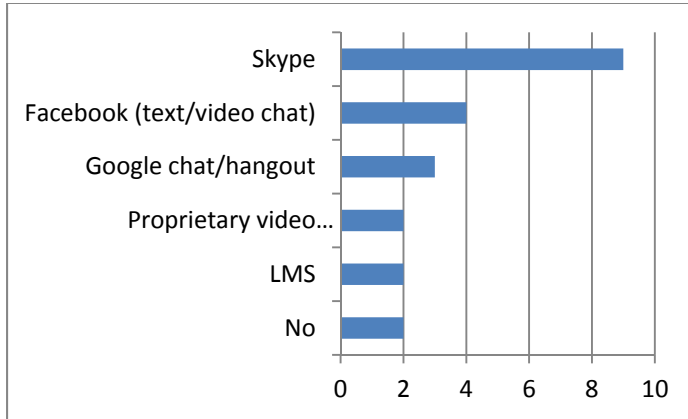


Figure 5: Synchronous tools used.

and/or video rather than text chat, simultaneous text editing, real-time image editing, etc. In only one case was text chat proposed as an in-class activity; for all the other team members who used text chat, this was simply a backup plan for failed audio/video communication. To no surprise, in the case of synchronous communication, bandwidth was a problem for nearly half the teams (ten). Four of these were not able to find a solution to the problem whereas the others came up with the following compromises:

- text chat;
- using a laptop and Skype when the more complex system didn't work;
- recording a lecture and then uploading it for the partner class to access;
- technical support to lower video quality in order to enhance audio quality;
- access the Internet from home, work or Internet cafés;
- technical support over the course of several weeks to set up a new platform for synchronous communication.

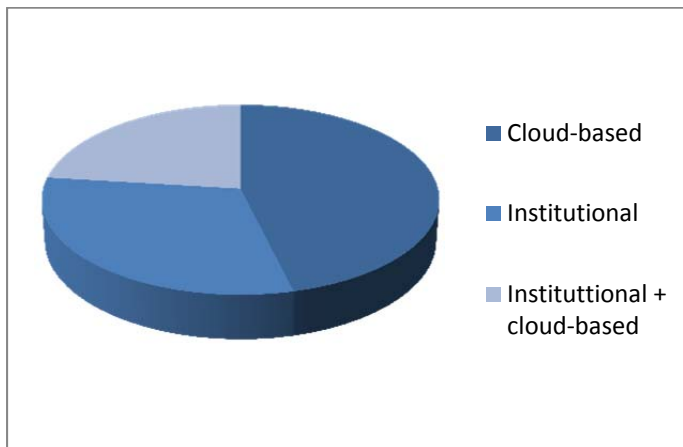


Figure 6: Type of tools used per project.

A few, on the other hand, experienced challenges that were more related to organization than technology. These are all good examples of lessons to be learned from the first iterations of the Institute courses.

- The faculty put students in groups of 4 for collaborative work and thus had to have students use the US account of Skype Premium (with regular Skype only two people can video chat). However, they found their students met up locally on both sides, 2 people with one computer, so that regular Skype would have worked fine.
- The teachers had planned 3 x 50 min. sessions a week but found that it was too little time; if they were to repeat the course they would do a 2 x 75 min. sessions a week instead.
- The teachers designed a task where students had to engage in exchanges via telephone or Skype and then provide written documentation. Instead of communicating with audio or video, as hoped, most ended up using text chat so they would automatically have scripts of their conversations. (Recording live sessions proved to be a challenge for many teams, especially for out-of-class activities.)

It is worth noting that in all of these examples the changes came from the students. Indeed, in another case when neither Skype nor the US Institution’s video conferencing were working, a student suggested Google Hangout, which worked and was used throughout the rest of the exchange. This is another aspect of flexibility that is required in GNL courses: willingness on the part of teachers to let go of total classroom control and learn from the students.

Table 2 shows how much synchronous communication was used in class and out of class. Just over half the teams decided to dedicate a significant amount of classroom sessions to real-time communication. This was dependent on various factors: course organization (lectures + discussion), course content (developing oral/aural skills), specific tasks (interviews), and/or simply for the groups to get to know one another better. Two teams stated that they organized the course so that the amount of synchronous communication increased over the term as the degree of collaboration (as well as trust) between students did.

Table 2: Frequency of synchronous communication between partners during the course.

<b>in class</b>	<b>no. of teams</b>	<b>out of class</b>	<b>no. of teams</b>
every other week	1	yes, but don't know how much	6
every class	1	not much	2
1 x wk	3	encouraged to use skype, but mostly used email	2
1 x wk	1	at least 1 x week (required)	1
1 x wk	1	3 times (required)	1
7 times	1	1 times (required)	1
6 times	1		
5 times	1		
4 times	1		
3 times	1		
	12		14

The out-of-class use of synchronous tools was quite different: eleven encouraged and promoted it, but only three made it a course requirement. Of those who encouraged it, two gathered that students hadn’t used it much, two teams found that students preferred email and six only had indications of this



taking place (observation of the development of friendships). Where it was a course requirement there was the issue of students 'proving' they'd done it. When it wasn't compulsory, students were encouraged to use synchronous communication both for informal interaction as well as for task completion. Interestingly, in two of these cases, at the end of the course students who had chosen not to use synchronous communication out of class observed that the teams that had opted for it worked more smoothly and had better results. They suggested to the teachers that it be a requirement in future iterations of the course.

Finally, teams were asked if they would use the same synchronous tools again: 10 replied "yes", 7 replied "yes, but", 1 was "uncertain" and 1 a definite "no". As was the case above, there are many suggestions on how to improve future iterations of the course. The only "no" came from the group that had already had two iterations of their course. They commented:

*Because class-to-class online synchronous communication largely failed in the first iteration of the course, we made no attempt to use the mode of communication in the second iteration. In addition, we did not see much educational benefit in using class-to-class online synchronous communication. For these reasons, we will likely not use class-to-class online synchronous communication in future iterations of this course. We will, however, continue to use Skype (or similar) for one-to-one interviews and peer-review sessions.*

To conclude, it appears that much of the learning process for Fellows was related to beginning to understand which tools and modes are appropriate for which types of tasks and activities depending on course content, course goals, and access to technology and broadband. As was said in the previous section, flexibility and trial and error helped teams navigate the sometimes rough waters of first-time COIL courses.

## Assessment

Assessment is a much-debated, tricky area in any school or academic context, let alone in cross-cultural contexts. What should be assessed? Who should assess? Is the assessment high or low stakes? These are just a few of the many questions faculty regularly ask themselves and the answers often depend not only on a teacher's beliefs, but on institutional requirements as well. In the projects discussed in this report, each course had to come to terms with at least two institutional cultures and requirements. In addition to the course content, one aim all of the courses had in common was the development of intercultural awareness/competence/communication. It has been argued that "if you teach it, you test it". In other words, if students see an objective in a course syllabus, they expect to be tested on it during or at the end of the course. But there are even more complex issues surrounding assessing intercultural awareness: we can test knowledge of another culture, but what faculty were really hoping to see happen was a change in students' attitudes and awareness, things that cannot be 'assessed' in the traditional sense of the word. The Case Study template asked teams a series of questions in order to see how they dealt with these challenges.

