

## Montreal Crossborder Workshop Minutes 7/31/03

### Topic #1: Skills

John Holden of Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) talked about the issues and skills identified by businesses in the course of the skills assessment carried out by EMDC and Maine International Trade Center (MITC). This study took a more personal approach using interviews and focus groups. (MITC is statewide. EMDC is regional.)

Skills categories identified:

1. Communication and motivation. Some specific technical skills – spreadsheets, software, presentations. Leadership management or team building is another part. Writing skills and speaking skills in the decision making process.
2. People skills was a large category – working in a team. To lead and develop a team or a project. Take a project through all the stages, not just develop it.
3. Decision making for a business. Ability to evaluate a situation, negotiate and then make a decision.

On p.10 the “student skills paper” identifies 5 skill sets.

Also asked about companies’ opinions on internships:

Structure in an internship is important. Firms want to evaluate students and help select them. Value to the business is infusion of youth into the company, not just the cheap labor. This could be true of the international perspective also. There is hesitation in the firms, they’re not sure they want to invest in a student. Risk involved. Idea of a regional concept was appealing to the firms. Firms in Atlantic Canada interested in the regional idea as well.

Comments:

-- Earl Walsh, Director of Cooperative Education, Dalhousie University: Dalhousie has developed a career portfolio – identifies transferable skills, make sure professors bring out these skills, no matter what kind of course. Students have to develop career portfolio in first work term (students have three work terms). They decide skills they want to develop with the employer.

-- Michael Whalen, Dean of Internationalization, NSAC: in a consulting study for PEI, identified most of same skills. Other one was research skills, employers anxious for students to know how to do research – can they sell a product in a market?

-- Leadership skills also – these are hard to define.

-- Walsh: Differences between Internships and Coop. Coop is usually a semester long (14 weeks for Dalhousie) program where students alternate between semesters of study at the University and working normally full-time at a firm or agency. Internships are normally less formal, more monitored by professor, and not always paid. In the trade there is a distinction between coop and internship. Larger companies build coops into their HR departments. One of the distinctions is pay. For Dalhousie, second work term is analytical. Has to be 14 weeks of paid employment. Also receive academic credit if all conditions are met.

- Diana Lawson, UM Associate Dean of Business: Coop is part of curriculum of a degree, internship is typically optional. Coop is structured for particular learning results.
- Karen Boucias, UM Director of International Programs: UM engineering program has set coop program structure. Small companies shouldn't miss the opportunity; student gets to see more parts of the business.
- Michel Morisset, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Programme d'économie et gestion agroalimentaires. Université Laval: Seven or eight years ago, Laval started a coop at farm level, a compulsory program. Now also a second one in organization – anything that is not a farm. Business, government, organization level. Students must do both. Information gathered is that organization appreciates it because it makes the students more valuable when they do start work. 400 firms available on any given year, about 120 used each year. Program is just for ag. econ. students.
- Walsh: In Nova Scotia, Fed. Gov. grants pay half of cost of coop in government positions.
- Morisset: Laval does not promote students to go outside the province bec. too difficult to supervise. Cannot have the control we want.

## Topic #2: New curriculum plans.

George Criner:

Based on skill results, the current thinking on curriculum modification is as follows.

1. Any of our Resource Agribusiness Management (RAM) students will be able to choose to earn an “International Concentration” in addition to their basic RAM B.S. degree. To earn the “International Concentration,” the students will need to complete several requirements above the basic degree. These include minimum language proficiency, an area study, and several international related courses. While a minimum set of international courses are required, the approach taken is to allow maximum flexibility for students, in consultation with their advisor, to make international course selections. The maximum flexibility is designed to allow ease of students to attend a Canadian (or other) university for a semester.
2. The University of Maine has general education requirements. These requirements require that students complete certain requirements in math, science and humanities. The general education requirements are met under the proposed concentration.
3. The set of courses required of all RAM students from the Department of Resource Economics and Policy, Economics, and Business, will be required of the students receiving the RAM International Concentration. These include a year of accounting, two years of economics, many courses on applied economics/management (the REP courses including marketing, finance, and quantitative analyses) and a senior seminar course for integration of concepts.
4. Students wishing to receive the International Concentration will need to have a minimum of two years of foreign language or equivalent proficiency.
5. International Concentration students will be required to complete the following courses: World Food Supply, Population and Environment (an REP course), Introduction to International Business (a MBS course), and International Trade (an Economics course). They will also be required to complete six credit hours of a region or culture study. For example, students taking French as their language may wish to take a May term or summer semester at Laval University. Because some students might find out of country travel not feasible economically, students could complete this requirement with more formal coursework, including more foreign language courses. In addition to the six credit culture or region study and the above three mentioned courses, students will be required to complete at a minimum, three other international courses in consultation with their advisor.
6. For providing some of the maturity and self-starting skills that were identified in the skills study, International Concentration students will be encouraged to complete an internship or the proposed summer institute.

