

Click: Curricular Strategy Using Virtual Exchange **Gazelle International Higher Education Brief**

Colleges need to prepare students for futures in an interconnected world and to thrive amid the challenges of globalization. Typical campus strategies focus on mobility, i.e. faculty exchange for professional development and research, recruiting international students, study abroad for students and increasingly service-learning or internships overseas. Institutional partnerships provide administrative anchors. Dual degrees provide curricular anchors. Yet the gaps are formidable. Do they create deep ties to the curriculum? Do they offer strategic opportunities to connect international resources on campus? Most importantly, do they reach most students? In the US, only 1% of all students are able to participate in study abroad and even in Europe with its major push, only 5% can participate.♦

Virtual Exchange addresses these gaps for all types of colleges. It can expand the core teaching resources on campus and integrate more students into robust intercultural engagement, while also strengthening student (and faculty) ability to use technology in formal coursework with the advantage of working in multicultural teams. Being campus-based, it provides a “two-country course” led by faculty locally and overseas, an immersive experience to any enrolled student, using for-credit coursework with technologic and international boosters.

Value for faculty.

- Significant professional development experience, expanding critical insight into the intercultural assumptions of their own fields and approaches
- Develops and nurtures collegial networks beyond the classroom
- Increases value of faculty’s language and international talents beyond their normal departmental reach, supporting other faculty who stretch to meet student demand for more international engagement in their own fields’ with research or teaching

Value for students

- Understanding issues of global significance, engaging with other cultures, effectively communicating with others outside their familiar environment
- Learning how to communicate in formal intercultural and virtual settings, beyond their “virtual engagements in the wild” like gaming, facetime, etc.; forming peer networks
- Key new world “survival skills” such as collaborating across networks, accessing and analyzing information, critical thinking and judgment, functioning in cross-cultural teams
- Keen insight into language and cultural variations and ability to reflect critically on and understand one’s own culture and assumptions, gaining skill in parsing other cultures

Value for colleges.

- Meets key institutional drivers, often in accreditation – diversity with exposure to other cultures, promoting active experiential learning among students, attracting students
- Develops and deepens international partnerships and creates new bridges to local partners, eg, employers and donors ready to support new ties to their overseas partners.
- Provides true virtual mobility at reasonable cost. Is integrated into the college’s core learning processes and standards. Complements other internationalization and digital endeavors.

♦ NAFA using 2013 data, roughly 1% of all students enrolled in the US and 10% of all US college graduates

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In a nutshell, how does Click* make Virtual Exchange work. Two faculty or a team of faculty from two different colleges in different parts of the world work, say Quebec and Hartford, and use similar teaching approaches. They each have a course that they teach normally that share learning goals and some subject matter, say “Public speaking” and “Persuasion.” They and their students will benefit by drawing on their different histories and cultures while learning the core subject matter lessons. They develop the learning aims for the **Click** module, the part of the course where Quebecois and CT students will work on a common projects with shared tasks. With Gazelle’s Design Workshop, the faculty prepare a mix of learning situations with different tools, i.e., full class presentations with video-conferencing or team projects with video or writing blogs. Students on each campus enroll in their own campus’ system and pay their home college tuition and fees.

Community colleges and minority-serving first generation colleges are notable for Virtual Exchange success in attracting and energizing students and faculty around international themes.

- Middlesex CC, La Salle University (Mexico) – Verbal, Non-Verbal Communication (Spanish, Communications)
- Asnuntuck CC, IUT Lannion (France) – Complex Topics, Clear Language (Health , English and Network Management)
- Northwest CC, IUT Nancy-Brabois (France)– Pharmaceutical Discovery (Microbiology, Statistics)
- Middlesex CC, U.Normandy (France) – French business in the US (Entrepreneurship, Business)

There are many variations ranging from sharing a module within a course to a two-semester fully interactive course with as many as three partner schools. Language and liberal arts faculty often are early champions. Social Science, Business, Engineering and others also bring the power of intercultural and cross-national perspectives to their students and institutions.

How Gazelle International’s Click is kickstarting the CT Community Colleges International Education Initiative. With our first French collaborators, Gazelle has helped CT obtain start-up funding while seeking longer term funding. Gazelle has provided initial workshops to engage faculty and identify likely courses to pursue; helped CT CC leadership to identify faculty teaching partners and engage partner institutions; developed the **Click** modules over the summer and into the academic year. Overseas travel funds have added special value in two places -- for the faculty partners to work in person; for the top **Click** students to travel to present their work or deepen their project. Gazelle provides a clear and simple assessment to understand what works and what doesn’t; where there is added value and cost; and guidance for next steps. Scaling up and out from virtual exchange, we help connect **Click** with the larger curriculum of the participating colleges, exchange and partnership plans and deepen curricular and research connections with current and new partners.

We are honored to help the CT Community Colleges pursue their international and global goals. I would be pleased to explore ways this strategy can work for your campus.

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* **Click**, Collaborative Learning for International Capabilities and Knowledge, anchoring international education in the faculty and curriculum using technology while expanding access to student and faculty exchange on-ground.