

7-2012

# Fostering Academic Cooperation and Collaboration Through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Faculty Research Abroad Program in Poland

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## Recommended Citation

Barczyk, Casimir C.; Davis, Nancy; and Zimmerman, Lynn (2012) "Fostering Academic Cooperation and Collaboration Through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Faculty Research Abroad Program in Poland," *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*: Vol. 6: No. 2, Article 17.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2012.060217>

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This study is a narrative analysis of participants' perceptions of the development of crosscultural awareness through The Faculty Research Abroad Program in Poland, a joint initiative between a regional campus of a Midwestern land grant university and a private university in Poland. The purpose was to foster academic cooperation and collaboration through a co-sponsored symposium on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Results from a survey of the 15 participating faculty members from the United States provided the basis for the development of the University Global Collaboration Model. The model depicts how awareness of culture, connection to others, and collaboration can result in tangible outcomes. The American faculty participating in the week-long sojourn in Poland experienced a different culture, but the short amount of time on-site attenuated the development of cultural awareness. Participants viewed the experience as having the potential for international collaboration.

## **Keywords**

Academic cooperation, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Cultural awareness, International collaboration, Faculty collaboration, Teaching and learning

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## Fostering Academic Cooperation and Collaboration through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Faculty Research Abroad Program in Poland

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### Abstract

This study is a narrative analysis of participants' perceptions of the development of cross-cultural awareness through *The Faculty Research Abroad Program in Poland*, a joint initiative between a regional campus of a Midwestern land grant university and a private university in Poland. The purpose was to foster academic cooperation and collaboration through a co-sponsored symposium on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Results from a survey of the 15 participating faculty members from the United States provided the basis for the development of the University Global Collaboration Model. The model depicts how awareness of culture, connection to others, and collaboration can result in tangible outcomes. The American faculty participating in the week-long sojourn in Poland experienced a different culture, but the short amount of time on-site attenuated the development of cultural awareness. Participants viewed the experience as having the potential for international collaboration.

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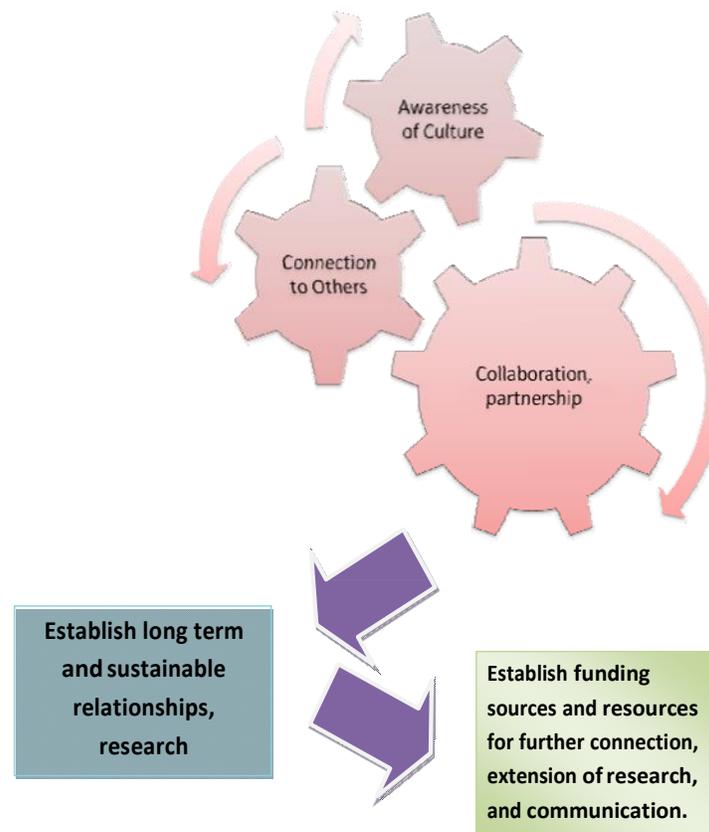
### Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine a program that aimed to foster academic cooperation and collaboration organized around a symposium on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) between a public regional Midwestern land grant university and a private Catholic university in Poland. Specifically, this article describes the development, implementation, and preliminary outcomes associated with a research abroad program in which faculty members from the U.S. traveled to and lived in Lublin, Poland for one week.

The Faculty Research Abroad Program involved the commitment of two institutions interested in cooperating in a joint initiative to foster faculty development and collaborative scholarship. The program was structured around a co-sponsored symposium on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Faculty from a variety of disciplines at both institutions prepared and presented conference papers that focused on linkages between their scholarship and teaching. The purpose of the symposium was to allow potential collaborators to demonstrate how their teaching and scholarship inform each other.

However, the program was not simply an individual-level linking of researchers, but a carefully planned, well-organized and institutionally backed effort to bring about international partnerships, academic connections, and research collaborations between Polish and American scholars. According to Hong (2005), these are the most difficult kinds of cooperative efforts to organize because they require “both parties to have not only common interests, but also mutual trust, dependable communication and most of all, a determination to carry out their projects over a long duration of time” (p.2). The common interest, in the current study, was the symposium, which focused on teaching and learning – a theme important to all of the program’s participants.

