

*Teaching Tip*  
**Adding Intercultural Communication to an IS  
Curriculum**

Alanah Mitchell and Rob Benyon

Recommended Citation: Mitchell, A. & Benyon, R. (2018). Teaching Tip: Adding Intercultural Communication to an IS Curriculum. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 29(1), pp. 1-10.

Article Link: <http://jise.org/Volume29/n1/JISEv29n1p1.html>

Initial Submission: 21 July 2016  
Accepted: 3 October 2017  
Abstract Posted Online: 12 December 2017  
Published: 21 March 2018

Full terms and conditions of access and use, archived papers, submission instructions, a search tool, and much more can be found on the JISE website: <http://jise.org>

ISSN: 2574-3872 (Online) 1055-3096 (Print)

---

# **Teaching Tip**

## **Adding Intercultural Communication to an IS Curriculum**

**Alanah Mitchell**

Department of Information Management and Business Analytics  
Drake University  
Des Moines, IA 50311, USA  
[alanah.mitchell@drake.edu](mailto:alanah.mitchell@drake.edu)

**Rob Benyon**

Department of Information Systems  
Rhodes University  
Grahamstown, South Africa  
[r.v.benyon@ru.ac.za](mailto:r.v.benyon@ru.ac.za)

### **ABSTRACT**

Increasingly, today's information systems (IS) programs are focused on making sure students are graduating with well-developed soft skills. One of these necessary soft skills is intercultural communication, which is the ability to communicate with people from different cultures. This teaching tip presents an assignment designed to increase the intercultural communication competency of IS students in both the U.S. and South Africa. Students from two different countries/cultures worked together one-on-one in order to improve their intercultural communication competency skills using a variety of technologies including email, Skype, Facebook, WhatsApp, SnapChat, Instagram, and FaceTime. The findings from this experience suggest that students are surprised by what they can learn from developing a relationship with a global partner. Lessons related to assignment successes and challenges are shared as well as plans for future assignment adopters.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural learning, Collaborative learning, Technology-mediated collaboration, IS major, Pedagogy

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The goal of an information systems (IS) education is to provide students with the business and technical skills that are necessary upon graduation (Chilton, 2012). Recent research is particularly focused on the importance of "soft skills" for information technology professionals so that they can effectively manage projects, relay user requirements, and successfully work in professional, global teams (Beard, Schwieger, and Surendran, 2008; Del Vitto, 2008; Osmani et al., 2016; Venables, Tan, and Miliszewska, 2013). A fundamental theory in relation to the development of soft skills is the concept of cultural intelligence (Del Vitto, 2008; Thomas and Inkson, 2003). Thomas and Inkson (2003, p. 15) define a culturally intelligent person as someone who is "skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, learning more about it from interactions with it, and gradually reshaping their thinking to be more sympathetic to the culture." Cultural intelligence is a key capability for IS development, deployment, and use (Heinzl and Leidner, 2012; Leidner and Kayworth, 2006). In fact, a number of previous research studies related to global, technology-supported collaboration have cited intercultural communication issues as

a common challenge (e.g., Avison and Banks, 2008; Cramton, 2002).

Generally speaking, the concept of cultural intelligence plays an important role in the development of one's cross-cultural communication competency (Johnson, Lenartowicz, and Apud, 2006). Definitions of intercultural communication competency generally emphasize the individual traits that one must possess. A recent research study from Reichard et al. (2015, p. 461) identifies a cross-culturally competent individual as

someone who has achieved a broadened perspective with 1) a lack of ethnocentrism with positive attitudes toward cultures other than their own and 2) a well-developed cultural intelligence with an ability to adapt in new cultural contexts.

An intercultural communication competence might even include intercultural social knowledge, which is knowledge held by a group that allows them to understand the behavior of others in their own culture (Phang, Zheng, and Zhong, 2007).

While cultural intelligence is a skill that can be developed (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004), it is often not a part of an academic program (Del Vitto, 2008; Venables, Tan, and Miliszewska, 2013). In fact, within an IS curriculum, students are rarely exposed to professional norms and students from other societies (Venables, Tan, and Miliszewska, 2013) particularly because the IS curriculum is already full with traditional knowledge requirements (Chen et al., 2008). Even the AACSB, the accreditation group for many IS curriculum developers, is focused on learning goals related to “communication abilities” and “multicultural and diversity understanding,” as well as “reflective thinking skills” (Beard, Schwieger, and Surendran, 2008).