Before discussing the results, it should be noted that there were different interpretations of the word "assessment" which influenced teams' responses. Generally speaking, 'assessment' refers to the measurement of student learning and 'evaluation' refers to the measurement of the success or failure of a project, course, experiment, etc. However, there is often confusion and while the authors of the Case Studies intended 'assessment of student learning', some Fellows interpreted 'assessment' to mean evaluation of the GNL course.

Unlike more traditional forms of international experience such as study abroad, in COIL courses students generally receive credits from their home institutions. Indeed whereas most of the content of the Institute courses was developed collaboratively, assessment was rarely a collaborative process. The

reasons given reflect what was stated above: different institutional norms and values, different course goals and different grade distributions and expectations. Many did, however, collaboratively develop grading rubrics and assessed assignments and shared rubrics even if then teachers gave marks individually. Most courses had a mixture of formative and summative assessment procedures and a blend of individual and collaborative assignments. Only two teams collaboratively marked student work at some point during the course. Both of these used a dual rater system to maintain consistency: teachers individually gave their marks and then discussed these in order to have final marks that they would both agree on. One of these two actually concluded: “We would both admit that in hindsight we may well have created rubrics for some of the other assignments, which would have eliminated some grey areas around assessment and given us a clearer guideline for our reasoning in grading creative material.” Undoubtedly, however, since only 2 out of the 24 teams did this and even they did not collaboratively grade all assignments, the issue of collaborative assessment in collaborative courses remains wide open to discussion.

Given that one of the goals of the COIL courses was intercultural learning, Fellows were asked if and how they assessed the development of intercultural awareness. Of those who replied to this specific question, eight did and five did not. The methods used for this type of assessment ranged from informal observation and discussion, to surveys, to the development of what might be termed learner portfolios, i.e. a record of student learning with reflections and examples of instances of learning throughout the courses. None of the Fellows who carried out assessment of intercultural learning had data at hand to report specific findings; nonetheless, a few gave their impressions. Two teams, in two different tracks and contexts, noticed a similar pattern: students who came to the course with an interest in cross-cultural learning and a critical approach to it are those that maintained and developed it throughout the course whereas it was more difficult to engage those who seemed to have a more superficial approach to the exchange. One of the teachers made the following observation:

*Generally speaking [...] we saw that some students in both sections came to the course with an already established interest in cross-cultural issues, and felt free to express opinions which could be considered provocative. Their posts seemed to invite the kind of larger discussion that could have helped students investigate and even question some of their own cultural values. However, these potentially provocative ideas were rarely responded to in the online environment. Rather than provoking useful discussion, the online forum tended towards what we have come to think of as “Pleasantville.” The silence in response to these posts suggests that students seemed reluctant to offend, disagree, or rebut, instead focusing on creating an atmosphere of polite civility. [...] The issue for us as the instructors is how to facilitate more substantive reflection on such topics through the structure of assignments, our own responses to discussion posts, and class discussion.*

This comment highlights the fact that for true intercultural learning to take place, putting students together with the ‘right’ tasks, content and mode of communication is not enough. Clearly the role of the teachers becomes very important. What seems to be unclear, however, is how pro-active a role the teacher should take on and if teachers engaging in COIL courses should have specific intercultural training both on how to promote it and how to manage moments of tension when they occur. This will be discussed below in the section on Institutional Support.

Out of the 24 projects, 9 report having explicitly integrated peer review/feedback into their courses both within local classrooms and between globally linked classrooms. On a positive note, one team observed that:

*The peer review process provided cross-cultural insights to strengthen future photos and uncover ways in which they might reflect a cultural frame of reference. For an additional assignment, students commented on the blog posts of their intercultural team members. Many of their comments were insightful and offered alternative perspectives on issues.*

However, if not carefully monitored or modeled, peer review can also lead to hurt feelings and/or misunderstandings within a traditional classroom, let alone in a globally-networked classroom. The following episode is exemplary of what can happen and what can be learned:

*It was during one of these peer feedback sessions [...] that we encountered the most significant conflict/misunderstanding/difficulty. Looking back, we realized that part of the problem was our instructions for the assignment, and a big difference in student expectation for the purpose and type of feedback that was expected of them. [...] Peer review was a new concept for most of the [international] students. They welcomed the idea in general, but many said at the end of the course that it was not very useful. They expressed a strong preference for feedback from the instructor on their drafts, rather than from their peers, particularly when their peer review partner was randomly assigned, either within their own section or from the [US] section.*

The concept of peer review is extremely culture-based. In many parts of the world the predominant instruction paradigm remains teacher-centered so that students have difficulty seeing what they might learn from their peers. There are also issues of directness and indirectness, e.g. what a person in one culture might consider clear, direct, helpful feedback, might be taken by a person from another culture as an attack on their work. Two teams noted that students were more inclined to provide peer review within their respective classrooms and much more hesitant to do so with their international partners. Overall, faculty seem to understand that there can peer review add to the learning experience, particularly in this context as it offers different perspectives. At the same time they recognize that in order to be effective, it requires careful organization and monitoring, not to mention training students in how to peer review in a culturally-sensitive way.

Since cultural misunderstanding can lead to failed communication and since the content of some courses was sensitive, e.g. gender, religion, etc., seven teams established guidelines for student interaction. In some cases the faculty co-developed these guidelines prior to the course while in two cases the students collaboratively developed them. One of these teams explained:

*Both classes established independent guidelines for student interaction and then through a collaborative effort worked to blend those two sets of guidelines into one shared document. This process worked well and we would probably not change it in the future.*

Several of those who did not have guidelines said that based on this initial experience they would consider developing them in the future, e.g. “especially in relation to expectations of how the cross-cultural pairs function and partner responsibilities” and “concerning expectations for student interaction as an additional means of scaffolding for the students”. Many of those who replied no to this question did, however, state that within the individual classrooms there was significant discussion both before and during the course about the need for respecting opposing viewpoints, criticism of one’s own culture and values from the international partners, etc. What does not come out of the data is if these guidelines (either formally written or informally discussed in class) actually did influence student interaction or not.

## **Institutional Support**

In order to demonstrate the importance of institutional support in the case of COIL courses, we can compare two comments taken directly from the Case Studies: one from a team that had full support from their institutions, another from an international faculty partner who had no support at her local institution.

