

Faculty Report

Establishment Of A Consortium To Create A Study Abroad Program In Italy

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Proposal title “Establishment Of A Consortium To Create A Study Abroad Program In Italy”

Country/ies visited Italy

Institution visited Consortium of Universities for International Studies, Assolo and Paderno Del Grappa.

Dates of travel October 21 – November 2, 2003

Number of student participants: 0

Previous IP proposals submitted and grants awarded
(list titles, countries and dates): “A Communication Exchange Program With Yonsei University,” Seoul, South Korea, July 2002, \$2,742.

Have all required reports been submitted? yes

Other funding for this activity available/applied for: cost sharing with the Consortium

Proposal Abstract (75 word maximum):

The SDSU School of Communication has become part of a consortium of leading U.S. communication programs to develop cooperatively a study-abroad opportunity in northern Italy. The consortium held an introductory meeting in March 2003, and it is scheduling a second meeting in October 2003 in Italy. We request funds to send two

individuals to this meeting, whose purpose will be to lay plans for expanding the number of communication courses that the program offers.

Travel report:

I. Opening/overview of intentions/activity

The Consortium of Universities for International Studies held a conference for advisers from member universities. As San Diego State recently joined the consortium, at its invitation, I was interested in viewing the existing operations (which, historically, have been primarily in business). I was looking to determine how SDSU's communication students could fit this study-abroad opportunity into their schedules. As faculty from the consortium universities teach at the two campuses operated by the consortium in nearby towns within Italy's Veneto region, I was also interested in learning about conditions for faculty and how SDSU faculty opportunities for teaching in Italy could be developed.

II. In preparation for the trip abroad

I attended a meeting for new consortium members, which was held in March 2003 at Purdue University. At that meeting, I met the consortium staff and began to work with International Programs to initiate a contract between SDSU and the consortium (as an aside, it turned out that the consortium director and I were in the same high school graduating class, and we had not seen each other since our high school days together). I began to work on the possibility of one of our faculty members teaching in the program, and I explored that possibility with Professor Brian Spitzberg.

In September 2003, the consortium staff visited the SDSU campus from its US headquarters, in Lawrence, Kansas. I hosted the group and arranged meetings for them with administrators such as Alan Sweedler, Robert Carolin, Janis Andersen, and Patricia Dintrone. We also held a very well-attended orientation session (35-40 participants), which was led by the consortium staff. Unfortunately, we learned during the staff's time on campus that we would not be able to send Professor Spitzberg to teach for the program, at least for the time being.

III. Upon arrival/specific activity

The consortium made a second place available at the conference for an SDSU participant, so Interim Graduate Dean Janis Andersen also made

the trip. Dean Andersen had her own agenda for attending, and she pursued that agenda with great vigor. Some of that agenda potentially included the School of Communication, as we discussed the possibility of instituting a joint master's degree in media management, with students enrolling in the intensive one-year MBA program that is run by the consortium and then returning to SDSU for the media studies and media management portion of their curriculum.

My goals revolved around understanding the consortium's programs and how the development of coursework in communication could fit with our students' interests and encourage students to take advantage of the program. The adviser's conference had a formal agenda for approximately three days. We visited both facilities (graduate and undergraduate) that are operated by the consortium, we examined curricular and course materials, we heard presentations from the permanent staff, we met some of the US professors who were teaching in the program that semester, and we attended events with some of the students and had opportunities to speak with the students at those events. After the formal conference ended, I was able to stay for a few additional days with a former student who was teaching at the undergraduate campus that semester. I stayed in the spare bedroom in her apartment near campus, met and interacted with her colleagues, ate in the dining hall, worked at a spare desk in the faculty "gang" office, and got a feel for what "normal" campus life is like. We also took an afternoon trip to Padua, so I could experience how faculty might be able to travel within the region (faculty members are given housing and cars as part of the compensation package), and I struck off one day by local bus, so I could experience how students could travel from campus.

IV. Conclusion, recommendation, and next step?

This study-abroad opportunity has great potential for our students. They have the opportunity to take a US curriculum from US faculty but also to live in a dynamic, entrepreneurial, region of Italy and to interact with the culture of a small Northern Italian village on a daily basis. Students can study Italian while at the facility, but classes are conducted in English. Students also learn about Italian culture, particularly business practices, as part of their campus experience.

The drawbacks at this point are availability of appropriate courses and cost. The communication portion of the curriculum is growing, but it is not fully developed yet. This fact is potentially beneficial for SDSU, as we have an opportunity to influence how communication study in this program develops. To that end, I was anxious to have one of our faculty members teach in the program as quickly as possible. I was delighted when one of our part-time faculty members, Kenn Ulrich, indicated that he

was interested in teaching in the program this fall, and the consortium accepted his application to do so. Kenn is a three-year lecturer with a specialization in public relations, and he will take a leave from his contract to teach in the undergraduate program during the Fall semester of 2004. From Kenn's experience, I will have a better idea of how to proceed in working with the consortium to develop the communication offerings.

Cost is always an issue for SDSU students. The consortium publishes what they describe as an "honest" budget for one semester at just under \$13,000, including transportation, tuition, and living expenses. The School of Communication's other international program is an exchange program with Nanyang Technical University, in Singapore, and the appeal of that program is that it actually costs less to attend, even figuring transportation, than a semester at SDSU, including housing and meals. A \$13,000 budget is therefore a bit of sticker shock for our students. The consortium distributed comparison numbers with other study-abroad programs in the region, and this program falls in the middle, by their figuring. Robert Carolin has been extremely helpful in explaining to students how financial aid can be adjusted to help with the cost of the program, but it is going to take someone actually going to Italy and then coming back and talking about it, before the program will take off.

We held another very successful orientation this spring (again, 35-40 students attended). Kenn Ulrich has also been talking up the program in his classes. I do not know whether anyone has yet applied, however. I doubt that we've had any takers, because I haven't heard anything from the consortium office about applications from SDSU students. We will keep holding orientations and doing whatever we can to promote the program, and I suspect that it will "take" with students at some point. I have a graduate student assisting with recruitment, and we will continue to encourage students to take advantage of this opportunity, as well as to work with the consortium to make the program as attractive as possible to School of Communication students.

V. Additional Information

All information should be sent to The Office of International Programs via e mail:

oiip@mail.sdsu.edu