

DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND PROJECTS: THE CASE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (SIPA)

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1.0 SIPA as an International Institution

In the aftermath of World War II, Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) began as the School of International Affairs (SIA) and was designed to help keep the United States aware of its international environment and capable of sophisticated diplomacy in the emerging world order. It was largely a product of Columbia University's Department of Government and Public Law and an expression of U.S. international engagement after World War II, and the concern that we might descend into the isolationism that followed World War I.

The School was quite small through the 1950's and 1960's and was built on a set of regional institutes focused on international area studies and supported by the federal government. In 1977 SIA established an MPA program designed to be the "domestic twin" of its international affairs program. Under the leadership of its first director, Jim Caraley, the program evolved away from its political science roots and added requirements in applied economics and public management through hires such as Harold Watts, Don Kettl, Pat Hennigan, Fred Thompson and myself.

One motivation for the development of the MPA program was the post-Vietnam war concern that the United States might turn inward and that SIA (in 1981 renamed SIPA) needed a "domestic product" to balance its international orientation. The great paradox of this is that in the end, Columbia's MPA program had the effect of making SIPA's international affairs program more analytic and management-oriented, while

the MPA program has become far more international in orientation due to its presence in SIPA and New York City.

SIPA is located in the world's most international city. According to the 2000 census, over 40% of the people living in New York City were born outside the United States. If illegal aliens and tourists are counted, there is no question that most of the people on the streets of New York were born outside this country. Many of SIPA's faculty are recruited internationally. Three of SIPA's economists were born in India, the head of Columbia's African Institute is from South Africa, and the director of the School's Program in Economic Policy Management is from Latin America.

Approximately 25% of SIPA's faculty were born outside the United States. Most of its faculty have worked and studied abroad.

SIPA'S student body is as international as the city of New York. With a total enrollment of 1,092, 476 or 43.6% are international students. The MPA in Economic Policy Management, a program funded by the World Bank, in part to train finance ministry staff from developing nations, is SIPA's most international program: 49 of its 54 students (90.7%) are international. Of the remaining programs:

- 333 of the 701 Master of International Affairs students (47.5%) are international.
- 79 of the 258 Master of Public Administration students (30.6%) are international.

- 15 of the 79 Executive Master of Public Administration (EMPA) students (19%) are international. The amazing thing about this statistic is that the Executive Program typically meets on Saturdays and all EMPA students live in the New York metropolitan area.

SIPA's history, location, faculty, curriculum and students all exhibit an international orientation. That international emphasis is reflected in:

- SIPA's MPA curriculum-- which includes international content in all core courses;
- The MPA Program's international affairs concentration—which enrolls about 25% of the program's student body;
- The MPA requirement that at least one course be international in orientation.

The international orientation is also reflected in a host of partnership arrangements with schools outside the United States. These type of relationships have long been a basic function of the School's regional institutes. All of these institutes have informal and formal relationships with peer institutions in the regions that they study. This paper will not focus on those relationships, and instead will focus on newer relationships that have not involved substantial participation by the regional institutes.

2.0 International Programs

2.1 Workshop in Economic and Political Development (EPD)

The capstone course for SIPA's concentration in Economic and Political Development is a two-semester sequence in project management and a development analysis workshop. The workshop typically has developing country clients and the students in the project group usually travel to the client's site to collect data or interview key informants.

According to Fida Adely, Workshop Coordinator and Coralie Bryant, EPD Director:

"Students work in teams with a faculty supervisor to assist clients on a wide variety of assignments in international development, poverty reduction and related fields. The students bring a multidisciplinary approach to their work, reflective of their range of backgrounds, skills and professional and academic experiences.

Each year, the *Workshop* faculty and students seek to identify agencies with discrete, well-defined projects that meet the real needs of the client while affording young professionals challenging opportunities to hone their skills. In recent years, projects have been arranged with a wide variety of international organizations including the International Rescue Committee, the Trickle Up Program, World Neighbors, the World Bank, UNICEF, UNIFEM and UNDP along with several domestic agencies, such as the New York Association for New Americans.

The precise nature of the product and process the students deliver is negotiated with the organization based upon the specifics of the project. Examples of past products and processes *Workshop* teams have delivered include: An institutional assessment of a community school movement; An institutional assessment of national capacities for mitigating civil violence; Marketing strategies for a product local artisans seek to export; A toolkit for planning water and sanitation delivery in refugee camps an evaluation of a program or project; A tool kit for addressing gender perspectives in transportation projects; Developing a framework for micro enterprise development strategies.

Each *Workshop* team is advised by a Columbia University faculty member. Faculty members, drawing from their own expertise, provide analytical input, practical guidance, and monitor task requirements and schedules to help pace the team's work and review their progress. Students draw on the expertise, analytical tools, language skills, and knowledge of economic, social and political issues that they have acquired through their course work, internships and previous work experience.