Full Support	No Support
<p><i>From the very beginning, our senior administrator [...] and our Department of Music Interim Chair [...] and Director of [...] Studies were enthusiastic about the opportunity of the proposed COIL project for our campus. In March, 2011, I traveled (using my personal funds) to NYC for the COIL conference of workshops and presentations from pilot projects. I received the time release to attend the conference, and administrative support to assist with the writing of the grant to respond to the RFP from COIL. At that time, the support was seen as faculty professional development. Once the grant application was awarded and [our school] was designated as lead partner, I was given a green light, and a directive to engage other faculty to assist with pedagogy and course design. I approached our Center for Teaching and Learning staff, and that initial conversation with our subsequent IT designer and specialist [...] also garnered his enthusiastic response and, from his request, support from his supervisors - specifically to agree to time release for his availability to work on the COIL project.</i></p>	<p><i>I do not mind expressing that I feel anger and a sense of betrayal. I wanted to reach out and broaden my students' and my own artistic and educational experience in this particular area of performance training. I feel that I was not fully supported, and even punished for having taken the initiative to do something different. I took a great deal of extra work on -- certainly financially uncompensated -- to an already overstretched load. There has been no acknowledgement of this to date, and I do not expect any, nor that my initiative will be in any way encouraged or rewarded. [...] My colleagues and the Director [...] believed that the initial introduction and planning was part of a greater scam that I was getting involved in. [...] my director was interested only in the intellectual property of the students and was not sure that there was any gain for the college as a whole.</i></p>

These two extreme reactions clearly highlight that for COIL courses to be successful there must be financial, administrative, pedagogical and technical support “otherwise the course would not have been possible”, as several Fellows mentioned. Indeed, in order to participate in the Institute, SUNY COIL required applicants to have 1-2 faculty members, an Instructional Designer and/or an International Programs staff member and an international faculty partner. Teams were encouraged to have the same type of support guaranteed at the partner’s institution, but this was not a requirement. Because of the nature of the grant (NEH restrictions), only US partners could be funded for travel and because of the limited staff at SUNY COIL, teams needed their own support to fall back.

The responses from the teams who completed this part of the survey indicate that 11 teams received support in all or 3 out of the 4 areas. Financial support involved:

- funding faculty to travel to one another’s countries;
- funding international faculty to come to the SUNY COIL workshops and, for some, the SUNY COIL Conferences;
- allowing course releases;
- purchasing equipment and technology;
- financial incentives;
- hiring support, e.g. graduate students or teaching assistants.

Examples of administrative support ranged from assistance in writing the grant proposal, to modifying class size, to organizing logistical matters. One team mentioned that the need for this type of support should have been in the COIL funding formula because “not knowing the full extent of our workload, we did not consider requesting administrative or resource support.” Only one team stated that they received direct pedagogical support from their institution, from their Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the Department of Learning Instructional Technology Services. Four teams felt they had received this type of assistance from COIL while two explicitly stated having received none. In many

cases pedagogical support was provided in the form of team teaching; many faculty indicated having learned a lot from and with their partner during the planning and implementation stages. One significant result is that eight of these eleven teams felt they had good to excellent technical support in *both* institutions ranging from problem solving to help from instructional designers to develop activities to training students. In one exchange between the US and Ghana, the US institution sent materials and equipment to Ghana while the institution in Ghana made a “campus-wide moratorium of internet use during our synchronous meeting time to make sure we had available band-width for our Skype meetings.”

Four teams report having received financial support but not much administrative, pedagogical or technical support. Four others felt they had little to no support from their institution. What is interesting about the comment above from the faculty who received no support, is that the focus isn't only on these four areas of support, but rather on a lack of recognition of the importance of the project and the efforts a COIL course requires: “There has been no acknowledgement of this to date, and I do not expect any, nor that my initiative will be in any way encouraged or rewarded.” Although all four areas of support are key ingredients to the success and sustainability of a project, recognition of innovation appears to be as well. Indeed, the team who reported full support in the table above also made the following comment.

***Administrative Support** also came in the form of recognition. As the collaboration moved through the various phases of conceptualization, weekly online meetings, planning and implementation, it became clear how labor intensive the project would be. [There was a] buzz on the campus about the COIL collaboration and course, spotlighting it in the campus magazine, sending press releases and invitations to present the COIL course in technology symposiums on campus. The attention from senior administration raised the profile of the COIL collaboration and had an impact on faculty in other areas. Many faculty related to me of their being inspired to create or infuse curricula with global components or asked for feedback on new courses in development.*

This comment would seem to confirm that sustainability of COIL courses across campuses depends on the efforts of many different stakeholders, but when courses depend on the sole enthusiasm of innovative teachers and there is no support, the novelty may wear off and the course prove to be a one-off experience.

A final observation is related to the specific context of community colleges. With a few exceptions, these institutions tend to be relatively small and have fewer staff and less funding compared to larger 4-year comprehensive colleges and research universities. At the same time, the student population at these schools tends to be very local attracting people who have never travelled and because of work or family will most likely *not* travel as part of their studies. In other words, there is a paradox: the students at community colleges would benefit greatly from COIL courses, but the support is difficult to attain. Quite often these schools don't have Offices of International Programs or instructional designers. The role of COIL in these contexts becomes more important. As one community college faculty member noted:

*Beyond financial support COIL did offer significant pedagogical support, most importantly by connecting me with other COIL participants and their teaching experiences. COIL was helpful in presenting international collaboration as a viable and important teaching activity at the community college, which may have resulted in greater freedom and support for my COIL activities. Probably the most important thing COIL did, however, was to connect me with an appropriate partner. It is simply not likely for community college faculty to find appropriate and interested international partners without COIL or some other group facilitating it.*

## Evaluation

### Student drop-out rate

Investigating the potential causes of high or low attrition rates offers important opportunities for learning from our experiences. One of the teams who had 0% drop-out rate feels it was due both to the way the course was organized and to its globally-networked nature: “I myself positioned and designed this course as a venue where my students experientially learn intercultural differences and solve the problems that occur in the course of achieving a research project together within the group, so they could not back out due to the collective responsibility.” Out of those who had low attrition rates, the one or two students who left did so for personal reasons and not because of the specific nature of the course. This appears to change when the attrition rates increase significantly, where it was the specifically the nature of the COIL course that led to drop-out. It is interesting to see how teams explain these rates:

- 30% dropout caused by “technological inequalities, budgetary disparities, institutional expectations and educational cultures”;
- 50% dropout caused by “busy schedules”, “many also work, some full time”, “buildings are scattered around [the city]”, “an optional course”, “very little personal contact”, “the impediment of the language”;
- 50% dropout caused by “Internet connectivity”, “disparity in time zones”, differences with “the academic culture from the other two universities”.