-- Comment from Diana Lawson: At one point you were considering adding “trailer courses,” with these trailer courses likely following a Maine Business School course. What is the status of these?

-- Response from George Criner: We have not ruled out the idea of trailer courses, but for practical reasons have decided to initiate the program with use of full three-credit hour courses. We want students to take the MBS International Business course, and fully expect them to take other international courses from the MBS. As REP continues to

develop and expand its knowledge base and experience in international areas, more courses, trailer or otherwise will likely become available.

-- Comment: There are fewer free electives in international program than in basic RAM program because of the international component. Is there room for internship and/or summer institute in the program?

-- Response from George Criner: There is room for either but perhaps not both.

Remember that some (or most) students enter with some language training, and this should allow them more flexibility.

-- Comment from Gary Fairchild, Univ. of Florida: Development of international courses is a challenge because department is small. Strengthening relationships with other departments is out of necessity on the teaching side, and also because grant programs seem to be now requiring larger working groups, with multidisciplinary and often multi-institution requirements. Also, with tightening of state and provincial budgets more cooperation will be beneficial.

-- Comment from George Criner: We have found excellent cooperation from departments across campus.

-- Comment from Al Kezis, UM Assoc. Dean, College of Nat. Sci., Forestry, Agric.: One thing that is changed at UM, we used to have coop programs but they died. Now called field experience and are very broad. These will not be coming back on the scale of Laval or Dalhousie, but we would like to start to move back to where we were. Programs are now run through departments. We are trying to rebuild what used to have.

-- Comment from Stephen Grant, Assoc. Dean of Research, UNB Fredericton: The language requirement is interesting. How many credits?

Response from George Criner: 12 credit minimum although we hope, and see evidence to this effect, that students will take more than this level.

-- Comment from Ray Pelletier (UM Canadian American Center): There is huge waste in language area because we let time pass. Students come with high school language but there is a time lapse and they lose it. If you invest in it, not lose what they already have, not have the time lapse, could use high school experience to move forward.

-- Comment from S. Grant: Do UM students study other than French?

-- Response from George Criner -- yes, we now have some studying Spanish and German too.

Topic #3: University-to-University agreements.

Karen Boucias, Director of International Programs at UM.

Handout on internationalization. – promising practices. Also procedures for developing study abroad programs. Guidelines. There are two types of agreements. Study abroad often provides all the skills mentioned before. Talk about University exchanges.

Polls show that international experience is especially important to the public. (2000) Reality is that language study declined to 8%, language requirements decreased to 20% of institutions. In contrast to the public opinion.

Less than 3% of US students study abroad.

Less than 1% of UM students study abroad.

Students are weak in geography. Global systems, exchange rates. Global issues blur what is a foreign and domestic concern. E.g. lack of Arabic speakers in US has become important. US approaching 60,000 foreign students. UM has 450 international students. What do we need to think about in terms of creating agreements?

UM now has 22 agreements that will work. 2 types – general and specific. Short term, long term, for specific functions, traditional semester or year. Most UM go to UK. Have to battle lots of preconceived notions about study abroad – cost, difficulty, etc. Need to know campus process for agreements. How ceremonial is it. Are there resources attached to agreements. None have resources attached now. Which office keeps track of agreements, renewals, many are written for 5 years. Who monitors financial commitment? UM student pays to special account at their tuition rate, we pay incoming visitors fees. Have to monitor the account. We have students pay for own housing and food. Who takes care of immigration processing? Who makes sure housing is available, who registers, is there housing? Not require TOEFL for exchange students, let the partner institution decide if their English is good enough.

