

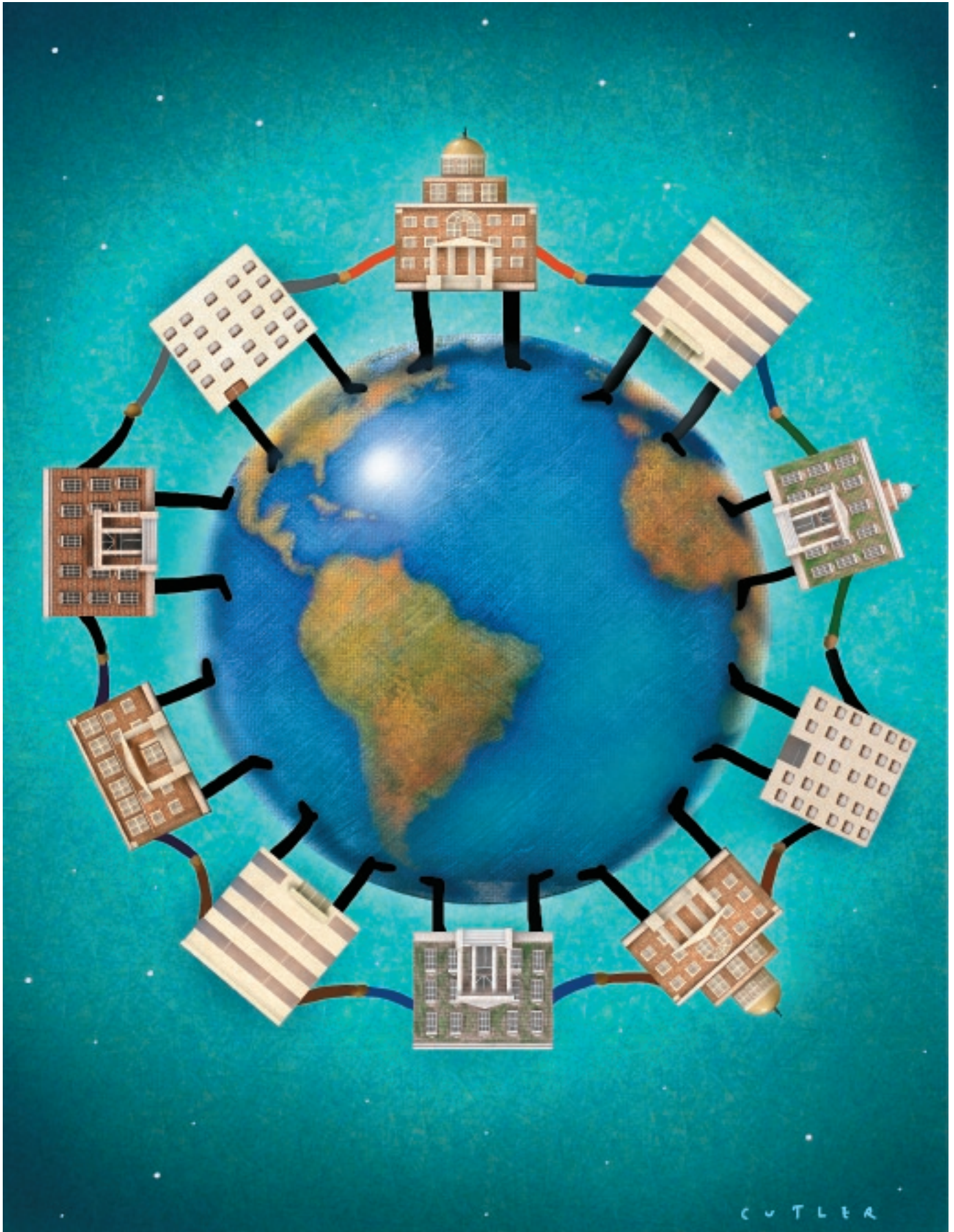
The Business of Collaboration

The days of the unhyphenated business degree might soon be over. Within their own universities, business schools are partnering with other departments to offer joint degrees in everything from law to healthcare. Outside of their campuses, they're building relationships with schools across the country or across the ocean. Two of the most common catchphrases at b-school today are "interdisciplinary" and "international."

These kinds of partnerships take careful planning and diligent maintenance. Collaborating with other schools on campus can mean carefully developing procedures that suit all departments and skillfully negotiating for scarce university resources. Collaborating with institutions in other countries requires dealing with unfamiliar government policies, overcoming language barriers, and coordinating logistics.