Although the two mention Internet and technology, and the third the impediment of [the English] language, the one aspect that all three have in common is differences in academic culture compared to their US counterparts. In these three cases, the international institutions were partnered with Liberal Arts Schools in the US, which tend to attract a particular demographic in age and background and to have student-centered approach to teaching. One US faculty whose course was a distance learning course, noted that the international students had troubles with the age (older) of their US peers. For example, one US student in this course commented:

*Referring back to the collaboration segment, I realized, very early on, that I was not up to date with current world events. My partner was insightfully more political than I was, which I felt was frustrating more for her. Overall, I felt my personal experience was not beneficial because my partner was hesitant to open up to me, and when she did, she did not relate much.*

Another faculty from a US community college who was paired with an Australian university reported that the US students didn’t always feel up to par, particularly when it came to written communication. What the teams that had high attrition learned and can teach other practitioners is not that institutions need to be paired with similar institutions, but rather that it is important for faculty partners to have in-depth discussions about institutional cultures, language proficiency, time zones, student expectations, etc. *before* implementing a COIL course. In addition, faculty partners need to carefully monitor student interaction and collaboration in order to be able to intervene and support students when they are having difficulties. This brings back the issue of faculty training for COIL courses and the need for flexibility and patience that were mentioned in the *Format* section above.

### Student feedback

In Question 35 of the Case Studies, teams were asked to provide anonymous examples of students’ evaluations of the courses. Not all Fellows had access to the data at the time when they wrote the study so only eight teams provided data. Furthermore, there was no standard course evaluation tool used across the Institute; not all teams carried out post-course evaluation and those who did used different tools to do so. Nonetheless, the information that was available was gathered into one file where content

analysis<sup>5</sup> was carried out following a qualitative structural scheme. First the student comments were divided into three categories: positive, negative, and recommendations. Then the characteristic themes that ran throughout the comments in each category were identified. These are summarized below with examples.

### Positive feedback

Nearly half the comments were positive despite the fact that Fellows provided both negative and positive feedback in their Case Studies. On the whole the positive comments expressed enthusiasm. This is demonstrated by a large number that suggest the courses be offered again and students who preface their comments with the problems encountered but say they would recommend it to others.

*I was honored to be a part of this pilot course and I firmly believe the collaboration between the two universities should be continued. Although my writing partner and I got off to a somewhat rock start, we have agreed to continue collaborating on our project outside of school.*

*I think that there should be more conferences under this course and they should be more extended.*

The final part of the first comment is the only explicit case in this dataset where a student said they kept in touch following the course, but it was mentioned by several Fellows as one of the positive outcomes of their courses.

The most commonly cited positive comments regarded having access to different points of view and how this often allowed students to see their own culture in a different light. Many of the comments clearly indicate a high level of awareness of ‘self’ and ‘other’ and reflection on the experience.

*It was fascinating to see the different perspectives concerning the topics we discussed in the course. It was interesting to see how we generalize our opinions while in reality they might be just exclusive to us.*

*It changed my perspective.*

*It challenged me to think in new ways.*

*The most enlightening moments for me during the collaboration was realizing that America is a very conceited country who thinks too much of itself and often disguises its conceit through a false patriotism. The need for sensitivity and understanding was addressed through [our activities] briefly, but more actions need to be taken.*

Some students also reflected on the skills they learned through the course from language skills (*I practiced my English in speech and writing*), to communicative competence (*how to interact with strangers that live overseas and be close friends with them*) to overcoming technophobia (*I still hate technology but I have come away with a much bigger realization of the world.*) Although this last student may still claim to hate technology, they certainly learned how it can be useful in her learning. This last comment brings up one of the two adjectives that characterize much of the data: “challenging”, which was often followed by “fun”. The enthusiasm most likely stems from this very combination: when something is challenging, but we enjoy doing it, in the long run it becomes fun and a deep learning experience.

A few other comments that were more specific to particular contexts regarded team teaching, the importance of ice-breakers, feeling empowered and being pleasantly surprised with the COIL course.

*As a team the teachers were great. It was fun to watch them exchange ideas and theories about a given piece of literature because their knowledge is so encyclopedic. Individually, they are still excellent professors.*

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<sup>5</sup> Mayring (2000) defines content analysis as the process of summarizing and reporting data in a way that “the essential contents are preserved but a short, manageable text is produced (p. 268).”

*The preparation meeting via instant messaging (Skype/Facebook) was probably my best experience because I got to know the students from Texas a bit better than in class environments. To break the ice between students is always the best way for me to have a nice atmosphere in class.*

*[Although initially I felt I knew less than my partner, when the topic changed] I was pleased to offer a U.S. counter perception.*

*Working with the American students was better than I expected.*

Clearly this last student started out the COIL course with strong negative opinions about the American counterparts and although this may not be a major change in awareness, it does seem to indicate that the student has learned to reconsider stereotypes.

Finally, one student was particularly impressed by the organization of the course: “Logistically speaking, however, this course was more complicated than what I originally expected. I still cannot believe that a dual presentation was created *and* presented so smoothly for all the groups!” This is an appropriate lead-in to the negative comments which were dominated by frustrations with organization in the courses.

### Negative feedback

Students’ complaints about the COIL courses were predominantly related to logistical issues, which is typical for the first time any course is held, let alone a complex globally-networked one. This information is invaluable for future iterations of these pilot courses and for future practitioners embarking on a COIL project. The negative comments can be summarized in the following themes:

- too heavy a workload (*cut down the readings*);
- unclear guidelines for assignments and/or discrepancy between guidelines given to the different groups (*The lack of clear guidelines on how works would have to look like.*);
- time difference (*The time difference exacerbated problems like work and school schedules.*);
- lack of time to effectively complete collaborative or peer-dependent tasks, especially in situations where there was a significant time difference (*It was hectic...too many assignments not enough time to rest in between.*)

With regards to this last point, many teachers also indicated that they had not gotten the ‘rhythm’ or ‘flow’ of activities quite right. This led to situations in which one group felt like they were doing the bulk of the work and the other that they didn’t have enough time to contribute to certain activities.

As is the case in any collaborative experience, a few students felt their international peers were not as serious, dedicated and/or motivated as they were and did not participate to the same degree as they did. However, in addition to personal differences amongst students, in a COIL course there may very well be different institutional cultures and expectations that lead to this sort of imbalance. This especially seemed to be the case when the one class was a for-credit compulsory course and the partner course a voluntary one. Others felt as though they were never able to establish effective communication with their peers abroad. It appears from both student and teacher comments that this depended on: the institutional culture just mentioned; different task guidelines mentioned above; and task design and task sequence. In particular, when students were not given enough time to get to know one another and create a working friendship before jumping into collaborative activities, these tended to fail.

Surprisingly, only one student mentioned connectivity and technology as a problem even though from the team perspective, this was often a major problem. One explanation for this result is perhaps due to the fact that many of those who suffered most from connectivity problems did not, in fact, provide feedback.



If we go back to the enthusiasm mentioned in the positive comments, it comes as no surprise that several students mentioned that the main problem was that there was not *enough* interaction with their peers. For example, one US student stated: “this course as a whole would have been far more interesting, exciting and valuable to my life if we had paid far more attention to our communication [with our international peers].” This student felt that too much attention had been placed on course content and too little on interaction and collaboration.