With higher education institutions emphasizing the importance of developing globally aware students and increasing the intercultural competency of graduates (Reichard et al., 2015), it might seem that study abroad programs would be an optimal approach for achieving these intercultural competence goals. However, coupled with the fact that the IS curriculum is already full with traditional knowledge requirements (Chen et al., 2008), these types of study abroad programs require significant resources and planning (Harris et al., 2011). Collaboration technology tools offer an alternative method for encouraging institutional collaboration projects that can encourage the development of intercultural skills and competence, as well as increase the sense of global citizenship among students across institutions. There is a considerable body of research related to collaborative teaching and learning in online environments (e.g., Alavi, 1994; Leidner and Jarvenpaa, 1995; Shen, Hiltz, and Bieber, 2006). In fact, a number of studies have presented findings from using technology-supported collaboration in a classroom setting for global collaboration projects (e.g., Adya, Temple, and Hepburn, 2015; Davis et al., 2009). Of particular interest are studies that have relied on Kolb’s Learning Cycle for training students to learn in such environments (e.g., Chen et al., 2008; Ng, van Dyne, and Ang, 2009). To summarize, Kolb’s Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) includes the following phases: 1) abstraction conceptualization – learning about an experience; 2) active experimentation – planning an experience; 3) concrete experience – actively experiencing an activity; and 4) observational reflection – consciously reflecting on the experience. This learning cycle provides a clear process for students to learn about a concept, such as intercultural communication competency, as well as reflect on an actual experience related to that concept.

Motivated by the increasing demand for IS students to be prepared with intercultural communication soft skills and the attempts of universities to fit these needs into an already full curriculum designed to meet industry needs, we have prepared an assignment to address this disconnect. This paper presents a global, technology-supported collaboration assignment where U.S. and South African students worked together in order to become more globally aware and increase their intercultural competency. Specifically, this paper presents a stand-alone assignment designed to increase the intercultural communication competency of IS students as well as the findings from the use of this assignment. U.S. and South African IS students partnered together through the use of various collaborative technologies in order to improve their intercultural communication competency. Students in this project worked together over the course of a semester using

widely available technology collaboration tools. Upon completion, students reflected on not only the opportunities and challenges associated with the task and technology, but also the lessons learned.

The following sections present the assignment implementation and lessons learned. The final section presents our discussion and conclusion and provides some ideas for future assignment use.

## **2. ASSIGNMENT IMPLEMENTATION**

Faculty from two different universities, one in the U.S. and one in South Africa, came together to design and implement an assignment to increase student intercultural communication in the spring of 2015. For this assignment, a total of 57 U.S. and South African students worked together one-on-one in order to increase their intercultural communication competency. Twenty two undergraduate students enrolled in an IS course in a college of business from a large university in the southern U.S. were partnered with 35 honors students enrolled in an IS course at a university in South Africa. The students from the U.S. were taking a Global Information Technologies course and ranged from sophomores to seniors with 9 female and 13 male students. The students from South Africa were primarily students in their fourth year of study. The South African students included 16 females and 19 males enrolled in an Information Systems Honours Corporate Communication module, with a Global Communications emphasis. Partners were assigned randomly and given email addresses in order to establish their initial connections. Because there were more South African students than U.S. students, a few of the U.S. students were assigned two partners. However, the communication between the partners all took place one-on-one (i.e., the U.S. students with more than one partner worked with each separately). All of the students were required to use English to communicate with each other.

### **2.1 Assignment Process**

Prior to the semester beginning, two faculty collaborated on the development of an assignment (see Appendix 1) where students from different countries/cultures would be required to work together and reflect on their experience. Faculty agreed that the assignment would count for 15% of the course grade in both classes so as to ensure student commitment to the experience. Both courses began with a discussion and background on globalization topics including the concepts of intercultural communication competency and technology collaboration tools (i.e., Kolb’s Learning Cycle – abstraction conceptualization phase).

Once the assignment was introduced in class, students were required to connect with their partners and get to know one another (i.e., Kolb’s Learning Cycle – active experimentation and concrete experience phases). Specifically, students were to find out information related to personal facts (e.g., age, demographics, family, hobbies), the education system in their partner’s country (e.g., degree requirements, classes, schedules, homework), the job process in their partner’s country (e.g., expectations, salary), food options, and the living arrangement and transportation options of their partners so they could compare and contrast their findings with their own country/culture perspectives.