Is there an orientation program for incoming and outgoing students? Getting passport, the basics. Some need visas. Concern with safety and health. Also power of attorney.

Insurance that pays for repatriation of remains. Advisor assigned for students. Also a faculty contact for exchanges. Who handles the publicity for the exchange – put out publicity around campus.

Important to know how your campus works, make it easier for student. General agreements. Comparable office contact at other institution.

UM also belongs to consortia that allows students to go to other programs. Then a student pays to go on that, not so much record keeping. E.g. national student exchange program. Canada Year – sponsored exchanges with institutions in Canada, UNB, McGill, Laval, Ottawa, UBC, spend a year or semester. UNB is more faculty exchange than student.

Comments:

-- Shelley Rinehart, Dean, Faculty of Business, UNB Saint John: when money decreased, did interest decline?

- Boucias: some money was for faculty travel, faculty interest declined. There are some endowments, scholarships for individual exchanges. E.g. Bulgaria.
- Rinehart: UNB just started a study abroad program, faculty and students, that is funded. Also issue of self funded students, how to make it work for them.
- Ray Pelletier: we always talk about how to increase numbers for study abroad. As Hoff pointed out, UM is NRC for study of Canada, get federal funding. Component of that is FLAS for French. Now devoted to graduate students. FLAS allows us to send students in the summer programs. 5 or 6-week programs. Should consider this as an option. Could possibly have some undergraduate support in the future.
- Diana Lawson: faculty contacts. It is important to have a faculty person to promote exchange programs to the students.

Topic #4: Department-to-Department agreements.

Michel Morisset, Laval University.

Handouts from Laval.

International profile. Laval is internationalized. 3000 students from abroad. Formalized exchanges, targeting students at undergraduate level.

First we do a general agreement for the exchange, we also participate in consortia, then wanted to go step further to program-to-program agreements.

His department manages 7 programs. Gets people involved at program level. Director of the program and the professor to select program at other university and promote exchange of students. Idea of agreement is that you pre-select courses the student will be authorized to take. This ensures that student will get credit for courses and no delay.

Also want exchange of students, not just one way for students. Program to program means close contact between professors at university. This is the kind of agreement we are looking for. The students who participate will have it on their diploma. Started program 2 years ago, select languages, select countries, select universities. French, English, Spanish and Portuguese. Agreement with Brazil and Argentina, Nova Scotia, some students want to go but not go far. Also discussing with other universities.

Students need above average marks, must be functional in language of host country. Language department will test them. Do have some support from foundation for students, when traveling to S America. Laval pays airfare. Not to Europe. Some small scholarship for costs. Depends on where they go. Laval student pays tuition at Laval when they go. It is advantage for other students coming to Laval to pay their own tuition. Offer all the support to incoming students to find housing, etc, housing is at own cost. Laval offers free intensive language courses over summer. Ten percent of his students go abroad during their time at Laval.

Comments

-- Diana Lawson: does money come from endowment?

-- Michel Morisset: Yes. Also there is a Laval university foundation that puts money into the program. Laval would like to get to 15 % of students, think they can get there.

Question of promotion, the best promotion is returning students. All students must be bilingual to get diploma.

-- Gary Fairchild: a large part of what deters students is that they often don't know how to go about it.

-- Morisset: Laval is very well organized, there are programs for before and after they go. Debriefing. There is an office that does all the paperwork. They can go for one or two semesters.

-- Karen Boucias: the trick at UM is getting students to the international office.

-- Morisset: There is study abroad, but internships must be more supervised. Would be interesting to make the internship abroad as well. There is an interest from the students.

-- Walsh: Dalhousie is starting to have some success with that too.

-- NSAC has certif. in Atlantic Agric. – call it work placement, starting to do this too, has been successful in attracting students from central Europe.

-- Boucias: We are in a position to build a model, knowing people at other universities.