## Recommendations

The number of comments indicating how to improve on these courses reflects the positive comments such as “Here’s hoping it will lead to future collaborative courses for the universities!” One student came out and directly stated: “This was a great experience and I enjoyed it, even if I felt like a guinea pig!” Fortunately, the ‘guinea pigs’ were more than happy to provide recommendations for future iterations of COIL courses like the ones they experienced.

There was one keyword that appeared in the recommendations more than any other: “more”. Students wanted more:

<i>time for collaborative work; months (2 semesters rather than one)</i>	<i>video chats</i>
<i>time for class discussion</i>	<i>class time</i>
<i>time to talk with [the international] students</i>	<i>oral sessions</i>
<i>mas interacciones entre los alumnos</i>	<i>comparisons between both cultures</i>

These responses would seem to indicate a high level of interest in the globally-connected course, but a desire to connect *more* with their globally-connected peers.

The other category of recommendations, tools and logistics, reflect some of the negative comments. As was stated above, students would “pace assignments better, especially where there is a bit time difference”.

They also seemed to have very clear ideas about which tools they preferred, and which tools are appropriate for different purposes. While some felt limited by too few tools, “I wish we had a different communicative tool in class, such as text chatting”, others felt there were too many, “Less different ways to communicate over things that are course related. Stick to one channel”. Similarly, some loved email, “Constant emails work better than trying to have a synchronized discussion on Skype [...] emails can lead a meaningful discussion” while another student stated “It felt like I was in the Stone Age communicating via email”. Clearly it is impossible to meet all students’ needs, but awareness of the varying degree of opinions may help in future course design.

As was discussed above with reference to informal communication between students, most teams opted to ‘encourage’ but not ‘impose’ this sort of out-of-class, optional interaction between globally-connected peers. Interestingly, in their evaluation of the courses, a few students suggested it would be better to: “‘Force’ students to contact each other more outside the classroom.” The fact that they became aware of this only on hindsight brings into question the issue of whether or not it would work if ‘forced’.

## Faculty evaluation

Teams were asked to identify the initial objectives they had for the COIL course and assess whether or not these had been achieved. Of those who completed this part of the Case Study, 16 felt they had achieved their goals, 3 indicated partial achievement, and 2 stated that they had not done what they set out to do. Although several teachers could not ‘prove’ that objectives had been achieved (“Some students shied away from both written and oral discussions until the end. But they spoke highly of the

course both to me and to their peers.”), they felt their teaching and students’ learning had been transformed by the COIL course. They also felt that their teaching practice had been transformed as the following contributions demonstrate.

*Personally, I feel that my teaching has been challenged and invigorated, students have experienced a unique learning environment, and everyone involved has learned.*

*I gained new perspectives from my international partner from the outset, as well as confidence in my own approach toward my students at our institution. I am more convinced than ever that, with proper institutional and technical support, these collaborations are invaluable for students and instructors around the world. Particularly for students with limited opportunities to travel abroad, the opportunity to share an educational experience with students from other cultures and countries is very important.*

*I feel I learned a great deal from resources and training provided by the COIL Institute, and had an extraordinary time building relationships with my international colleagues. I feel ready to create the course anew and build a more dynamic impactful experience.*

From the Case Studies it appears that most Fellows were unwilling to reduce the evaluation of their projects to more traditional assessment methods, e.g. quantitative surveys, and were more inclined to focus on aspects of these courses that cannot be assessed or that have not found a ‘universal’ method of assessment. Even those who stated they had met their objectives had no ‘traditional’ evidence of learning on the part of students, but rather reported observations and impressions, such as those reported here:

*The technical aspects went very smoothly, the student engagement and enthusiasm about making new friends in a creative field was hugely evident students from both countries viewed this as a remarkable opportunity and this was reflected in their intense level of engagement in the course.*

*There was considerable discussion and preparedness to listen and contribute that reflected effective student engagement and practice analysis. Student responses were enthusiastic. They have continued to develop their stories and to keep in touch, so the course has spawned an ongoing community. The initial activities did provide a framework for participants to learn about each other. The process did create a discernible progressive development in the work of all participants. It has proved to be viable and effective.*

*As I reflect on the course, what stands out in my memory are the many conversations I had with students that reflected their increased mindfulness of their own communication processes. Although students might have initially thought our main goal was to increase their knowledge of Russian communication, the outcome we hoped to (and did) achieve was increased knowledge and understanding of their own communication. Numerous times during the course, students would come to me newly aware of the role culture plays in communication to discuss how best to negotiate communication differences.*

Course evaluations also depended on the content of the courses, i.e. when the content explicitly engaged in experiential learning and intercultural learning, carrying out a COIL course seemed to provide an excellent solution:

*In the classroom students learned intercultural theory, but through their collaboration they experienced the challenges and the true meaning of intercultural exchange. Students didn’t just study it, they had to feel it as well: how exciting yet frustrating learning can be at times. We wanted them to go through this process, as we believe the experience in itself is crucial in becoming a member of the global community? By moving beyond the theory, we hope to invoke passion and engagement, which might lead students into a different direction than we initially anticipated. But if we believe that true or critical awareness comes from within, we need to take that risk. In the end, the experience becomes a learning outcome as well.*

Other faculty were more skeptical about the learning that had taken place and reflected on what might encourage more in-depth cultural learning in these environments. More specifically, these faculty were aware of the difference between ‘knowledge’, i.e. what you can learn from a book or the Internet

nowadays, and ‘effective cross-cultural communication’, which cannot be learned from a book but must be experienced. The following comment demonstrates how ‘things are usually done’ and how this changed with the COIL course.

*In usual culture class, students learn Japanese culture from an instructor and literatures in a knowledge-centered way. However, this course let them learn the culture experientially by actually communicating with Japanese students in Japan. Also, I think that the group work was the best venue for American students to learn what intercultural communication is and to foster intercultural competence.*

Similarly, another US Fellow working with Japan noted the importance of direct peer-to-peer contact.

*I think my students came to be able to evaluate situations, but most of them did not reach the level where they can independently choose and use appropriate communication strategies to meet their intention in the actual intercultural settings. One of the reasons is that most of them were not used to using Japanese language with Japanese native speakers and the web communication tools. They have knowledge, but they could not use it appropriately without my help. I think the period itself was too short for them to achieve the goal.*

This contribution points out two important factors: communication does not equal intercultural learning if not supported by specific tasks, tools and teacher moderation; and the fact that perhaps more than a semester is required in order to develop effective intercultural skills. Other faculty add to this equation the fact that traditional learning environments, methods and pedagogies do not work in COIL courses and that new approaches need to come out of these pilot projects:

*the destabilization of the traditional notion of what a classroom looks like helped students erase the false dichotomy between the classroom and the world. As such, learning was understood to occur through their interactions with their counterparts across the globe not just from their teachers.*

In addition to this, faculty seemed aware of the importance of students reflecting not only on the ‘Other’ but on their own assumptions and where these come from. The following comments from very different projects demonstrate this.