To help guide this study, two research questions are aligned with the program’s strategic objectives. They revolve around whether the Faculty Research Abroad Program in Poland (1) fostered cultural awareness for the participants from the United States, and (2) facilitated the establishment of international partnerships and connections in the area of the scholarship of teaching and learning, as well as research. These research questions established the basis for the development of a model known as the University Global Collaboration Model (UGCM). The model (Figure 1) is based on findings of this study, and depicts outcomes associated with the collaborative effort based on the SoTL. The model demonstrates the relationship between cultural awareness and connection to others. It also demonstrates how these can result in a collaboration or partnership, which eventually moves into the establishment of sustainable relationships that foster teaching and learning models in disciplinary-specific methodologies, funded research, or other communication to extend existing projects.



**Figure 1.** University Global Collaboration Model depicting awareness, cooperation, and collaboration resulting in tangible outcomes.

This article is organized into five sections. The first reviews the literature on international and cross-cultural collaborations. This section provides a conceptual framework for the later description of the Faculty Research Abroad Program in Poland. The second section describes the program in Poland, outlining the planning, implementation and the two collaborative efforts that preceded it. The third section describes the methodology employed to address the two research questions. The fourth section summarizes the quantitative and qualitative results obtained from a survey completed by the faculty participants in the research abroad program. The fifth section discusses the findings in terms of the program's objectives and theoretical considerations on international and multi-cultural collaboration. It also presents the limitations of this study and implications for future research.

## Review of the Literature

The pedagogical underpinnings of The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) aim to understand how students learn and teachers teach. As universities increase the emphasis on student learning outcomes, they also focus more on teaching strategies. Increasing globalization (Navarrete 2002) is affecting diversity and multicultural relationships in

university settings, which requires attention in the scholarship of teaching and learning. The dynamic interplay of these factors increases the need for faculty and organizational collaboration. The decisions and discoveries of our era are international and require teaming to foster research and enhance existing knowledge. Because global economic and scientific integration exists, the educational community must foster programs that extend learning and research beyond national boundaries. In discussing the nature of academics in the future, Hawawini (2005) believes that schools will consist of "interconnected locations around the world" (p. 779). With this projection, universities see the need to channel resources into models that engage global partnering. The concept of partnering is based on the principle of satisfying mutual benefits such as relevant learning and credibility building for institutions (Choudaha 2007). In the last few decades, there has been an increase in international partnering resulting in coauthoring – with the proportion of publications authored by institutions from different countries practically doubling in the last decade (Okubo and Zitt 2004).

An institution wishing to expand into international cooperation should recognize the need for intercultural topics in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Gurung and Schwartz (2009) note that pedagogical research provides opportunities for many issues, thus promoting new perspectives on how issues develop in education. Realizing this need underscores the intricacies required of educational bodies to develop and extend global initiatives. Because it means an extension of an organization's mission, at the heart of such programs is the desire to learn and serve students within academic communities. The commitment from the individual institution presupposes financial backing and recognition for achievements that reward the efforts in teaching, research, and service. Furthermore, the institution must recognize the needs of faculty in such initiatives. In some cases faculty members "fear venturing out of ... [their] traditional teaching and research roles" (Hamrita Tartir 2007, para. 1), which generally focuses on personal achievements. Often they must overcome departmental barriers as well as traditional role boundaries (Hamrita Tartir 2007). An institution's commitment to global initiatives reaches beyond its faculty. Institutions must provide concrete assurances that participation in international programs is seen as a benefit rather than a detriment, particularly in terms of advancement and salary progression (Smith 2007).

Focusing on the teaching and learning as well as on cultural awareness broadens the scope of the mission of universities. According to Sutton (2007), global partnerships help us to "knock down academic towers" (p. 1), placing international relations in a dynamic network of "exchange, engagement, and discovery" (p. 1). Bonine (2007) believes that the "goals of university partnerships include strengthening teaching, research, administrative, and public service capacity; reform of educational programs and teaching; collaborative research; and outreach beyond the university itself" (para. 4). However, one must also recognize that these are cross-cultural experiences.

According to Gudykunst and Kim (2003), "the term cross-cultural traditionally implies a comparison of some phenomena across cultures" (p. 18). Although cross-cultural experiences can refer to anything from eating ethnic food to living in another country, Gudykunst and Kim (2003) point out that cross-cultural studies usually focus on the adaptation process that individuals or groups undergo when they are in an unfamiliar culture or a different social environment. Cross-cultural adaptation can be related to

changes within a society, but these experiences are generally considered from the perspective of traveling to, or being in, another culture. These experiences may range from short visits and temporary sojourns, to actually moving to and settling in a different country, culture, or society.

In his study of intercultural communicative competence, Byram (1997) makes a distinction between the tourist and the sojourner. He states that tourists seek their own enrichment while sojourners actually effect change – for themselves and possibly for the society in which they are sojourning. He writes, “the sojourner has the opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others’ conditions” (p. 2).

Delle Fave and Bassi (2009) identified other characteristics which affect cross-cultural adaptation. They found correlations between degree of cultural adaptation and perceived quality of life and opportunities, cultural distance, length of stay, and reasons for the entry into the new environment. The development and sustainment of international partnerships are similarly impacted by these characteristics.