- Criner: We will talk after lunch about cross border internships. UNB has dept to dept agreements with Univ. will you tell us?
- Stephen Grant: We have 3 in Fredericton. We call them 2 plus 2 programs. Trinidad and Cairo. Accept credits for 2 years, then provide final 2 years. Receive UNB degree.
- Rinehart: At both under and grad. 2 years in China, final 2 years at UNB. At MBA level, offered to Asian students. A dozen students at any given time from there. Students come from college with 2-year diploma, come for 2 years to get applied management degree.
- Lawson: UM has a partnership with Germany. Exchange for a semester. Also have study trip, students put in teams with German students, work on project, present project to corporate execs. Challenges doing program the first time, but would do it again. Talked about joint curriculum, but not gotten it worked out yet. UM is part of consortium to send students to Grenoble, France. Pooled students so have group of 20. There are more of these programs now, teaching in English. This one is not so popular. Lots of programs in Europe, but need to do one-to-one exchange of students, send our students there.
- Dan Innis, UM Dean of Business, Public Policy and Health: This will become a requirement for UM MBA students, this year exchange was an elective.
- Walsh: Dalhousie school of business has about 12 exchanges. Has MBA in financial services, partnered with banking industry. There is a market for this, the Japanese, Chinese, are interested. Have started other programs on model of banking – partnering with other industry.

## Topic #5: Summer institute

See one-page description handout. Presentation was followed by a computer demonstration of the business simulation game.

Tim Taylor, UFlorida Food and Resource Economics Department

This is conceived as an option for a shorter experience, maybe three week, 6 credit, for those students who won't, or can't go abroad. It takes a real problem from industry, use it as a case study, not just business, but could be agricultural economics too. Students use problem-solving skills, see the value of working with diverse students. It uses seminars, discussions, industry representation and debates. A large part is a computer-based simulation.

This concept would be a joint effort, rather than an exchange. The simulation is done in teams of 3 students, they make decisions, make a strategic plan, give a presentation.

### Comments:

- Karen Boucias: the game could be run in the morning with afternoon used for cultural sensitivity training.
- Diana Lawson: example is the Bafa Bafa game.
- John Holden, EMDC: students could also join in "business to business" meetings with industry.
- could incorporate actual current issues between US and Canada.
- could combine with language courses.
- Stephen Grant: UNB would be interested.
- Michael Whalen: example of a business program that deals with NAFTA in NY.
- Michel Morisset: This would interest Laval students, but might need to be more "agro" to sell it to the program and to students.
- the case studies and the industries could be agricultural.
- could take 30 to 40 students, with the content determined by the universities that participate. Could subsidize the cost in the first years, then look for funding.
- who is giving the credit? Would want each university to give its own credit and have its own course number.
- could have business people as participants.
- Idea for writing a grant is to get a programmer to modify the game to change the commodity to something agricultural.
- issue of agricultural commodity or not is whether they have preconceived notions of idea on agriculture or not. This could be part of the learning experience.

## Topic #6: More cross border options

Stephen Grant, Associate Dean of Research and Outreach, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

Would love to have UM students on UNB campus, would open door to UNB students to go to UM. Don't have agribusiness, but do have lot of course offerings. There is an export partnering program on Fredericton Campus, could work together on this or expand it. There is money available to enhance the program. Exporting is the key to developing it. 6 credit hour course, about 20 students. ACOA is gov't agency that wants to promote it.

Other opportunities are internships, job shadowing, and also traditional field trips across the border. Maybe could be a requirement to go cross border to visit farms, production facilities.

### Comments:

--John Holden: EMDC would like to develop this type of opportunity (field trips) as part of the regional concept. Students could sit in on this type of meeting, the business-to-business meeting.

-- Stephen Grant: The export partnering program is run with guest speakers -- Could coordinate.

-- Ray Pelletier: The intro to Canada course takes a field trip to Ottawa – option to make a requirement of a day in Fredericton. Would like to renew this type of exchange. Can Am center could help in setting up these types of field trips, write it into a grant.

-- Stephen Grant: to work, field trips have to be a requirement.

-- Idea of internships, we should collectively share ideas. One complication is the work visa requirement, unless the student becomes a student of the host university.

-- Don't need a visa to be a foreign student, but do have to have immigration documents. Canadians can come to US and work as part of their curriculum.