At the conclusion of the assignment, once the students had connected and shared with one another, all students had to turn in a final deliverable reflecting on their findings (i.e., Kolb's Learning Cycle – observational reflection phase). Specifically, the students were required to reflect on 1) their partners and what they learned (as well as any communication complications), 2) the opportunities and challenges related to the assignment or the technology, and 3) any final lessons learned. The final deliverables from the students in the U.S. and South Africa provided qualitative comments evaluating the assignment implementation.

## **2.2 Communication Tools**

As a part of the assignment, students were encouraged to use email and Skype to communicate with their partners. Initial introductions were sent by one of the faculty in order to "virtually" introduce the partners. However, once students were connected, they were allowed and encouraged to use whatever technology they wanted.

## **3. LESSONS LEARNED**

In this section, we present the evidence of our assignment based on the faculty observations from the implementation of the intercultural communication assignment and the qualitative comments from the student reflections. While each student had their own experiences and reflections from this assignment, certain patterns and themes did emerge. Specifically, the findings from this assignment were categorized according to assignment successes and challenges. The following sections highlight the student and faculty experiences in relation to both categories in the form of lessons learned.

### **3.1 Successes**

**3.1.1 The assignment and technology were useful for accomplishing the learning objective, and students were able to learn new things related to a different country/culture and ultimately about intercultural communication.** Based on student comments, it is clear that students were able to learn about their partners. In many cases students were very open about the surprises related to preconceived stereotypes or expectations. For example, one U.S. student was surprised about the appearance of their partner, stating:

I was expecting a darker featured fellow with less English fluency abilities, which was very stereotypical of me, and turned out to be the complete opposite. [Partner] has blonde curly hair, blue eyes, and a British accent. It was a nice eye opener and reminder to not let main stream media embed a cultural inference into our Westernized society so much that we believe that other countries are drastically different from us.

The main goal of this assignment was to increase the intercultural communication competency of the student participants. While the previous comment related to preconceived notions showed that students did learn something about their intercultural communication, evidence of increased competency was even clearer in the reflection of other students. For instance, one U.S. student commented:

As a business student, I will likely work with people from other cultures. It is crucial to be able to work in diverse groups, and this project was one of the few experiences I have had doing so. After completing the Global Outreach Experience, I feel better equipped to communicate with other people from other cultures not only directly, but virtually.

IS faculty interested in increasing the intercultural communication competencies of their students should work to find a partner from another country/culture and adopt this assignment as a portion of their course. The assignment could be adapted to the course needs, but the important part of the assignment is to get students communicating with students from a different location and background than their own and reflecting on what they learn.

**3.1.2 Students were able to relate with one another, identify similarities and differences, and reflect on these findings.** It was interesting that many of the partners were able to quickly identify similarities and interests that connected them in their conversations. In fact, most of the students found they had a lot of similarities. One U.S. student stated:

Although this assignment was supposed to expose me to intercultural communication, the three of us were all pretty similar. Our schools run in pretty much the same way with the exception of my undergrad being longer. We all had similar hobbies and could communicate easily with each other.

Another U.S. student commented: "As stated before, I was astonished that [partner] and I shared very similar tastes in music and even wound up linking up on Soundcloud, a music streaming and sharing sight."

The students from South Africa also noted the project benefits in terms of similarities, with one student acknowledging: "It allowed me to gain an understanding of the American culture and it enabled me to see some of the similarities between America and South Africa." Another South African student stated: "It was fascinating to discover that people from different continents could have numerous similarities and get along so well."

Along with discussions of similarities, differences were also easy to identify. An important finding related to the differences is that students were able to reflect on their differences and learn from them. This reflection was particularly important for the U.S. students when considering their differences in language skills. A number of U.S. students commented on how the South African students were much more advanced in their language skills. For example, one U.S. student stated:

[Partner] is rather the communicator for she can speak three languages: English, Afrikaans, and German... Foreign language should be something that America strives [sic] for every student to have. I know a little bit of Spanish, but if I were asked to communicate with a student in Mexico there is no way I could perform like these students.

A key component of this assignment is the reflection piece. Going forward, faculty who adopt this assignment should be sure to require students to reflect on the similarities and differences they identify during their partnerships.