Many international partnerships develop from individuals who have existing relationships or experiences (Malik 2007). Having previous connections often allows for smoother transitions, and many excellent collaborations at universities began with a single person leading the way. Whether developed by faculty or by the institution, Malik (2007) suggests that collaborations should go forward. He believes that the institution can “overlay” the research initiative, which might include funding, extension of activity, or the development of direct communication links with administration at the partnering institution. By fostering initial relationships, the prospects for development of further research may extend to other faculty members. Malik notes that many partnerships have spawned secondary linkages. Those linkages enable researchers to combine their efforts, which result in a beneficial access to funding, data, and other resources (Okubu and Zitt 2004).

Even though collaborative study focuses on partnership, one must consider the foundation that makes it successful. The nature of collaborative study requires trust and understanding, and international collaboration requires knowledge of cultural differences as well (Okubu and Zitt 2004). In discussing a study abroad program for nursing students, Ruddock and Turner (2007) suggest that there is a need for the development of cultural sensitivity. A 2003 study by McMurray (as cited in Ruddock and Turner 2007) asserts that cultural sensitivity requires openness and respect for differences in culture as well as an understanding of the dynamics of the other culture to prevent the development of cultural bias.

Cultural bias is often a matter of misconception based on stereotyping. Generalizing from reading sparse facts or viewing videos can create understandings of cultures that are inaccurate and often result in negative judgments about an entire culture (Fung and Filippo 2002). Certainly, cultural knowledge does not equate to cross-cultural understanding or cultural sensitivity.

In the Ruddock and Turner (2007) study, the participants developed cultural sensitivity through what was described as a “circular” process, defined first by a stressor, immersion into culture, then making a comparison of the culture to their own. According to Campinha-

Bacote (2003), cultural sensitivity is an on-going process. Over time, the process becomes transformative with an experience of disjuncture followed by a reconsideration of what is previously taken for granted (Ruddock and Turner 2007).

This article examines a cross-cultural experience from the perspective of a week-long visit by faculty in the United States to another country – Poland. It also examines how international collaboration focusing on teaching, learning, and research was viewed by one set of participants, those from the United States. Even though such a short visit prohibits more than cursory exposure to another culture, there are still adaptations that an individual must make in order to function appropriately. Relationships, no matter whether they are with one's neighbor or cross-cultural, take more than a week to develop. However, all relationships have to start somehow. That is what this type of program offers the participants – a chance to make connections with other academics, and a chance to hear how their scholarship informs their teaching and how they translate that information into learning opportunities for their students.

### **Description of the Faculty Research Abroad in Poland Program**

The Faculty Research Abroad Program in Poland at Purdue University Calumet (PUC) was the third initiative to be envisioned and co-sponsored by its Office of Faculty Research and Professional Development. Each was organized and led by a faculty member who had an interest in and contacts with the host country. The first program sent faculty to Taiwan, and the second to Hong Kong. Since PUC, a master's degree-granting institution, is a regional campus of Purdue University West Lafayette (PUWL), a major land-grant university in the Midwest, participation of faculty and administrators from PUWL was also solicited. In this way, the project became an intercampus effort that expanded the potential for international collaboration with a doctoral granting institution.

The program examined in this study occurred in Poland during March 2009. Its keystone was a symposium (the program can be accessed at: [http://www.kul.pl/symposium-on-scholarship-of-teaching-and-learning,art\\_16126.html](http://www.kul.pl/symposium-on-scholarship-of-teaching-and-learning,art_16126.html)) that focused on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, "the systematic study of teaching and/or learning and the public sharing and review of such work through presentations or publications (McKinney n.d., p. 2). The major goals of the program in Poland were to:

1. facilitate the joint efforts of PUC, PUWL, and Polish scholars in an international symposium on the scholarship of teaching and learning;
2. publish conference proceedings on the scholarship of teaching and learning; and
3. develop collaborative sponsored research and instructional projects between American, Polish, and other international faculty members.

In addition to the symposium, which constituted the major aspect of the Polish travel abroad experience, the program contained a number of culturally relevant activities. Among them were visiting several historical landmarks; participating in question and answer sessions with experts on those landmarks; engaging with local people; exploring academic, governmental, and commercial establishments; and practicing some of the customs and cultural traditions of the country. The pre-departure briefings on food, traditions, and social

practices in Poland facilitated the U.S. faculty's awareness of Polish culture and life. Taken together, the activities in Poland did not constitute a vacation or "an event", but rather, process encounters that created "culturally related opportunities" (Kambutu and Nganga, 2008, p. 947).

The proposal announcing the research abroad experience specified that a maximum of 15 faculty members and 5 administrators from PUC and a maximum of 10 faculty members from PUWL could attend the proposed symposium and international sponsored-research program. Each school or college would be limited to a maximum of 6 faculty members participating in the program. Partly as a reflection of the downturn in the economy, the delegations were smaller than specified. The distribution of financial responsibilities also reflected the influence of this downturn.

## **Method**

### **Survey Instrument**

The research team, consisting of the faculty coordinator for the program in Poland and two participants, developed a questionnaire to examine the faculty research abroad experience in Poland. The questionnaire focused on two research questions repeated here for clarity: (1) Was cultural awareness fostered as a result of the Faculty Research Abroad in Poland experience? and (2) Were international partnerships and connections for The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning through disciplinary-specific models and through pedagogical research formed as a result of the faculty research abroad experience?

