

Cultural Competence and Global Competitiveness: An Educational Approach

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Introduction

The reality of global interdependence has become widely recognized because of world events and characterized both by increased trade and the threat of worldwide terrorism. A USDA-CSREES (2002) publication states that there is an urgent need for "Americans to understand the United States' role in global cooperation and development, and the benefits that accrue as a result of international involvement" (p.1). Under the support of an external grant, faculty and staff from the College of Agriculture developed an innovative educational program that would provide the opportunity for shared international experiences with colleagues, communities, and clientele in which Purdue University serves.

Course Description

Course Participants:

(each participant was paired with an Indiana agribusiness)

- Purdue Extension educators
- Purdue graduate students enrolled in the Department of Youth Development and Agricultural Education
- Indiana Agricultural Science and Business teachers
- Indiana agribusiness leaders and managers

Course Coordination by:

- Purdue Extension New Ventures team
- Department of Youth Development and Agricultural Education
- Department of Forestry and Natural Resources
- Purdue International Extension
- CATIE University

Course Activities:

- Participants were trained in market access techniques by Purdue agricultural marketing specialists prior to their travel experience
- The participants engaged in an 11-day agricultural education and market research experience in Costa Rica
- The experience explored international engagement and education: Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), tropical biodiversity, environmental and trade differences in Latin American agriculture, and global/international business perspectives

Delivery

The course was innovative in providing participants cultural training in another country, while conducting market research for Indiana agribusinesses interested in exploring international markets. Participants were required to:

- Engage in a pre-trip orientation and market analysis training
- Engage in a pre-trip dialogue and review with a selected Indiana agribusiness, pertaining to interests the business had in Central America
- Travel to Costa Rica and on a daily basis follow self-guided supporting written curriculum during the trip
- Participate in all group discussions at each visited site during the trip, focusing on their respective agribusiness and group reflections at the end of each day
- Prepare a post-trip report on the state of the market, and potential economic benefits for each agribusiness studied



Conclusions

2006 Course Trip:

- Ten participants compiled and presented marketing reports to the seven Indiana agribusinesses
- Opportunities identified for corn and soybean agriculture, ornamental plant production and sales, and food processing
- Three of seven agribusinesses sustained interactions with Costa Rican contacts

2007 Course Trip:

- Ten participants compiled and presented marketing reports to the four Indiana agribusinesses
- Opportunities identified for agricultural real estate, animal production, wood products, and fruit processing
- Continued follow up with participating agribusinesses through Purdue New Ventures team and Purdue International Extension

Course Reflections:

- Perceived changes by students in personal awareness and thoughts about international travel:
 - ❖ Changed ethnocentric perceptions of United States agriculture
 - ❖ Differing world food systems
 - ❖ Socioeconomic awareness
 - ❖ Value of understanding other people between and within cultures.
 - ❖ Behavioral changes, including confidence to travel and explore new countries
 - ❖ Classroom adjustments, adding international components

References

United States Department of Agriculture and Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. (2002). Global Education: What is it? Why should you care? Retrieved October 30, 2003, from http://www.reeusda.gov/serd/ip/global_ed.htm