-- Walsh: most students working in the states have their own connections.

-- Stephen Grant: UNB could find internship placements for US students, what type of placements? Would they have to be ag business?

-- Walsh: one of the problems is the exchange rate. And high cost of living.

-- Gary Fairchild: do you think your businesses would be open to Maine students as interns?

-- Stephen Grant: In our experience it would (in NB). They would welcome someone from the New England Market. A company that would want to export to New England. If they think the student will stay after the coop or in the area, they are willing. UNB would need to identify companies. Student would need to have a better fit than a domestic student, for a particular project.

-- Walsh: stats are that only 30% of coop students find permanent employment with their firms.

-- John Holden: many firms would welcome student from NB, NS, QE, but student should have some pre-work on what is the area. Should know it physically. There was no bias in interviews toward it being a Maine student.

- Diana Lawson: within Chamber of Commerce in Bangor, a Franco-business committee that wanted interns with French ability. Is it still around? There is a market for interns with bilingual ability. (they published a directory of businesses in Bangor area that have French capacity. David Casavant is convener.)
- Walsh: issue is how you get jobs. It would be better if you could go through somebody instead of cold calling.
- John Holden: firms don't know where to go, there needs to be a structure.
- Diana Lawson: career planning and placement may be the structure.
- Michel Morriset: it would be easy for Laval to receive students from elsewhere and find them some jobs, from Maine or elsewhere.
- George Criner: a model that might work would be for student to pick a school, go there for a semester and work with that school to get placement then for the summer.
- Shelley Rinehart: that would bring third year students in, that would work.
- Stephen Grant: it also solves the visa problem, if they are our student then they can work in an internship.
- Walsh: only place this can't work in Canada is federal government.
- Al Kezis: it would be nice to set up a loose agreement between us that we would help each other with these internships. For a few students it could work this way.
- John Holden: we (EMDC) could easily be a part of this agreement and send out information on which firm wants an intern.
- Earl Walsh: employment at the university itself would be an option.

George Criner:

There are two other options to talk about.

1. Student would start studying a country, a region, a firm, then go there during spring break, a job shadowing, then prepare a report, give a presentation. This would get around some of the problems.
2. Also might find classes on both sides of border, look at an issue, do a visit to other institution over break, work on joint report, reciprocate.

- Stephen Grant: this would be an easy one to implement. Essentially a field trip.
- George Criner: we will be exploring these options more, will be sending emails, etc.
- John Holden: for the summer institute idea. We talked about business participation – very important. It could sustain itself if we get businesses to participate in design of it as well. Could evolve into an internship. Could open it up beyond agribusiness, maybe an IT firm.

Public relations on this project itself. Need to show concrete examples of regional cooperation, this is great example today. Like press releases, etc.

#### DISCUSSION:

- Gary Fairchild: Is there a general sense that summer institute makes sense?
- Stephen Grant: It makes sense for UNB.
- We want industry support. Would give them priority access to students. Never envisioned an academic endeavor.
- Walsh: would there be course prerequisites?
- Between junior and senior year? Yes

- Stephen Grant: what the next step is? A formal agreement before Press Release?
- Ray Pelletier: Press release from UM that could be shared with other institutions. Probably George.
- Margaret at press office, could also go into Maine magazines.
- John Holden: EMDC purpose in Maine is to promote NEAR. Our agreement is an example of what NEAR can do. Bigger picture – organizational meeting to start programs, cooperation. To pique the interest of business and industry. To build political support.
- Gary Fairchild: we don't want to get ahead of ourselves.
- Ray Pelletier: issue of the road maps. Clearly delineated road maps for students and the community. I liked Laval program – unit that maintains and sustains the program w/o everyone having to be involved. Since George is at Laval, we could learn from their model. A centralized program that sustains itself.
- Earl Walsh: talking about funding. Should explore some Canadian funding. (NB gov't is interested)
  
- Gary Fairchild: We could eventually have more demand than we could supply. We could also interest Florida students.
- George Criner: following up on Florida connection, students interested in Spanish could work with Florida,
- Diana Lawson: this could be a revenue-generating model. This is competitive advantage.

George Criner wraps up.

Adjourn