The questionnaire contained 35 closed- and open-ended items. There were 13 personal and professional demographic items and 22 narrative and closed-ended items that related to the academic, global, and cultural aspects of the experience in Poland.

### **Respondents**

There were 18 participants in the Faculty Research Abroad in Poland program. One participant resigned from the university and did not complete the questionnaire. Two others served in an administrative capacity to organize the research abroad experience. They did not participate in this study.

The remaining 15 participants who traveled abroad were surveyed during the summer following the March 2009 trip to the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), situated in Lublin, Poland. Those participants were faculty members at PUC and PUWL, holding academic ranks from assistant to full professor. Sixteen participants were contacted and invited to participate in the email survey. With the resignation of one faculty member, a respondent pool of 15 remained. All 15 faculty members completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 100%.

### **Procedure**

Following the protocol approved by the Institutional Review Board of PUWL, the program participants received a cover letter and questionnaire by email. The cover letter explained the study, indicating that participation was voluntary, and invited the faculty member to complete the questionnaire and send it back to a specified co-author. Survey respondents received assurances of confidentiality. The cover letters and questionnaires were sent out

three times at two-week intervals to maximize the response rate. All 15 participants returned the questionnaires.

## Results

### Demographics

The survey participants responded to a number of demographic questions. The data reveal that the participants were widely represented on the basis of various demographic categories. Forty percent of the participants were in the age category between 55 and 64. The survey participants were somewhat evenly spread across academic ranks, with 40% holding the rank of professor. The participants were affiliated with five schools at PUC and PUWL. The School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences had the highest percentage of participants – 40%. The School of Technology, with one participant, had the lowest percentage – 6.7%. There were 53.3% males and 46.7% females in the surveyed group. Most (66.7%) were born in the U.S.A. The other 33.3% were born in Iran, Israel, Morocco, Nigeria, or Taiwan. The majority (86.6%) of the survey participants identified themselves as White with 13.4% identifying themselves as either Black (one participant) or Asian (one participant). The largest contingent of participants, three individuals, indicated that they were Polish – 20%. Another 13.3%, two participants, indicated that they were Jewish. Approximately 67% of the participants indicated that their first language was English. In terms of religion, 26.7% of the participants were Catholic; 20% were Jewish; and 20% identified themselves as Christian or Protestant. Due to the small sample size, it was not possible to determine whether and how the diversity of the participants had an impact on the results of the survey.

### Research question 1: Was cultural awareness fostered as a result of the program?

The questionnaire contained a variety of items to determine whether cultural awareness was fostered as a result of the program. Several questions were designed to determine the participants' impressions of their experience and whether they considered it a cross-cultural experience.

*Impressions: Before and after.* One group of questions examined participant impressions of Poland before and after the program. Within this grouping, two questions were designed to compare the participants' perceptions of Poland and Polish culture before and after the trip. Another question asked: Were there surprising cultural experiences? The final question for this portion of the analysis was whether or not the participants thought this was a cross-cultural experience and why. The answers to all these questions tended to center around impressions about Polish culture, history, and people (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Number and percentage of narrative responses by type of impressions

Narrative Responses (N=15)	Before Departure		After Return	
	N	P <sup>1</sup>	N	P
Positive comments regarding Polish culture/history	5	33.3	6	40.0
Positive comments regarding the Polish people	1	2.6	5	33.3
Neutral comments about Polish culture, history, and people	8	53.3	4	26.6
Negative comments specific to the Polish economy	1	2.6	0	–

Note. Percentages are based on respondents' comments where  $N = 15$ .

*Impressions before going to Poland.* In response to the questions about participants' perception of Poland, its culture, and people before participating in the program (Table 1), 36% of the respondents had positive impressions of Poland, although often tempered with something not as positive. For example, one respondent wrote, "that it would be a nice country with a rich culture/much more history than in the States" while another wrote that Poland is a "highly cultured but very poor country." Another specifically related positive perceptions about the country but uncertainty about the Polish educational system: "In general, positive, about the culture. I wasn't sure about the educational system, especially the university system, and its involvement in scholarship, especially research on teaching."

One respondent made a comment about the Polish economic and political situation that could be interpreted as slightly negative. This respondent stated: "Poland is a post-communist culture strongly dominated by the Catholic Church that is struggling in the new economy and with the new political system." While not a negative comment in and of itself, it uses words such as "dominated" and "struggling" which can be interpreted in a negative fashion.

The remaining 53% of the participants made neutral comments, interpreted as neither positive nor negative. For example, one wrote: "I had limited knowledge about the culture, so there were few impressions." Another stated: "I knew a little about the Polish culture prior to this trip."

*Impressions after going to Poland.* After returning from the research abroad experience in Poland, participants' impressions changed (Table 1). The number of neutral responses dropped to 27%. Of those that responded neutrally before, two did not change their impressions. Another wrote that "inasmuch as my wife and I are both of Polish extraction, my impressions were a relatively close approximation to what I experienced." Another who had been to Poland before, wrote, "I did not have any particular impressions." A final respondent who had given a neutral answer before and after also stated, that impressions

were “the same, but I understand more about the struggles of the Catholic Church under communism.”