*Russian students learning about themselves: the majority were not historians and thus did not know much even on the history of Stalinism.*

*My students emphasized that the collaborative experiences taught them how much they have yet to learn, not only about other cultures and history, but about their own culture and history.*

*When completing assignments, students became aware of their own perspective on local and global issues. Students experienced many challenges in collaborating internationally, but persisted through the challenges. Students realized the importance of intercultural collaboration skills. Because of their experiences in the course, students gained an authentic appreciation of the global community as well as the continuing importance of the local community.*

A final issue that was brought up in very few contexts was that of English being used for communication even though it was not the primary language of the international students. However, this fact needed to be explicitly pointed out to many of the US students who simply took it for granted that their peers would speak/write in English. The following comment illustrates how a US faculty member recognized the linguistic effort made on the part of the international students and tried to share this with the US students: “I tried repeatedly to impress upon them that the Russian students were doing the same work as the Americans but doing it as if at the same time in a foreign language class. This really did make an impression.” As has become clear several times throughout this report, when imbalances occur, be they in linguistic proficiency, commitment, collaboration, etc., what is important is to take note of it and search for ways to work around the imbalance.

## Lessons learned

The complexity of setting up a COIL course with institutional support is evident in the names that member institutions apply to the concept of what is called “international programs office” in the Case Study template and the fact that some US community colleges and foreign institutions don’t even have such an office. Below is a brief list of what team members at the US institutions understood to be the “international programs office”

- Internationalization Taskforce
- Center for International Education
- Global Studies Program
- Center for Global Education
- Center for Distance Learning
- Office of International Education
- Office of Global and International Strategies
- Innovative Learning Institute
- International Office (off-campus study)
- International Programs Office
- Office of International Affairs
- Office of International Programs

If this is the level of diversity *within* the US, one can only imagine how complex the task of establishing long-lasting institutional relationships becomes on an international level where equivalent offices do not exist. The diversity of these ‘offices’ also highlights the fact that COIL courses and programs have yet to find their ‘place’ in institutions, e.g. are they distance learning, international programs, global strategies? This highlights the innovative aspect of the COIL Institute and the fact that, while interested, institutions are not still clear as how to integrate this practice into campus-wide curricula. Throughout the Case Studies it is clear that all of the institutions involved have established “internationalization” as one of their key objectives. This does not mean, however, that the appropriate support structures have been put in place or are actively supporting faculty, as can be seen by the following contribution:

*The COIL opportunity is relevant and the Office of International Education supports these activities. But, the “work” is not done by our office but rather by dedicated faculty members on campus. We consider our office in the role of providing encouragement and support rather than part of our work load. All parts of a University are interrelated and have an effect on the other parts. So in a very broad sense, the COIL globally networked learning activities affect the depth and breadth of the academic experience at [our university]. The Office of International Education considers COIL to be an important part of internationalization because it provides a very rich avenue for international learning and exposure to both domestic and foreign students. We do not at present consider this endeavor a part of Study Abroad, International Internships or International Recruitment. We do consider this to be a part of international relations and international research/teaching/learning activities – and thus could be considered a “vector” of international activity. Thus this is a small but important part of [our] activities at present. Globally networked learning at [our university] needs to have support from the Office of International Education but should probably be promoted by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). This office does an outstanding job of helping faculty to try new endeavors and to build new pedagogical approaches into the vast array of learning opportunities on campus.*

This was the one section of the Case Studies where overall US and international partners responded separately and where international programs staff in the US contributed to the documents; therefore, the number of comments is greater than in previous sections. Out of those who contributed to this section, 15 indicated that there was no engagement on the part of the international programs office, that no such office existed or that there was interest but no practical support. The fact that internationalization is often associated solely with study abroad is demonstrated in the following

comment from one US faculty: “I never thought to involve them in the project.” Fortunately, 13 Fellows reported that they did have support, which often involved assistance in writing the COIL Institute proposal, funding for faculty travel, and in two cases, the creation of memorandums of collaboration. With regards to the latter, the two contributions report:

*[the Director of Global Education] will be involved in writing a memorandum of understanding between the two universities to support an ongoing relationship.*

*[the faculty has spoken with the Provost and the Dean of the Center for Distance Learning] to have a framework agreement signed between the 2 institutions in order to collaborate on a formal basis and to participate together to ICT-based initiatives.*

These are the kinds of initiatives that can lead to sustainability, but they are only 2 out of 24 projects. Even where ‘international offices’ are present, a common sentiment throughout the Case Studies is that there is “enthusiasm and interest”, but rarely is this transformed into concrete investment on the part of institutions. Question 39 of the Case Study reads: “When you applied to the COIL Institute did your partnered institutions or your departments/programs make a substantial commitment to continue developing a globally networked initiative? Or was it primarily a singular commitment on the part of the participating faculty Fellows? Please discuss.” Unfortunately, 10 Fellows replied that it was a singular commitment on the part of faculty. Many of these Fellows discuss the fact that the innovative nature of the project means that the only way to promote it across the institution and to make it sustainable is to ‘prove’ that it is worth the investment, e.g. “we need a solid track record of success”. The two comments below demonstrate the frustrations faculty felt they will face until their courses are ‘proven’ to be valid:

*Both institutions are eager to continue to develop globally-networked learning environments as they see it as an important development in globalizing their respective institutions. That being said, this specific course stems more from a singular commitment on the part of the participating faculty Fellows and if it is run again, it would be at the initiative of the two Fellows.*

*Although I asked for a teaching assistant or teaching load reduction to my department chair, not only I was not able to get either of them until I got sick, but also I had to do additional duties due to the budget crisis and my [...] coordinator’s sabbatical leave. Also, the [...] program coordinator always asks me when I can get rid of this COIL project from his point of view [...]. Thus, I had been caught between the Dean (+COIL staffs) and the Chair and Program coordinator in my department.*

Not investing in projects that are ‘unknowns’ might make sense on an administrative/financial level, but it poses the question on how to promote innovation without taking the risks that innovation might entail. Four Fellows stated that there was significant ‘interest’ in their project, but that there was no financial or administrative commitment to supporting it. On the other hand, seven US fellows did have significant support on their campuses, as this comment shows:

*As Director of the Center for Global Education, I believe that this initiative is extremely relevant to the work of the Center for providing global experiences to [our] students, faculty and staff, and for that reason, I was one of the drivers of the project. It is an example of the kind of curriculum globalization that can benefit both students and faculty who are not able to travel or engage in study abroad experiences. Once the technology platforms are sorted through, this course can become a model for other departments in how to engage globally without leaving campus. The learning of the professors involved was significant and changed their perceptions about teaching and learning in an international setting with international counterparts. These are the kind of experiences The Center should continue to foster.*

Nonetheless, this university “has not made a budgetary commitment to globally networked courses per se”. This comment comes from the US partner and, together with the international partner, both

“expect to be able to continue developing this course and others”, but without invested support, even this project remains a singular commitment.