**3.1.3 The technology enabled this assignment to be possible and for learning to occur.** It is important to note that the technology is what makes this assignment possible. Interestingly, students greatly enjoyed the technology part of the assignment and specifically valued the flexibility that they were given to choose whatever technology they wanted. For instance, one U.S. student noted:

I also liked how it wasn't already some predetermined platform that we had to use to communicate. The fact that the instructors allowed us to find the best methods for us was really nice. It helped avoid a lot of problems that could have occurred given each persons [sic] daily activities.

While the students made initial contact via email, the majority of the partners moved to other social media platforms, acknowledging the advantages of real time communication. One South African student declared that: "After a few exchanges, we both came to the conclusion that email was a bit impersonal and that we should incorporate social media platforms and other video conferencing software like Skype." In fact, 30 of the 35 pairs complemented the use of email with at least one other technology (see Table 1 for the full breakdown of technology choices). From the faculty perspective, it was highly beneficial to learn the technology choices students made and valued. Email and Skype were the most popular technology choices (most likely because they were recommended by the assignment). However, even groups that did not use Skype were able to share videos and photos via email. For instance, one student stated: "[Partner] sent me a video clip of his home, a virtual tour, and I enjoyed watching it and getting a visual image of where he spends his life."

Technology	Number of Partners Using
Email	35
Skype	17
Facebook	10
WhatsApp or iMessage	8
SnapChat	1
Instagram	1
FaceTime	1

**Table 1. Technology Counts**

Following email and Skype, Facebook was a popular choice because many students were regularly connected to Facebook or Facebook Messenger. One South African student spoke to the value of Facebook for this assignment: "It was a great experience to log into Facebook and actually have a meaningful message that concerns my Honours degree waiting for me."

At the time of this assignment, WhatsApp and SnapChat were relatively new social networking collaboration tools receiving a lot of attention from students as well. While many of the South African students were already comfortable with WhatsApp, it was new to many of the U.S. students and

required a bit of guidance from the South African students. One U.S. student commented on this process:

I thought I had a partner who wasn't going to be willing to work with me. That's until she recommended that I download a popular messaging app in Zimbabwe. I believe that the app was the best form of communication for [partner] and I; it's called 'WhatsApp'... Once I got the hang of it, WhatsApp made our communications a lot easier to manage.

Another pair was very successful with SnapChat, with one U.S. student commenting: "I actually felt that SnapChat was a great tool because it was an easy way for us to send pictures of what was going on in our life."

Many of the students found that using the social networking tools they were already regularly using helped to immerse them into the other country/culture even more than expected. One U.S. student recommended specifically encouraging students to use social networking technologies for this assignment:

The coolest part of the experience for me is that I now get to see my South African partner's stuff on Facebook and Instagram, so my only suggestion would be to encourage people to add them on social media so they can continue to see things from their partners.

A number of students expressed hope that they will remain connected even after the assignment concludes. Specifically, one South African student declared: "I have made a life-long friend." A number of U.S. students expressed similar sentiments.

Going forward, faculty should offer students technology flexibility to choose collaboration tools they prefer in order to encourage regular communication. However, faculty should also be certain to present options. In this case, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, iMessage, SnapChat, Instagram, FaceTime, and even SoundCloud were all used. These technologies could be presented as well as any others that may be popular in the participating countries (e.g., WeChat in China or Slack in the U.S.).

**3.1.4 Faculty need to be sure to present the same assignment requirements and check in on the partner communications over the course of the assignment.** Finally, in terms of the successful findings from this case, it worked well that all students had the same assignment. One student commented:

This project was nothing if not enjoyable. It was informative to talk to my partners about so many different topics and yet so easy to do. I liked that it was two-part assignment, meaning they had the same questions and answers to gather as we did. Even though conversations would sometimes go in another direction, having those initial talking points made things a little less awkward in the long run.

Additionally, due to the independent nature of this assignment and the fact that all of the work was completed outside of class time (due to time zone differences), it was important that the instructors continued to check in with the students on how the assignment was progressing. One U.S. student stated as much:

I liked this project a great deal. I think that it was interesting to be able to 'cross' international boundaries and communicate with other students around our age. I think we were fairly prepped for this experience and you made sure to check in with us while we were participating.