But not only do the payoffs outweigh the pain, many school officials believe there is no other way to educate the multitalented, culturally aware problem solvers who will be needed in tomorrow's workforce. For that reason, collaboration—across campus and across continents—could very well be the watchword of the future for business education. For the four schools featured here, it has become an essential part of their pedagogy. Faculty heading their efforts explain how to safely navigate a complex but essential maze of partnerships with fellow schools on campus and far-flung universities.

Tomorrow's business will be multinational, multicultural, and multidisciplinary. Programs at four schools illustrate how multileveled partnerships prepare students for the challenges ahead.





Students from the Lauder Institute strike a pose at a replica of the seat of Caiaphas in Israel.

The Cross-Cultural MBA

Mauro Guillén
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Collaboration is the operating system that runs the Lauder Institute, a joint degree program that relies on relationships within the University of Pennsylvania as well as schools around the world. Now in its 26th year, the program combines a Wharton MBA with a master's degree in international studies. Up to 70 students are accepted annually into one of eight foreign-language tracks that revolve around Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, or Russian.

Lauder students begin classes in May, three months before Wharton classes start, then spend two summer months in an overseas immersion program located in a country that speaks the language they're studying. Classes are held on the campuses of partner schools that include the American University in Cairo, École des Hautes Études Commerciales Paris, the Beijing Foreign Studies University, the Universidad de San Andres in Argentina, and the Academy of National Economy in Russia. Upon returning to Philadelphia, Lauder students join the rest of the Wharton MBAs. They spend the next two years dividing study time between business and international studies in a closely choreographed and highly collaborative arrangement.

When someone asks me why the world needs a cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural program like ours, I have two answers.

First, I don't think the world is as flat as some people say. Take a look at the current economic crisis. Germany didn't have a real estate bubble like the U.S. did; it's suffering from the crisis because it exports a great deal, and trade has plummeted. What happened in the U.S. is only relevant to the German markets as background. If we want managers to be more effective in Germany, they need to understand the situation in that country.

Second, a joint business and international studies program allows us to educate better human beings. We don't teach students Russian or Portuguese because we expect them to work in Russia or Brazil for the rest of their lives. We teach them a second or third or fourth language to enrich them as individuals, to make them better thinkers and problem solvers. In the future, when they face difficult problems, they can say, "How would a Russian solve this?" and they will instantly have a new perspective.

We don't want students at the Lauder Institute simply to be fluent in a second language. We want them to have an in-depth understanding of another country, so we provide classes on the history, culture, and politics of the regions they're studying. Not only do Lauder students go overseas for the summer immersion, we encourage them to pursue "in-language" internships during their second summer of the program, which means taking positions in countries where their target languages are spoken. To make this more affordable, we offer a fellowship that will enable them to accept jobs in countries such as China or Brazil or Chile, where the pay might not be as good as it would be if they interned in the U.S.

While students take their MBA classes at Wharton, the Lauder Institute has its own faculty for language, history, culture, international economics, economic history, and summer immersion courses. Thus, successful collaboration across campus is critical.

I have learned that two structural decisions will help interdisciplinary programs like ours function smoothly. One is to have the program heads report to someone other than the school deans—in our case, that's the provost. The support of the deans is always essential, but reporting to a campuswide official ensures access to university resources.

The second important decision is to define early on which part of the program will serve as its foundation, and which part will differentiate it from similar programs. At the Lauder Institute, we build the program on the foundation of the Wharton MBA. We differentiate it with the master's degree in international studies, which does not exist separately.

For a joint degree program to run smoothly, it's absolutely critical for the director to establish relationships with all parts of the campus that will be involved in the effort. That's easier said than done. When I started as director two years ago, I had more linkages to Wharton than to the School of Arts and Sciences, but my job has been greatly facilitated as I've tapped into the connections I had at both schools. For instance, I have a secondary appointment in the department of sociology. Most crucially, the Institute has a co-director who is a faculty member from the School of Arts and Sciences, and our activities are overseen by a Graduate Group in International Studies which includes faculty from across campus.

Collaborating with institutions in different countries presents a different set of challenges. I think there are four ways to address these challenges and develop successful international partnerships. The first step is to define what you want to accomplish with the alliance; develop a clear set of goals before you begin.

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Second, partner with schools at your same level, so you don't dilute your reputation. We look for partners who have a solid reputation in the world of business, but who also can deliver language and cultural training that flows logically from our May classes into our fall classes. We also must consider logistical demands, such as the timing of their summer schedules and the geographic location of their campuses.