In general, participants thought that the program fostered a moderate amount of cultural awareness of Poland. It covered, according to one participant, “the essentials of food, customs, university life, and the history of World War II, especially the experience of the concentration camps at Majdanek. It also gave us an appreciation of the roles of women.” But it “didn’t show us the churches in Poland or give us a deep understanding of the country’s ethics.” Another participant wrote that the program “provided a glimpse of Polish culture. One of the advantages of this trip was that...we got a chance to visit several historical landmarks in the country, particularly the Jewish internment camp. It goes without saying that in order to acquire any meaningful cultural awareness, one has to consciously mingle with the locals, read, explore, and attend cultural events with an open mind.”

The building of cultural awareness among program participants was achieved by means of the symposium on teaching and learning. This was a central part of the week-long experience in Poland. It created the process of planned involvement with Polish colleagues that shared similar interests in teaching and scholarship. The program also facilitated enhancements of teaching for U.S. faculty. One participant wrote “global and cultural exposure significantly contributes to teaching and learning, especially on my multi-national campus.” Another commented, “the program in Poland gave me another example to use in my classroom when I’m discussing attitudes toward work as well as cultural differences between people. This makes me a better teacher because students learn more when an instructor can speak from real life experience.”

Other teaching and learning outcomes facilitated by the travel abroad experience to Poland included a sponsored seminar in the U.S., which was conducted by a Polish professor from KUL, a Fulbright teaching fellowship, and participation in a doctoral research study. Thus, the program in Poland has had a demonstrable impact on teaching and learning on the U.S. participants.

The number of responses that could be interpreted negatively was zero, while the number of positive responses was 73%. Similar to the impressions before going to Poland, most of these responses fell into two categories: culture/history and people. The increase in positive responses was reflected in the impressions related to people. For example, one participant wrote that it “seems the culture is rich in history as evidenced by some of the architecture. Judging from my interaction with people at KUL, it appears the Polish are very receptive of visitors.” Another wrote, “It is a nice country with a rich culture. Everyone we interacted with was awesome.” Several also commented on what they saw as potential for future collaboration. One participant wrote that the impressions were “even more positive now. I met some very interesting Polish colleagues/was impressed with their work. It appeared to be at a rather high, sophisticated level. I look forward to getting involved in some collaborative research with them.”

Another question related to impressions of their experience in Poland asked if there were any surprising cultural experiences. Three respondents answered, “yes.” One respondent did not elaborate, while another said: “I was surprised to see wine at dinner” without stating why. The final respondent stated: “KUL faculty were particularly proud of their facilities and

showed us their offices. I think they were proud of the physical space created during communism... [and] academic freedom at KUL.”

*Perceptions of participants: Was this a cross-cultural experience?* One item on the questionnaire asked: Would you consider this a cross-cultural experience? Why or why not? The results indicate that this temporary sojourn was considered by the majority of the respondents (78.6%) to be a cross-cultural experience (Table 2). Most stated that just being in another country created that experience, while others were more specific, stating that the interaction between faculty from different cultures and the sharing of ideas constituted the cross-cultural component. One respondent stated: “Anytime you willingly cross boundaries and genuinely engage with others from a different culture, you create a cross-cultural experience.”

**Table 2.** Number and percentage of respondents’ perceptions about program’s cross-cultural nature

Nature of Perception / Reason	$N_{(TOTAL)}$	$P_{(TOTAL)}^1$	$N_{(PARTIAL)}$	$P_{(PARTIAL)}$
Program was cross-cultural	11	78.6		
Were in a different country			6	42.9
Experienced a different language			1	7.1
Experienced religious differences			2	14.3
Shared different ideas			2	14.3
Program was not cross-cultural	2	14.2		
Polish and American culture are similar			1	7.1
Program was only an academic exchange			1	7.1
Program was and was not cross-cultural	1	7.1		
Polish and American cultures are similar, but different			1	7.1

Note. Percentages are based on respondents’ comments where  $N = 14$ .

Another respondent wrote: “I consider cross cultural to be two cultures mixing to share ideas and cultural backgrounds. I believe we did this.” Still another participant focused specifically on the interaction and sharing of ideas among faculty, pointing out that the PUC/PUWL contingent itself was a cross-cultural mix. That participant wrote: “It was cross-cultural because it involved PUC faculty (made up of people from many different cultures) interacting and sharing ideas with KUL faculty who are from a different country and culture.”

One participant indicated that the experience had elements of a cross-cultural experience, but not entirely. This respondent wrote that “a lot seemed like here – malls, music at the mall, university campus – could have been in the States. However, obvious differences in the buildings, the level of history, people’s views about religion seemed stronger.”

The two participants who did not consider this experience to be cross-cultural expressed it in different ways. One focused on the perception of Polish culture being similar to American culture. This respondent wrote:

My cross-cultural experiences have been with truly different cultures, e.g., working in mainland China, working among head-hunters in the north of the Philippines,

working in northern parts of Thailand, working in the homelands in South Africa, and so on.

The other participant who did not consider this a cross-cultural experience focused more on the academic exchange aspects of the experience. That individual wrote, "I'll consider the trip as a first step towards exploring scholarly opportunities of mutual benefit between faculties and institutions."

