

How do you teach diversity?

Connecting International and Domestic Students in Management and Communications. Bruce Kingma, Professor Entrepreneurship, School of Information Studies, Whitman School of Management, Syracuse University; brkingma@syr.edu

IST466: Professional Issues in Information Management and Technology

This assignment teaches an appreciation for cultural diversity by connecting domestic and international students over a business case assignment. Teams of students can only properly analyze the case with an understanding and appreciation of the business culture in another country and of their fellow students from outside of the United States.

Background

Given the unfortunate events at Syracuse University in the spring 2018¹, Professor Kingma felt it was important for diversity training to be included in the iSchool's curriculum. About 20 percent of the students at Syracuse University are from outside of the United States.² These students are frequently marginalized, with some domestic students not embracing the value of international students in the classroom.

Professor Kingma teaches the course in business communications and the undergraduate capstone course. The undergraduate capstone course includes a series of case studies in collaboration with outside organizations to enable students to work on real-world projects. Organizations we work with this past year include EY, Google, Facebook, and GAO.

Assignment

Working with the corporate case study, we find a way to include an international flavor to the project. For example, in the spring of 2019, one of the students' cases was;

"You're walking down the hallway and Google CEO, Sundar Pichai is speaking with the CEO of JD.com, Richard Liu. You stop and speak with them, and the JD.com CEO asks, "What are the top 3 partnerships JD.com should be doing with Google?" Using your knowledge of Google and JD.com, decide what are the top partnership opportunities that can be mutually beneficial for both companies and explain why."

Each student team had at least one student from China, who proved to be the international expert on JD.com and Chinese online markets. In addition, graduate students from China were assigned as team mentors and held office hours to help with the case. After three weeks, the student teams presented their analysis to a Google executive, who is also a Syracuse University alumnus. Prior to this presentation, the capstone class had a lunch featuring food and a lesson on etiquette at business meals in China. While there was no formal survey of the impact of this lesson in cultural diversity, many students mentioned in the course evaluation the value and effect the case, lunch, and integration of the international students into the course had on them.

International Case Process

1. Identify alumni working at organizations that can provide a business case.
2. Identify issues of international business in the case.
3. Assign students in teams to analyze the case. Assign at least one international student on each team if possible.
4. Connect international graduate students to the class as mentors.
5. Have a business etiquette lunch that focuses on international business meal etiquette.
6. Include the international business dimension of the case as part of the evaluation rubric.

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/04/19/syracuse-suspects-engineering-fraternity-for-racist-anti-semitic-homophobic-video/>

² <https://www.syracuse.edu/admissions/undergraduate/international/>