Third, structure the relationship so that it has specific limits. A partnership doesn't have to be like a marriage—it doesn't have to affect everything.

Finally, make sure you have an exit mechanism. Sign a partnership for a set number of years and then jointly evaluate to determine if it's working the way you want. And keep in mind that changes in the world itself might render these partnerships irrelevant, so always be prepared for new challenges.

Breaking Down Barriers

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Last January, the School of Business Administration brought together nine of the University of Miami's 12 schools for a two-day Global Business Forum that attracted 700 attendees. The School of Business Administration had begun planning the forum in 2007 to bring together global business leaders and academics to discuss global business. The conference also represented a manifestation of university president Donna Shalala's goal to promote cross-disciplinary cooperation.

Forum speakers included industry titans such as former GE CEO Jack Welch, McDonald's CEO Jim Skinner, and Coca-Cola CEO Muhtar Kent. But what really drew attendees was a series of 16 panel discussions organized by the various schools and stretching across a variety of industry sectors. The business school's panels focused on the economic crisis, Latin America and Asia, customer engagement strategies, healthcare financing, and entrepreneurship. Other schools developed panels on topics such as medical advances, alternative energy, commercial arbitration, sustainable urban building, water scarcity, commercializing music technology, culture and branding, and women and leadership. Together, the panels provided attendees with a broad, interdisciplinary look at key issues in the world today.



At the University of Miami's Global Business Forum, receptions and breaks between events give participants a chance to hold cross-disciplinary discussions across a variety of industries.

When we began our planning for the Global Business Forum, the deans of other schools were open to cross-disciplinary participation, but we all had different ways of working and thinking. Never before had we collaborated on an event of this magnitude. And we soon found that expressing support for cooperation and actually cooperating are two different things.

The provost and the Academic Deans Policy Council were enthusiastic about the idea of the Global Business Forum, but we needed more than verbal commitments. We needed the other schools to organize their own panels with prominent thought leaders, while interacting with us as we built the program.

We had made the decision to call the conference the “University of Miami Global Business Forum: Harnessing the Power of the Connected World,” which turned out to be both an asset and a liability. The name helped connect the event to the business school, but it also served to de-motivate some of the other schools, which tended to put our conference on the back burner as they focused on their own priorities.

Early planning sessions that included representatives from all the participating schools did not show rapid progress, as it was hard to get solid commitments from such a large group of people. We made more progress as we began having one-on-one discussions with individual deans. Crucially, we also invited the schools’ external affairs directors, who instantly understood that the Forum presented an opportunity for them to connect with alumni and business leaders. Their participation helped us all align our incentives.

Once the deans were onboard, we sought buy-in from the University of Miami Citizens Board and the university’s Board of Trustees, which together include hundreds of the community’s most important business, professional, and civic leaders. The Citizens Board became our first sponsor, providing \$10,000 in seed money. More sponsors were added as all schools finalized their panelists and keynote speakers.

Registration was the next big task. We had decided to charge alumni and businesspeople to attend—a first for the university, which usually offered such events to the community for free. The decision seemed even riskier as the January 2009 date approached, and the world was in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. To attract paying registrants, we asked each school to invite alumni and other constituents to their own panels, and we customized promotional materials for each school. We also built sup-

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port for the whole conference through electronic media such as email blasts and social networking sites.

If we hadn’t collaborated so closely with other schools on campus, it’s unlikely the Forum would have been so successful. Many attendees noted that they found the event so interesting *because* it was cross-disciplinary; they could attend one panel on music, another on medicine, and another on marketing. Some of our own faculty experienced *aha!* moments when they listened to panel discussions organized by other schools. Many discussions occurred during breaks and at receptions, when people from different schools talked to one another and with CEOs from companies across industries.

For the School of Business, the Forum had another outcome: It helped other schools tie the practical aspects of their disciplines to business applications. For example, the College of Arts and Sciences organized a panel about how culture leads to branding. Panelists drew a dotted line between the social sciences—ethics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology—and business.

As a result of the Forum, faculty have a deeper understanding of how their colleagues in other departments think, publish, and approach research problems. Students are better able to connect their coursework across disciplines. Members of the campus community know one another better and have formed strong working relationships.

These relationships will continue to be important as the School of Business develops or continues joint programs with the schools of medicine, architecture, and law. We believe the campuswide cross-disciplinary focus is a key competitive advantage for both the university and the School of Business and that the event has enabled us to promote this competitive advantage. No wonder we’ve already started working on our 2011 Global Business Forum.