Question 40 of the Case Study asked teams to discuss the future of the COIL course they taught as part of the Institute. Only 7 Fellows replied that they would be implementing another iteration of the course. Unfortunately, 15 Fellows indicated that at present there would be no continuation and the main explanations for this were lack of resources and/or partners. As one Fellow wrote, “I would love to offer it again, if possible. However, it is almost a double teaching load, and should be recognized as such. Next Fall, I am on sabbatical though.” As mentioned above, the idea of establishing memorandums between institutions aims to overcome the fact that faculty might come and go, or be on leave for a certain period of time. This kind of commitment does not characterize the majority of the teams. Seven Fellows said they would like to do a new iteration of their course but they cannot due to institutional commitments (tenure track being one of these as will be discussed below) and the lack of financial and human resources. The storyline seems to repeat itself: we recognize the importance, we would like to do it, but... .

The seven Fellows that are carrying out additional iterations of their projects are not surprisingly those who indicate that their institution is committed to further developing the work they have begun. Eight Fellows report that their project is influencing institutional policy but, as was stated above, the real value of these courses has to be ‘proved’ before the institutions are willing to invest in these projects. There were, however, six Fellows who reported a complete lack of interest in their initiatives at their institutions.

Unfortunately, when asked about the support Fellows were receiving from their departments, chairs, deans, etc. to repeat or replicate their COIL course, not a single Fellow replied that they were or would be receiving full support. There were 16 Fellows who indicated that there was interest but no certainty and 9 said that there was no support to continue to promote new COIL courses.

Finally, Fellows were asked “What would most help nurture the development of globally networked learning at your institutions?” The responses often overlapped so to sum up, Fellows suggest:

*[financial support to] attend conferences and workshops that center on cross-cultural courses, co-teaching, and online technologies*

*approval to work with smaller than typical class sizes*

*[developing] procedures for incorporating these courses in the regular curriculum and make them available for students from different departments*

*faculty release time to develop the course materials and financial support for developing the pedagogical interface of the online classroom*

*evidence that the course is an effective pedagogical approach*

*opportunities to share the knowledge we gain from teaching in global classrooms with other faculty at our home institutions*

*a core group of faculty [that] can develop expertise and provide a support network, learning from each other's experience*

*a foundation of technological expertise*

*a SUNY COIL approved and developed training course and materials that we could use and customize as needed to offer to interested faculty*

*a SUNY COIL affordable membership website that provided a global, web based faculty matching service for those interested*

*strong partnerships (internal and external)*

*ideas on securing funding to help faculty build more effective partners*

*course releases, travel funds, and a student assistant*

*[the need for] upper management to include such courses as a 'normal' mode of teaching and learning*

*developing an international programs office or committee and offering other faculty members the opportunity to engage in COIL workshops and conferences*

*an annual budget for COIL-related release time and a regularized means of granting it*

*talking to immediate colleagues and administrators*

*more flexibility with calendars on the US side*

*a new perception: globally networked learning has to be perceived as something that is a skill set for a liberal arts education and as non-threatening at the administrative, dare I say budgetary level*

*an open discussion about what is possible and a willingness to let go of traditional learning systems in favour of more user friendly systems*

They also suggested:

- the promotion of an ongoing group to share development ideas and to discuss solutions to specific challenges;
- having both partners sign an agreement;
- finding ways to integrate graduate-part-time instructors into the mix;
- increasing funding for face-to-face meetings of faculty members;
- administrative backing;
- initiating transparent, meaningful reward structures, particularly for tenure-track faculty.

Despite the challenges, Fellows eagerly contributed to this list of factors that could help promote successful projects. These responses seem to indicate a strong belief in and commitment to this model of international collaborative learning and this list of recommendations will certainly prove useful for practitioners interested in engaging in such projects.

## **The Future of Collaborative Online International Learning**

Most teams recognize that in order to normalize this practice throughout their institutions they are going to need more than their enthusiasm and general observations. Although COIL can be considered a low-cost approach to internationalization at home, it is not no-cost. Given the added resources these courses require, Fellows have to demonstrate how the COIL course was different from a traditional course and what added value it had. To no surprise, most cited the access to different cultural points of view as adding that 'something extra' to the course. They found that this element increased student motivation, led to more in-depth learning and helped students be more willing to see ideas, texts, works of art, etc. from different perspectives. In some ways it was as if the students felt they had to perform better because they saw their partner class as a new audience particularly during synchronous audio/video sessions and in asynchronous discussion forums.

*[The] level of intellectual and academic rigor was also very satisfying from a faculty standpoint, with students never at a loss for words! Also, the willingness to collaborate and change and modify ideas based on each other's input in the student pairings was superlative.*

*Aside from enhancing student interest in what they were learning generally, I really saw the international aspects of the course prompting students to think about the texts from other perspectives, including other*

*peoples' personal, historical, and political perspectives. And by bringing me more forthrightly into the role of co-learner with them, I was able to model writing, reading, and learning behaviors.*

This last comment highlights nicely the fact that these courses were a learning experience for the teachers as well. Indeed, recognition of teaching a COIL course as a means of professional development was mentioned by some as ways to make COIL programs more sustainable either through incentives or value placed on it for tenure.

Some Fellows commented on ways in which the COIL course enhanced learning in their specific discipline and led to outcomes that could not arise in a more traditional configuration.

*The subject of the course, the intellectual history of human rights, was greatly enhanced by the networked learning environment. The course was scaffolded in a way that traced the development of human rights which was great, but the real success occurred in having several of the tensions of human rights, especially the complex relationship between the universal and the particular, play out through the experience students had in working with each other.*

*This broadening of the cultural foundations for creation of screenplays is enormously advantageous as the potential final function of a screenplay is a film that should ideally transcend cultural barriers. A distinctive feature of this course was that it enabled the locus of engagement to remain within a familiar environment: participants were able to create work from within their culture whilst allowing it to be scrutinized by colleagues from outside of that culture.*

Another way to move forward and convince others of the validity of these courses is to point out that the lessons learned collectively throughout the Institute can help avoid similar pitfalls for future courses. These pitfalls can be divided into three categories: logistical, intercultural and technological. While the cause of some logistical problems cannot be changed, e.g. significant time difference, there are ways to work around them. Several Fellows mentioned the need to allow more time between tasks and more time at the beginning of the course for learners to get to know one another; based on this some also suggest courses last two terms rather than just one. Three teams also came to the conclusion that their syllabi were too complex and extensive, which often led to incomplete work and/or frustration on the part of teachers and students alike. Another de-motivating factor was that students in some courses were not graded and the goals of the various tasks and activities were not clear. It is always important to have clear, explicit instructions for tasks, but this becomes even more critical in a COIL context where students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds have to come together and collaborate. Similarly, tasks that intend for students to collaborate must be designed in such a way that students are not simply individually adding information to a shared document (e.g. "The work was not always seen as a whole but as the addition of both parts.") but interdependent for the completion of the task.