Prior to the adoption of this assignment, the participating faculty need to be in agreement about the assignment specifics. Then, over the course of this assignment (whether that be a full semester or a small part of a semester), faculty should regularly check in with their class as a whole in order to make sure that there are no communication issues and that the assignment is progressing smoothly.

### 3.2 Challenges

**3.2.1 Faculty need to allow for technology choice freedom, but also encourage some face-to-face, synchronous interaction.** One of the successful findings from this case indicated that students highly valued the opportunity to choose their preferred collaboration technology. However, this meant that student pairs were not required to hold face-to-face, synchronous conversations. As mentioned above, there were five pairs that only communicated via email. In these situations, the students thought that requiring a second technology would be preferred. For example, one U.S. student stated:

One change I would make is having the students communicate in at least one other way besides email, although that would be hard to regulate. I would definitely recommend this assignment in the future. It is not often we get to communicate with people from other countries, let alone students so similar to us.

A South African student shared this perspective, mentioning that a required video conference would have been preferred: "Face to face conversations would have allowed students to know more about each other and therefore identify cultural differences."

While some of the students were nervous about conducting Skype meetings or agreed that "the difference in time was a hurdle" that made it difficult to set up Skype meetings, most participants found that their partners were friendly and they enjoyed the Skype sessions. It should also be noted that a couple of the pairs that did not use Skype (or FaceTime) to chat did make attempts to do so. One South African student stated: "After many attempts to plan Skyping times we eventually settled for email communication." In future implementations of this project, it would be valuable for students to be required to hold at least one synchronous, face-to-face conversation via Skype, FaceTime, or the equivalent.

**3.2.2 Technology and time zone challenges will occur.** As is generally the case with virtual collaboration assignments, there are bound to be technology and time zone challenges. With this assignment, it seemed that the technology challenges were minimal because the students were able to select the technologies they preferred to use. However, there were still some relatively minor technological issues. For example, one U.S. student stated: "Some technology issues occurred, which we never figured out what happened, but her mic was very quiet

the first time we spoke – I could barely hear her, even though she was using the same headphones as myself with a mic."

Regarding time zone challenges, most of the students included in this experience were not experienced with working across time zones. This meant that learning about time zone differences was an important outcome from this assignment. In fact, 100% of the South African students cited the time zone difference as the biggest issue with this assignment.

There was even a complication related to a Daylight Savings time change in the middle of the project, with one U.S. student noting:

Something new I learned was that South Africa does not have a time change (daylight savings time), and when we decided to meet at our normal time (8:30 AM US time, 3:30 PM South Africa time), she missed our meeting. She responded to me an hour later saying that I had been an hour early. I then realized that we had just had daylight savings time, and that made it 2:30pm her time! That was kind of difficult to explain to her, I think she felt confused. This taught me that intercultural communication is not as difficult when we are able to explain ourselves clearly, but sometimes misunderstandings happen.

This specific anecdote was even discussed in class, as a couple of students had gotten comfortable calculating the time zone difference before it changed in the middle of the semester.

For future assignment implementations, faculty should be prepared for technology challenges, perhaps providing technology equipment (e.g., headphones, microphones, lab times) if necessary or posting instructions for various technology tools (e.g., Skype directions and reminders). Faculty might also want to prepare guidelines or a time zone cheat sheet (e.g., <https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html>) that shows the time zone difference for the participating countries in order to help students know what time it is when they are collaborating. Guidelines might also need to take into account country/cultural differences such as Daylight Savings or holiday schedules to help students be fully prepared for this new experience.

**3.2.3 Faculty need to be sure to balance the workload as much as possible and provide consistent directions and deadlines.** Because of the size differences in the classes, some of the U.S. students had two partners to talk with instead of one, and some students perceived this as an issue. One U.S. student, who had more partners than some others, stated:

[Too many] partners make it difficult for the project to become personal, making the project simply feel like an assignment rather than an experience. For future classes, I would focus on assigning fewer partners to each student to alleviate this aspect.

However, another student really liked the experience of having two different partners to compare. She noted:

My two partners mentioned the drinking habits in SA; one mentioned it was strict while the other called their college town the drinking capital of SA. Having two different students from a country will be helpful to get

a wider view of how students are in SA. If you met me and a different person in my class, we aren't going to be the same or do the same activities; I would have a wider idea range of one country, instead of generalizing it to what one person tells me.