A roster of clients and preliminary project descriptions (terms of reference) are identified in the Fall semester. This process begins in September and a final list of projects for students to choose from are identified by the end of October. During this process students and/or faculty advisors are in contact with client agencies in order to draft project terms of reference based on the client's needs. During the first week of November, *Workshop* teams are formed and teams contact clients to schedule an initial meeting or teleconference.

Depending on the needs of the client, students may conduct full-time fieldwork during a three-week period in January (Winter Vacation) and/or during a two-week period in mid-March (Spring Break). Teams work on their projects throughout the spring semester and deliver their final report, as well as any other deliverables agreed upon with the client, by the end of April. A public briefing, which clients are encouraged to attend, is scheduled at the end of April at SIPA. In addition, clients may arrange for briefings to their own staff around the same time.

Workshop projects are limited by the constraints of the academic year. Faculty and students start meeting during November of the fall semester and continue through to April, near end of the spring semester. Furthermore, students participating in the *Workshop* are also pursuing a full time course of study while working on the *Workshop*. Much of the work, therefore, is done off-site from the field.

For assignments that require international travel – and most do – clients are asked to assist in cost sharing. SIPA encourages the *Workshop* and provides a modest fund to which teams may apply for assistance with travel costs. In addition, clients are asked to designate a liaison to collaborate with the *Workshop* team throughout the process.” (Bryant and Adelay: 2001, EPD Workshop Course Handout, SIPA)

The EPD workshop has been a feature at SIPA for well over a decade. Many of the clients are “repeat customers” and SIPA faculty over time have learned to deal with the logistical, financial and analytic constraints and difficulties confronted by these projects.

2. 2 Fieldwork Abroad

Both SIPA's MPA and MIA programs require students to undertake internships to complete their masters degree. Each summer approximately 100 students participate in the School's Fieldwork Abroad Program. Every year the School's Office of Career Services contacts internship sponsors and publishes a directory of job opportunities.

About 40% of the internships are paid internships. SIPA provides travel subsidies of 60% of the airfare for students traveling to internship sites. Last year 100 students received travel grants totaling \$55,000. In addition, 7 SIPA students were awarded \$1,050 fellowships from an anonymous benefactor who wished to encourage unpaid internships in health, education and development.

The Fieldwork Abroad program is a fairly resource intensive activity. A full time staff person and a student assistant spend most of their time lining up internship sites, processing travel grants, and assisting students in their internship search. This program helps augment our students' exposure to work outside the United States. When this program is added to our large international student population and then added to the international experiences many of our students have before coming to SIPA, we have a high level of confidence that our students have been exposed to non-U.S. environments. This makes our graduates more cosmopolitan and more valuable to employers.

2.3 Partnerships with Externado, Sciences Po, and the London School of Economics

Externado. The partnership with Universidad Externado de Colombia is one in which SIPA's MPA program sends faculty to teach in a graduate program at an elite private university in Bogota, Colombia. Our faculty travels to Bogota to teach about management issues from an international perspective in Externado's executive

certificate program. The program is the equivalent of a masters degree in public administration without a thesis (Colombian law requires a thesis for all masters degrees). SIPA's MPA faculty helped develop the entire curriculum, and selected SIPA faculty participants and their topics. SIPA faculty receive a stipend and travel expenses directly for their teaching.

Our relationship with the Externado developed through introduction made by an MPA alum from Colombia. My colleague William Eimicke visited the Externado campus for general discussions in the Fall of 1993. Discussions continued throughout 1994 as the curriculum, recruitment and respective roles took shape. In February, 1995, Dean John Ruggie of SIPA and Dean Roberto Hinnestrosa signed a formal letter of agreement to launch the certificate program. To date, classes have graduated each year since April 1997.

The agreement calls for joint academic activities in public administration and public policy analysis including graduate teaching programs, research and faculty/student exchanges. We have recently begun exploration of a case study development effort for use in the certificate program and each of our own masters programs.

SIPA provides the faculty and curriculum for eight sessions, consisting of two consecutive eight hour teaching days on site at the Externado. Faculty leave here on Thursday afternoon, teach all day Friday and Saturday, and return on Sunday. On several occasions Professor Eimicke and I have made evaluation visits as the program

has moved forward. The Specialization Certificate has been well received in Colombia, and from our perspective, it is a rigorous and high quality program.

The agreement specifies that our course sessions are taught in English with professional simultaneous translation provided by the Externado. Admission preference is given to English speaking candidates. To date, about a third of the students are fluent in English. Few of our faculty are fluent in Spanish, so simultaneous translation is an important point and a major expense.