The Power of Partnerships

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If handling one partnership is a challenge, imagine how difficult it is to juggle dozens. But for Audencia—which currently sustains student exchange agreements with 110 schools in 43 countries—there is no other way to give students the international experience the school is committed to providing. Not only does Audencia send each business student abroad for at least one semester, it also welcomes a heavy influx of international students. The school's current student population is 23 percent international; the goal is 50 percent.

The majority of Audencia's students are enrolled in the Master in Management program, which requires them to learn three foreign languages before they graduate. The school also has launched tracks that allow students to take the master's program in Spanish, German, or Chinese while completing internships in Latin America, Spain, Germany, or China. Along with the semesters spent abroad, these internships expose them to international cultures as well as international business.



At the Audencia Nantes School of Management, 23 percent of the student population is international.

English may be the common language of business, but for most people, it is not their native tongue. That means that most business graduates will be working with and talking to people whose language, culture, and perspective are much different from their own. To prepare our students for that life, we want to put them in an international environment both when they're at home and when they're abroad, which is why we maintain partnerships with more than 100 schools.

When we're choosing partner schools, first we look at quality. About 50 percent have AACSB or EQUIS accreditation; many are the top schools in their countries. Second, we look at whether they adhere to the same values we do in terms of ethics, strategy, global social responsibility, and faculty research. We also consider whether they are similar to us in terms of programs, internationalization goals, and size.

When we do sign agreements with bigger institutions, they usually have smaller business schools—or majors and specializations business schools might not. For example, we recently signed an agreement with Boston University's arts administration department so our students could study the administration of cultural institutions such as museums and operas. In this way, we complement each other. We bring our European management competencies to the table, and they bring their specific expertise.

Arrangements vary widely, from simple student exchanges to multileveled partnerships that include faculty exchanges, collaborative research, and joint degree programs. For instance, we just signed a broad alliance with HHL-Leipzig in Germany and the Politecnico di Milano's School of Management in Italy. We have combined all our recruitment and placement efforts so our MBA students have a wider pool of possible employers and a bigger network of alumni associations. We also collaborate on different double master's degrees with each of these institutions.

Within Europe, arrangements are fairly simple because of the Bologna Accord, which allows students to move easily between European schools. But partnerships with schools on other continents often present more challenges. For instance, schools in China have different rules to follow; there generally is more bureaucratic involvement, which can create extra red tape. However, such cultural differences are not insurmountable. For example, we have a strategic partnership with Tongji University that includes faculty exchanges and double degree programs.

It also takes a good deal of time to finalize agreements with Latin American schools, where Ministries of Education are often deeply involved. We've found we can overcome cultural barriers if we negotiate toward a win-win for

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both schools. That’s most likely to happen if both partners are flexible and patient. In these situations, the human relations element becomes very important, because we need to build trust between institutions.

For a school to succeed at global collaborations, it first must commit pedagogical, financial, and human resources. Internationalization must be at the heart of the school’s philosophy, and everyone at the school has to believe in it. At Audencia, we not only send out 500 students every year, we also welcome hundreds of international students to our campus. Everyone on campus must be involved in making these international exchanges a success.

For instance, the people in the International Relations office must keep track of all the details, working on one of two levels. At the simplest level are the student exchange partnerships, which form the majority of our agreements. It is a relatively straightforward process to keep track of the logistics of these kinds of partnerships.

However, it is much more complex to maintain far-reaching strategic partnerships, because these relationships involve participation across the board. An international committee monitors partnerships. The faculty must participate in pedagogical and curricular efforts; the dean and vice dean must determine strategy. The cleaning staff must be able to communicate with international students they meet in the halls, and the cafeteria staff must be able to sell them sandwiches. Everyone at the school must help make them feel welcome.

We’re committed to an international education because we believe students need to understand more than the pure disciplines of management. In order to make critical business decisions, they need to have balance in their lives, and they need to understand other cultures. If we don’t teach our students how to deal with a globalized environment, we will have failed them and the companies that hire them. Collaboration with schools in so many other countries allows us to meet our mission of internationalizing the student experience.



Illinois State University students meet with a Chinese lawyer to learn how a company might set up a joint venture in China.

Building Cross-Disciplinary Teams

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Normal, Illinois

Interdisciplinary relationships are at the heart of ISU’s two-year-old Export Project, which organizes teams of students to research markets for Midwestern companies looking to export overseas. Participating in the project are five departments—marketing, international business, entrepreneurship, agriculture, and technology—from the College of Business and the College of Applied Science and Technology.