One respondent who considered this experience to be cross-cultural, also pointed out that not only were the PUC and PUWL faculty in a different country, but the Polish participants were interacting in English, not their native language. This participant said: "We were in another country. The people we interacted with were speaking in a language that was not their first language." This is the only instance in which a participant expressed an awareness of a cultural adaptation.

*Discussion of research question 1.* The question of whether the Faculty Research Abroad in Poland experience was cross-cultural can be analyzed by referring to the work of Gudykunst and Kim (2003) as well as Delle Fave and Bassi (2009). The experience in Poland may have had cross-cultural elements but was not an in-depth cross-cultural experience. It appears that while there were some positive changes in how the participants viewed Poland as a country and culture, their interactions with Polish colleagues had the most impact and generated the most positive impressions.

Is this a development of cultural awareness? According to Okubu and Zitt (2004), Ruddock and Turner (2007), and Camphinha-Bacote (2003), cultural awareness and sensitivity tend to develop over time as a result of acknowledging and accepting differences. By grounding the symposium in SoTL, the participants had a chance to learn how their counterparts from the other country integrate their scholarship and teaching. However, because this experience was so brief, the participants only had time to find similarities, helping them make positive comparisons with their own culture. In the strictest sense, cultural awareness did not emerge. Consistent with its purpose and intent, the program seemed to create a "sojourner" experience for its American participants. It effected personal change and enabled the sojourners an opportunity to learn and become educated so as to "improve their own and others' conditions" (Byram 1997, p. 2).

**Research Question 2: Were international partnerships and connections for The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning through disciplinary-specific models and through pedagogical research formed as a result of the faculty research abroad experience?**

The questionnaire contained a number of items related to this second research question. Those items focused on communication between the faculty of PUC, PUWL, and those in Poland. They also focused on whether the respondents perceived the Poland experience as fostering academic cooperation.

**Table 3.** Number and percentage of respondents' perceptions about partnerships

Content of Perception	Agreed		Disagreed	
	N	P <sup>1</sup>	N	P
Program in Poland fostered communication with colleagues	11	83.3	4	16.7
Program in Poland fostered academic cooperation <sup>2</sup>	12	86.7	2	13.3
Participants saw value in cooperation <sup>3</sup>	10	67.7	3	20.0
Program in Poland resulted in professional collaborative outcomes	8	53.3	7	46.7

Note. <sup>1</sup> Percentages are based on respondents' comments where  $N = 15$ .

<sup>2</sup> One respondent both agreed and disagreed.

<sup>3</sup> Two respondents indicated they were neutral.

*Post-program communication.* In regards to communication, 11 participants indicated that they had communicated with colleagues in Poland upon their return to the US, resulting in 70 communication incidents (Table 3). Of those communications, 25 were made by one person for a combination of personal and professional reasons. Another engaged in 20 communications of a strictly professional nature, while a third participant engaged in 10. The remainder of the communications involved a combination of personal and professional matters with the number ranging between 1 and 5 communications per person.

*Fostering academic cooperation.* There were 12 (87%) affirmative responses by participants on whether this program fostered academic cooperation (Table 3). One respondent said "both" (meaning cooperation and communication), and the other two responded "no". The ones who responded "no" did not provide reasons for their negative responses. The one who responded "both" gave an answer that weighted more toward the negative. This person wrote that it is "difficult for the program by itself to foster academic cooperation. The program connects faculties [sic], but for connection to result in cooperation requires mutual academic/research interest and goals from both institutions. This mutual research interest is/was missing."

Several participants indicated that the program offered opportunities for making connections with faculty in other countries for possible research collaboration. One respondent wrote of talking "a lot, both socially and professionally, with a wide group of researchers." Another participant elaborated on the experience and wrote:

I think the program enabled us to meet other academics who [sic] we would never have had the opportunity to meet had we not made the trip to KUL in Lublin. I think we need to keep the momentum rolling. Academic cooperation starts with faculty getting to know one another and then sharing a cultural experience together. This then has implications for further academic cooperation in terms of student exchanges and perhaps administrative exchanges. Other faculty workshops could also be arranged, perhaps even by PUC where our KUL counterparts could attend.

Others responded in a similar vein about having the opportunity “to listen to and talk to them about their work and research.”

In addition to being an opportunity for meeting and working with Polish counterparts, one PUC faculty member stressed the importance of the program as:

[A] way of creating relationships between not only KUL and PUC faculty, but between PUC and PUWL faculty and most importantly for me, between myself as a PUC faculty member and other PUC faculty. It is difficult to get to know faculty in other areas of the University. This trip created relationships that may lead to collaborative research, but I do not think that is the most important outcome. I now know people on campus that I can contact when I have different questions, need assistance, or just want to talk about our experiences with teaching and research. The trip fostered relationships that would not naturally occur on our campus and that was extremely valuable to me.

Although only one participant mentioned this aspect, these connections are also considered to be a desirable outcome of the program.