The certificate program is a Colombian version of an MPA. Students take courses over an 18 month term, attending two full days of classes on campus every other week. Homework and readings are done during the interim period. SIPA faculty teach one of the seven modules, entitled the "International Experience". Topics covered by SIPA faculty include: the theory and practice of public administration; total quality management and management innovation; privatization and contracting out; organization theory and behavior; policy analysis and decision-making; standard operating procedures and organizational change; leadership and political management; financial management; and applied research modeled after SIPA's Workshop in Applied Policy Analysis.

The modules taught by Externado faculty cover Colombian government and politics, international relations, micro and macro economics, budget and accounting, and the judicial system. Students must have an undergraduate degree in a field related to the

certificate program, have a personal interview and pass a written examination. To graduate they must evidence regular attendance (sign-in required), participate in class discussion, receive satisfactory grades on examinations and papers, and complete a workshop project.

To manage the program, one person at each school has been designated as director of the program. Bill Eimicke has performed that function for SIPA. At the Externado, Andres Gonzalez, former Justice Minister, played that role until he was elected governor of Colombia's most populous state. His successor is Dean of the Economics faculty, Mauricio Perez. Dean Perez has been a key member of our team since 1993 and was our initial contact there.

Our relationship with the Externado has been mutually beneficial and enjoyable. It provides practitioners in Colombia with a high quality mid-career educational experience, acts as a feeder for Externado's advanced programs, gives our faculty new experiences and extra income, and provides the foundation for other joint endeavors. A new joint Master of International Affairs program was a concrete example of growth in the relationship. We also helped initiate a joint degree program in international economic policy and finance.

SIPA has also benefited from higher application and admissions rates from Colombia. We have done some pro bono consulting for the government and developed a case

study for use in the certificate program. Perhaps most important, our faculty believe that the exchange with Colombian faculty and students to be intellectually stimulating.

Sciences Po. Beginning in the 2000-2001 academic year, students at SIPA and at the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris (IEP or "Sciences Po") have been able to participate in a joint degree program. Students spend the first year of study at their home institution and then their second at the partner school. This allows students to complete their core curriculum at their home institution and then pursue a concentration abroad. After two years of study the student earns both SIPA's Master of International Affairs and Science Po's Diplome. The student registers both years at their home institution therefore ensuring that the program has no effect on a school's revenue from a particular student. The program is small, less than six students a year, and most of the students in the program originate at Science Po. A new marketing brochure has been developed to increase the size of the program and to convince SIPA students to study in Paris.

The program was developed and negotiated by SIPA Associate Dean Robin Lewis. The negotiations were time consuming due to the differences between education practices in the two countries. One struggle in the program has been to keep the exchange of students equal in number. The goal is to keep the flow of students in balance so that no school loses tuition as a result of the exchange program.

London School Of Economics (LSE). A strategic decision by the Columbia Provost's office has been made to pursue international partnerships. Education has become a global enterprise and the university is actively working to transcend its traditional geographic base in New York City. In New York this includes a medical complex in Washington Heights and the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in Rockland County. It includes the development of an environmental campus at the Biosphere 2 facility near Tucson, Arizona. It also includes partnerships with the university's web-enterprise, Fathom.com, linking Columbia with The British Library, the London School of Economics, the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago, Cambridge University Press, and Rand (among others). Michael Crow, Columbia's Executive Vice Provost (and Maxwell School graduate) is responsible for developing these partnerships and is working to develop joint programs between SIPA and LSE.

SIPA Dean Anderson and Crow led a faculty delegation to London last spring and began discussion on possible joint programming. The most tangible result of that trip has been a SIPA program, funded by the Provost to pay the cost of SIPA and LSE faculty travel to stimulate informal dialogue and research. The notion is that the best way to stimulate joint educational offerings is to first build an informal network among the faculty at the two institutions. At this point we are at the beginning of this effort and do not know how it will develop.

3. 0 Mechanics of International Programs

There are a variety of issues that must be addressed when developing and managing international programs and partnerships. These can range from logistical issues to problems of cross-cultural communication.

In the case of the EPD workshop the first task is identifying projects and clients. While a mass letter to a large number of groups can be sent to elicit proposals, a better method is personal contact between faculty and client. One of the best methods of generating projects is to use alums of the program who were once enrolled in the workshop. These alum-clients will understand the strengths and weaknesses of student projects and the constraints of the one-semester format. Logistical issues related to travel and data collection often require work by faculty and administrative staff. Client relations can also arise. Communication with clients can be difficult when they are in the next county, and at times can be quite complicated overseas. Language barriers and cultural issues can create problems for project teams. Insurance and liability issues must also be addressed. Release forms are often required before students can participate in the fieldwork elements of the workshop. Another issue can arise over the final product and its ultimate ownership. Issues such as confidentiality and dissemination of results must be discussed and agreed to in writing at the start of the project. It is often a good idea to draft and exchange a written agreement specifying the expectations of both the workshop group and the client.