Faculty spend the fall semester lining up partner companies and recruiting students into the program, usually aiming to create four to five teams of four students each. During the spring, students conduct secondary market research before setting out in the summer for an intensive three-week international field experience to undertake primary research. They meet with potential distributors, industry representatives, law firms, and final users every day while overseas, then return to Illinois to synthesize their findings and make presentations to their sponsoring companies. The program nets six credit hours for the students, most of whom are graduating seniors; they march with their classmates at graduation but don’t receive their diplomas until they’ve made their final presentations.

The overseas travel for 12 to 15 students and five faculty members is costly, but the first two years of the program were funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant and the participating departments and companies; a \$100,000 federal earmark, just received, will sustain it for at least one more year.

“Business students quickly understand why an international experience will be valuable, but students from other departments sometimes need more convincing.”

For the Export Project, my colleagues and I create student teams customized to a company's needs, just as a consulting firm would do. For instance, if an air filtration company wants to research the market in China, we might want a tech student with a background in construction management, a student with a double major in marketing and international business, and a student taking business administration.

To set up the market research field experiences, faculty members draw on a broad mix of resources, including the state of Illinois' 11 trade offices in cities around the world; the U.S. Commercial Service, which is a branch of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; international trade associations; industry conference attendees; professors at universities in our target markets; and, in special cases, market research firms. Some of these individuals and offices provide us with background information, while others help us set up appointments. Client company executives may also accompany the teams overseas for specific appointments.

The cross-disciplinary nature of the program is essential to its success. As an example, this year one of our partner companies was the second-largest producer of soy milk in the U.S. Company executives wanted to learn specific facts about the market in India, where they thought the protein-based nutrition of soy milk might appeal to Indian consumers who don't traditionally eat much red meat. In particular, they wanted to learn about flavor preferences, potential processor partners, structure of supply chain, and barriers to export. We recruited a grad student from food science and nutrition, and we teamed her with students focusing on international business and agriculture.

At the same time, the interdisciplinary component of the program can be its most challenging aspect. Business students quickly understand why an international experience will be valuable, but students from other departments sometimes need more convincing. I usually explain that the experience—which develops critical thinking skills—could relate to many jobs they might have in the future.

For instance, when a food sciences student wondered how international experience could help her improve the daily diets of those in malnourished U.S. communities, I told her she could go to India to research nutritional deficits there. She then could apply that knowledge to her career in the U.S. If I'm trying to recruit a technology student, I point out that he might one day take a job with a U.S. firm that wants to license technology to an overseas company. If he can say that he spent three weeks in China consulting for an air filter manufacturer, he's instantly going to be on the team that explores international possibilities.

In addition to student recruitment, other aspects of cross-campus collaboration can be challenging, because the participating departments often have different processes and procedures. To improve communication, we ask faculty members from each of the five departments to meet every week, and we involve the deans and chairs from both colleges fairly often. We realize the university has a finite set of resources, so we want to keep updating the deans, the chairs, and other stakeholders on the benefits of our program.

Despite the challenges, the payoffs are plentiful. First, the students come away with specific business knowledge, much greater self-confidence, and much deeper cultural understanding. Second, faculty build and refine their skills, while sometimes identifying future research projects. Third, the university's image is enhanced as faculty cultivate contacts with institutions outside the U.S. For example, school administrators we met in Argentina and China have shown an interest in partnering with ISU for study abroad programs. So our cross-campus collaboration might very well lead to cross-country collaborations as well.

Schools that want to create a collaborative consulting experience should first analyze companies in their geographic areas to find the dominant industries. Then, they'll know what other departments they'll need to work with to serve those industries effectively. For example, if the region supports medical device manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies, a business school should approach the medical school or biology/chemistry departments to recruit students and faculty to complement the business-oriented members of the team.

Then they should consider potential sources of funding to pay for the overseas experience. Money could come from the client companies and students, but it could also come from the local chambers of commerce, the state's office of economic development, or federal grants. It could come from alumni who have done well in international business. It takes time and effort to launch an interdisciplinary program like ours, but the rewards are tremendous.

The Goal of Collaboration

While collaboration is a key ingredient to the success of these schools, all of them invest tremendous time, energy, and resources into their relationships. And, whether they're seeking a partnership with a school nearby or around the world, all of them have specific motivations and goals in mind. They make it clear they aren't collaborating because it's fashionable. They're reaching out to other schools because an interdisciplinary, international curriculum is the best way they've found to educate students for the demands of tomorrow's business. [Z](#)