Two participants reported that collaboration is already underway. One wrote that cooperation would happen “to some extent – Dr. Piotr F. will be visiting here this fall.” The PUC faculty member who had made this connection elaborated further by writing, “Professor F will be visiting us in September, and we are in the process of planning an international conference in Poland in 2010. A faculty/student exchange agreement could be another outcome of the trip.” Another participant wrote:

As a result of the Faculty Research Abroad project, I met a young woman who was completing her dissertation in an area of interest to me. Interestingly, it was not the topic I presented (Reflection in Teacher Education), but in my other area of expertise, counseling. The symposium offered the opportunity to hear about her project, which piqued my interest. After the presentations at the symposium, we were able to have tea together to delve deeper into the potential for collaboration. I commented that it would be wonderful if she could come to my country and do some further investigation on her topic. As it turned out, she was indeed able to secure a grant from her university to spend 10 days with us. During this time, she had multiple opportunities to meet with other professors in her field and to visit facilities and organizations that were useful to her personal research. More importantly, we continued to discuss our research agendas and determined ways to create a comparative research project that eventually led to a published article. All of this resulted from the original symposium in Poland.

*Value of collaborating.* Another questionnaire item that addressed the second research question was: What are your thoughts about the value of collaborating with academic researchers in Poland? A majority (68%) of the participants responded positively to this question (Table 3). However, there were some who responded negatively, focusing more on this particular project not matching their needs as opposed to the value of collaborating with Polish researchers in general. For instance, one of the negative responses was actually positive about the program: “although my research did not align with that of the Polish

faculty, I believe there is great value in collaborating with those who can offer a different perspective.”

Because one of the outcomes of this program was to generate external grants, one person commented that “it is extremely difficult if not impossible. This is so because Federal/state funds (taxpayers’ money) from [the] US may likely not be used to support research efforts in Poland and vice versa.”

Another indicated that the program would be more valuable if there were “more production of knowledge on what it means to collaborate, how to begin/sustain collaborative relationships. Maybe do readings before going on trips.”

Most of the positive responses were somewhat vague, offering little reason for why the respondent thought the project was “great” or that “it could result in some interesting comparative projects.” However, one participant indicated, “moving forward on a project with one of the academics from Poland. We will be studying something both of us are interested in.”

*Professional collaborative outcomes.* The final questionnaire item that addressed the second research question was: What type of professional collaborative outcomes do you anticipate? This question attempted to ascertain whether plans for projects were formulated or were in the process of being formulated (Table 3).

Of the participants responding, 7 indicated that they did not expect any collaborative outcomes from this program. All of these participants responded to the previous question indicating that they were not able to make appropriate connections for a research or academic collaboration.

The other 8 respondents, however, reported a variety of possible outcomes. Some of them were general and may not have indicated that the possibilities were realizable. For example, one participant wrote of the possibility of preparing a “conference presentation, journal paper and research proposal.” One wrote, “Although I have been in touch with a few people that we met, I do not think I will have a collaborative project with them. However, I am working with another Polish colleague on a project.”

Several respondents reported specific outcomes. One participant wrote of writing “research papers for conferences and academic journals co-authored by me and my Polish counterpart.” Another repeated the upcoming visit by Professor F. One participant who mentioned her/his project when answering an earlier question wrote:

The project requires research both in Poland and [the] US, so both of us are involved in our own countries, but we will be doing a comparative study of our findings, thus bringing our collaboration back into play at that time.

Follow-ups on these participants will be necessary to determine which of the projects had sustainability.

*Discussion of research question 2.* Overall, the participants saw this program as a possible means of developing professional relationships with colleagues in Poland. It offered the

opportunity for making connections – an opportunity that would not have existed otherwise for most of the participants. They were able to connect on a professional level as they examined each other's work in light of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, the theme of the symposium. Even those who did not make connections or anticipate making connections saw that this type of program had the potential of leading to international collaboration.

The survey questionnaire on which this study is based was completed about four months after the program in Poland ended. This article is being written about a year after program completion. Therefore, a follow-up survey should be conducted to determine some of the long-term effects of this program as a way of creating international partnerships and connections.

### Discussion

One of the challenges of analyzing this experience is trying to determine the degree of cross-cultural adaptation participants made or perceived they made. Although the US-based faculty members who participated in the program were in Poland for five days, during which time they ate Polish food and slept in Polish hotels, their guides and Polish colleagues spoke English. They were also shepherded by the faculty coordinator of the program and by Polish faculty and staff. As such, they had limited time to experience and interact on their own. This experience was obviously too brief to be more than a superficial cross-cultural experience. More correctly, it was a "sojourner" experience, going somewhat beyond what Byram (1997) calls a "tourist" experience. However, as evidenced by the survey responses, participants experienced different degrees of depth, partly dependent on what they perceived as being cross-cultural.

Consistent with the international travel abroad research conducted by Kambutu and Nganga (2008) in Kenya, the program in Poland promoted cultural awareness through short term, "carefully planned international cultural experiences" (p. 949). Participants had the chance to experience "a degree of cultural transformation" because the program created opportunities to interact and sufficient "space to learn about cultural similarities and differences" (p. 949). The participants in Poland had to make sense of the unfamiliar and were unable to go back to the familiar because of their physical separation from the U.S. This had the potential to create an uncomfortable state of dissonance, which is an essential step in the cultural awareness building process.