The fieldwork abroad program at SIPA raises some similar issues. Travel can raise logistical and safety issues and requires coordination with students and, in this case, the university's travel agent. A great deal of work goes into generating internship opportunities and in troubleshooting failed internships. A directory of internship sites is prepared and disseminated in hard-copy and on-line. The Office of Career Services must complete these tasks and also track and file student internship reports and employer evaluations of SIPA interns. After several decades of doing this work, the school's Office of Career Services is quite good at securing "repeat business" from employers and determining which employers are not good internship sites.

Joint programs such as Externado require high-level negotiations to be established and also require substantial senior faculty or administrative staff attention to maintain. Relationships must be nurtured to ensure trust that is capable of overcoming vast physical distances. Problems can arise stemming from a wide variety of sources: from floating exchange rates that alter program costs—to faculty who may not be sensitive to the norms or values of the host country. The administration of finances can be particularly difficult. For that reason, we decided early on that Externado would have direct contractual relationships with our faculty and pay them directly through wire transfers. Columbia faculty, like faculty in most universities are on nine month contracts paid over twelve months. This allows them to bring in additional compensation directly through the university payroll system and to work one day per week as consultants to outside organizations. Direct payment avoids the administrative work of processing pay and also avoids the university's internal administrative tax and fringe benefit payments.

Partnerships such as Sciences Po and LSE also require a great deal of senior management and senior faculty time. In a private university such as Columbia it is often possible, if sometimes cumbersome to develop and administer joint programs. Often budget and personnel staff are asked to be creative in transferring funds and paying for services. These “mechanical issues” should not be seen as trivial by faculty pursuing international programs and partnerships. Administrative staff need to be treated seriously and their buy-in should be sought so they can come to understand the purpose and value of these arrangements.

4.0 The Value and Costs of International Activities and Programs

It is almost an article of faith among those of us who have worked on international partnerships and programs that education, like most other contemporary businesses, has become increasingly global. We read research from a network of international public management scholars. We recruit faculty and students from a talent pool that has long transcended the borders of the United States. We benefit from the perspectives of colleagues and students who have had different life experiences and see the world in slightly different lights. For a public policy and management teacher and scholar, this is the great value of international partnerships. They put us in closer contact with a larger world, a world that we can learn from and can learn from us.

I have seen this personally in work that Bill Eimicke and I have done on public ethics with our Colombian colleague Mauricio Perez Salazar. For Mauricio, public ethics is not an activity pursued lightly or abstractly, it is literally a matter of life and death for our friend and for his country. I have seen the impact of SPA's EPD workshop, when Professor Bryant and her cross-national student body hold a public briefing on a development analysis of methods for reducing water consumption from arsenic-poisoned wells in Bangladesh. For those students who traveled abroad and analyzed this issue first-hand, environmental protection becomes more than a policy issue—it becomes an issue of the health of babies and children. This is of course an argument for experiential learning, which need not be international—but what is the educational rationale for limiting these experiences to our own country? Convenience? Cost? Not good arguments.

International relationships are a necessary condition for adequate curriculum, research and education in our field. These arrangements are not luxuries or frills any more. Their absence is an indication that a program is not of the highest quality. The purpose of these programs and partnerships is to expand our informal professional network beyond our borders. Our economies, media, and political institutions are increasingly interconnected in a world that has been made smaller by satellite communications, cellular technology, the World Wide Web, containerized shipping and a wide variety of other technologies. Academia has been a leader in this globalization process, and in my view that has been a good thing. We need to nurture and develop these informal

international networks. Formal joint programs, overseas internships and workshop projects, often provide the excuse we need to stay in touch.

However, like all good things, these programs are not cost free. They require a great deal of attention by senior faculty and administrative staff. They rarely generate revenues in excess of costs. Many of the benefits of these programs are long term and abstract while the costs are short-term and quite tangible. In a world that is sometimes unpredictably dangerous, some partnerships may require travel that can put faculty and students in danger. (As I reread these words, I remember the view from my office window –looking south toward lower Manhattan- on September 11, 2001. I remember the size of the smoke plume and its smell and must acknowledge that the danger of public policy analysis and public service is now both an international and domestic product.) There is also the possibility of poor cross-cultural communication and mistakes that can be made from inexperience and misguided good intentions.

Still, the benefits far outweigh the costs, and I suspect that all NASPAA programs are discovering this fact of modern life. Michael Brintnall, NASPAA Executive Director has followed in his predecessor, Al Zuck's footsteps, and has aggressively pursued international partnerships for the field as a whole. I think NASPAA is an excellent vehicle for consortium arrangements that can allow some of our field's smaller programs an opportunity to engage in international programs. NASPAA can play an increasingly important role here, and can help the field develop a truly international character.