Not surprisingly, teachers and students alike faced challenges with regards to the intercultural nature of these courses. In one case, the team felt there was no "real personal connection" between students in the two groups. They think that in addition to task design, the tools used and a significant time difference, one major reason for this might also be differences in the academic culture in the two countries. Other teams had similar experiences:

*As students encountered the differences in our educational systems, tension emerged until they were able to understand these differences. Our different ways of working, different expectations, different attitudes and approaches to time management made working together a challenge at the same time that these differences were an essential component of course content.*

*The lack of [...] full time students attending any classroom activities was problematic as it does not match the academic culture from the other two universities.*



Another cause for intercultural conflict came from stereotypes and preconceptions students had of one another going into the exchange:

*The [US] students did not immediately see the less-than-warm-and-fuzzy exchanges between themselves and their [international] counterparts as insightful learning experiences, and tended to treat these encounters negatively when they occurred. It took some work on the part of [the US faculty] to help them consider how the exchanges might be contextualized as intercultural learning experiences.*

As has been noted several times in this report, this last comment highlights the very important and delicate role teachers play in international course collaborations. In addition to content knowledge, teachers also need the skills to navigate the not-always-calm waters of intercultural communication and facilitate moments of tension so that they may result in learning. Not all teachers felt comfortable in this role of intercultural mediator.

*When the assigned writing tasks produced challenging moments for negotiating meaning across language and cultural difference that they were designed to produce, I did not feel entirely prepared to adequately and effectively respond to the situation.*

Basic training in facilitating intercultural communication as well as online learning and teaching would be recommended for teachers new to this practice. These skills are often overlooked, as they were in

Table 3: Team recommendations for changes/improvements they plan to or would like to make for future iterations of their GNL course.

<b>Logistics</b>	<b>Course Design</b>	<b>Technological</b>
<p><i>have more explicit discussions about deadlines and shared responsibility in collaboration</i></p> <p><i>establish a clear understanding between partners of student expectations for the course</i></p> <p><i>spend more time organizing the course with the co-instructors</i></p> <p><i>do icebreaking for two weeks</i></p> <p><i>begin synchronous activities sooner</i></p> <p><i>insist upon release</i></p> <p><i>expand the course over two units</i></p>	<p><i>narrow the historical focus of the class conduct more activities with a “playful” structure where students focus more on the act of communicating than on the fact that they had to communicate for the course</i></p> <p><i>add “traditional knowledge-providing activities” to allow students to learn not only through the process of their practical work, but also from engaging with each faculty member</i></p> <p><i>have both professors should engage in the non-class discussions with students</i></p> <p><i>improve non-class communication between students</i></p> <p><i>increase the virtual communication assignments outside the class</i></p> <p><i>introduce admission criteria for the course, selecting students with a certain level of English</i></p> <p><i>add numerous multimodal elements, including videos, photos, and songs</i></p> <p><i>allow students numerous opportunities for ungraded practice and teamwork in preparation for the graded individual paper</i></p> <p><i>stress that the common work should be common and not the addition of the different parts</i></p> <p><i>not do long (more than one hour) oral sessions where each group presents their own work while the rest of the class is listening</i></p> <p><i>work up a more explicit set of instructions for them, along with, for the American students, the sort of grade incentives that they’re used to having</i></p> <p><i>pare down the number of assignments</i></p> <p><i>shift the focus of the lectures more towards addressing intercultural understanding</i></p>	<p><i>change the types of technology used based on the previous experience</i></p> <p><i>train the students in technology use</i></p> <p><i>add a tool such as VoiceThread</i></p> <p><i>work with a videographer/ audio engineer to ensure high quality audio and video to post</i></p>

the first decade of online learning where administrators and teachers often assumed they could simply transfer their classroom practice to the online practice. However, years of research into distance

learning, high drop-out rates and failed courses have proved that there are different skill sets for teaching online – and the same is true for GNLEs.

Although technology can facilitate communication across borders, when it doesn't work, it can lead to communication breakdown. As much as one trials tools before a course, there can still be moments when the technology does not work or one group has difficulty effectively using a specific online tool. It is important to recognize that educational technologies such as Wordpress are not culturally neutral (see [Helm, Guth and Farrah 2012](#)). Fellows also learned that a key to survival and success is flexibility, i.e. when a tool didn't work or do what they had hoped, try another tool. In many cases, however, this responsibility fell on the teachers' shoulders only adding to an already heavy workload. Hence technical support is of fundamental importance for the full success of a COIL course just as is financial investment into guaranteeing access to the necessary tools, technology and Internet connection. As one Fellow commented:

*there is no question that addressing technology issues will be critical to sustaining and improving this course. We need an online classroom space that seamlessly supports the type of interactions we hope will occur and enables both groups of students to form a single class.*

Table 3 provides a summary of the ways in which Fellows say they would change their course if and when it is offered again. Perhaps the best 'selling' point for convincing others of the value of these courses is the fact that despite the many challenges, frustrations and significant time commitment Fellows had, when asked "Was it worth it?" not a single one replied "no".

*The learnings garnered from the many layers of planning, design and implementation in our COIL Course will be invaluable in our humanities coursework across our campus. We look forward to sustaining and building more global networks in the future.*

*The collaboration and interaction with international faculty members and students were beneficial to our growth as academics, educators and students.*

*What we designed and implemented took full advantage of the ability to transcend physical space, and thus created a unique opportunity for the participants.*

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## Appendix 1: Participating Institutions

List of Institutions that participated in the COIL Institute for Globally Networked Learning in the Humanities.

### Participating US Institutions:

College at Brockport (SUNY)  
Buffalo State College (SUNY)  
University of Cincinnati  
Coastal Carolina University  
Corning Community College (SUNY)  
Drexel University  
Empire State College (SUNY)  
George Mason University  
Lehigh University  
Marymount University  
National University  
North Carolina Central University  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
San Jose State University  
SUNY Cortland  
SUNY Geneseo  
Swarthmore College  
University of Texas El Paso  
Texas Tech University

### Participating International Institutions:

Actors College of Theatre & Television (Australia)  
American College of Management and Technology (Croatia)  
American University Beirut (Lebanon)  
Anadolu University (Turkey)  
Ashesi University College (Ghana)  
Babes Bolyai University (Romania)  
Friedrich Schiller-Universität Jena (Germany)  
University of Ghana (Ghana)  
Hanze Hogeschool Groningen (Netherlands)  
Kagoshima University (Japan)  
Kwansei Gakuin University (Japan)  
La Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain)  
La Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ) (Ecuador)  
Manchester Metropolitan University (United Kingdom)  
Moscow State University (Russia)  
Myongji University (Republic of Korea)  
Novgorod State University (Russia)  
Osaka University (Japan)  
Universidad de las Americas-Puebla (Mexico)  
Queensland College of Art, Griffith University (Australia)  
Royal Academy of Music (Denmark)  
University of Belize (Belize)  
University of South Africa (South Africa)  
University of Victoria (Canada)  
Victoria University (Australia)



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