In the final analysis, we believe that the identification and determination of whether participants in the program experienced a cultural awareness of Poland must be viewed using the perspectives of the participants. Because the focus of the Faculty Research Abroad Program was developed as a SoTL academic collaboration, there was little attention to helping participants think of this experience as a cross-cultural experience, except in a minor way. An orientation meeting prior to departure gave participants a brief overview of Polish history, culture, and society, but there was no mechanism to treat this as a cross-cultural learning experience and included no debriefing on return. Since the purpose of this initiative was to develop collaborative relationships with others in Poland, the perception of the amount of cross-cultural adaptation needed to foster successful collaborations must be explored. The perception by the organizers was that by grounding the program in SoTL,

these collaborations would develop naturally as a result of learning one another's approaches to teaching and learning. However, as it turns out, some of the participants did not fully understand the concept of SoTL. Therefore, they missed the opportunity to present their work in such a way that it created this type of connection.

The outcomes of the Faculty Research Abroad program were designed to establish communication and ideas that promoted teaching and learning in various academic disciplines, and to cultivate funding sources, resources for further connection, extension of research, and on-going communication. According to the University Global Collaboration Model (Figure 1), that goal can be reached when certain other conditions are met: awareness of culture, connection to others, and collaboration/partnerships. If implemented appropriately SoTL offers a suitable backdrop for creating these conditions. In turn, these conditions lead to the establishment of long term and sustainable relationships for research and other academic collaborations, which are important for reaching the program's goal.

One participant who has developed a successful research collaboration with a colleague from Poland reported later that while the collaboration was helpful for research, it also provided opportunities to learn about teaching in another country and culture. Working with this professor during her visit to the U.S. and during frequent Skype sessions they often discussed their experiences and challenges with teaching, speculating about the similarities and differences of their students. They agreed that student similarities were greater than the differences. Ultimately they concluded that the students' needs and wants for classes were quite similar, particularly in their expectations of professors. Such ongoing communication was integral to their developing a sustainable long term relationship, enabling them to examine cultural similarities and differences as they integrated scholarship and teaching.

One element missing from faculty abroad programs, such as the one in Poland and its predecessors, is formal opportunities for reflection. Reflective practice is recognized as a key concept in numerous professions. Mezirow (1998) and Schön (1984) assert that growth occurs through reflection. For example, in a study with pre-service teachers and their development of multicultural awareness, Brown (2004) found that when students had opportunities "to actively participate in cross-cultural field experiences and to actively engage in cross cultural research" (p. 336) throughout the class and to reflect on those experiences, they developed more multicultural awareness and had "better comprehension of the issues studied in the class" (Zimmerman 2006, p. 6). These findings can be generalized to faculty research abroad experiences. Incorporating formal opportunities for self-reflection into research abroad programs would facilitate establishing whether, how much, and what kind of cultural awareness took place.

### **Limitations of This Study**

This study has two apparent limitations. The first relates to the use of a single survey instrument. This has the potential for creating a common method bias. For this study, a survey methodology was chosen as an efficient manner to collect the necessary data. Additional research in the future should include other data collection methods such as interviews or focus groups. This would strengthen the findings and minimize the validity threats of mono-method bias occasionally observed in organizational research (Donaldson and Grant-Vallone 2002).

The second limitation relates to the researchers' choice to survey only one group involved in the collaboration, specifically, the faculty from the United States. At some point, the questionnaire could be sent to the Polish participants in the Faculty Research Abroad in Poland program. One of the issues that arose in informal conversations with Polish colleagues was that many of them are not familiar with the concept of SoTL. Therefore, some of the Polish faculty felt they were being asked to make presentations on a topic that was not directly relevant to their research interests. Additional relevant questions could be added to the existing survey instrument to address these issues.

### **Implications for Future Research**

These limitations offer opportunities for future research. This study revealed interesting insights about the perceptions of the U.S. participants in the Faculty Research Abroad Program in Poland. To achieve a more comprehensive view of the program and its efficacy, it would be necessary to solicit the impressions and perceptions of the Polish participants from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin.

A second phase of this study is being planned that will examine faculty satisfaction and how the institution contributes to it (or not). Follow-up surveys and interviews will be conducted with participants who were able to create connections and collaborations with Polish counterparts. The role of university support will be one element of focus.

Further research should be conducted on the other efforts being undertaken at PUCM to foster academic cooperation and collaboration. Data were not collected for the first two faculty abroad projects which were not based on SoTL. Comparative data on the accomplishment of program goals as well as participant perceptions could provide additional insight into how cross-cultural awareness and collaboration may have been fostered in those programs, and the role that SoTL can play in creating conditions for effective collaboration.

### **Conclusion**

As globalization increases, so does the need for developing effective programs that foster intercultural and international cooperation and collaboration. As stated above, SoTL can provide a strong foundation on which to base such academic partnerships. However, as this study demonstrates, programs must be carefully planned so that they are not perceived as being fragmented and haphazard. They must offer the opportunity for learning based on interaction with concepts, issues, themes and problems from a multicultural perspective. While one week is not enough time for a program to build sophisticated skills in intercultural awareness, it is enough time to begin the process of transforming participants into culturally sensitive individuals. In so doing, connections can be established and strengthened over time, culminating in meaningful and sustainable relationships. These have the potential to generate academic collaborations that result in significant outcomes benefiting students, society, and the teaching profession.

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