Along with making sure that the workload is consistent, faculty need to be sure to provide consistent directions and deadlines. In this specific case, the faculty did provide the same assignment directions (which was noted as a successful finding above). However, the U.S. students had a later deadline for the reflection deliverable than the South African students, as the U.S. semester ended later. A handful of the South African students were bothered by the differences in deadlines, suggesting that some of the U.S. students showed a lack of enthusiasm and a sense of relaxation as they had more time to complete the assignment. These students suggested that the same deadline to complete final deliverables should be provided for all students involved in the assignment. With future implementations of this assignment, faculty will want to agree on assignment percentages, loads, and deadlines to be sure student workload is perceived as fair and the motivation between collaboration partners is as even as possible.

**3.2.4 Faculty should consider a way to present to the class.** Finally, the project was discussed in each class in order to assess progress, but some students were interested in finding out more about the happenings in other partnerships. Accordingly, adding a final presentation portion to the class would have been a well-received idea. Specifically, one U.S. student stated:

A suggestion for next semester could be to have short presentations for each student, maybe 5 minutes, on the partners and what they learned just to share with the rest of the class. I know I was pretty excited about some of the things I had in common with my partners and would tell other classmates about it. Overall it was a wonderful project though and I do feel like I have gained a large amount of insight on education in other cultures and just had a great time talking to college students in different parts of the world.

Going forward, faculty may want to consider including a presentation to the assignment or a small group discussion component so that collocated students can hear different perspectives and findings. This could also encourage further learning related to intercultural communication competencies.

**4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This paper presented the implementation of an assignment designed to increase the intercultural communication competency of IS students from both the U.S. and South Africa. This implementation illustrates that it is possible to include an assignment within the IS curriculum that aids in increasing the intercultural communication competency of today's IS graduates. The evidence from this assignment suggests that students were able to learn about another country/culture from their partnerships as well as collaboration technologies and working across time zones. This paper has identified both successes and challenges from this experience but, overall, suggested that this type of exercise is well received and

necessary in an IS program. Even though some of the students were faced with challenges during this assignment, 100% of the U.S. and South African students recommended this assignment be included in future classes. Table 2 shows that a number of U.S. student comments which presented this sentiment.

<b>U.S. Student Comments (excerpts)</b>	
1	"This was by far my favorite assignment I have completed in my four years of college."
2	"I loved this assignment because I feel that my view of the world is particularly narrow... Overall, this has been one of my favorite assignments in my semesters thus far... I hope to stay in touch with these girls in the future."
3	"My favorite part about this assignment is that this assignment was not possible just 20 years ago...this experience has made me want to learn more about other cultures rather than my own and to meet many more new and exciting individuals."
4	"Overall, the project gave me great insight, and a friend, into South African culture, better communications skills using online tools, and an appreciation for international school projects."
5	"I legitimately enjoyed this project. I enjoy learning about other people and it was cool to tell someone about yourself who is also curious and might not have any idea about life in a different area."
6	"This was probably one of the most exciting assignments I got to do all year. It really gave me the opportunity to explore what life is like for students my age in other countries. I got to learn how their schooling works in relation to [ours] and what their everyday life is like. I don't have any negative comments about this assignment."

**Table 2. Positive Comments from U.S. Student Reflections Related to Overall Experience**

From the student perspective, the qualitative comments show the value of this assignment. From the faculty perspective, this assignment was also valuable. Increasingly, today's business world is relying on virtual technology and technology-supported collaboration for global collaboration. As faculty, this type of assignment provides a way to produce students that are able to work in today's business world. While offering this type of global collaboration project in class can present some challenges, it was very satisfying to assist students from both countries in understanding course concepts as well as what it is like to work in a global, virtual world.

In conclusion, the assignment presented here presents a successful example for IS educators to consider when thinking about how to prepare students with the soft skills related to intercultural communication competency. It is hoped that the experiences and reflections of the students and faculty presented in this paper will encourage other IS educators to consider incorporating similar assignments into their curriculum as a way to prepare IS students for their future global, technology collaboration projects.



## 5. REFERENCES

- Adya, M., Temple, B. K., & Hepburn, D. M. (2015). Distant Yet Near: Promoting Interdisciplinary Learning in Significantly Diverse Teams through Socially Responsible Projects. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, 13(2), 121-149.
- Alavi, M. (1994). Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning: An Empirical Evaluation. *MIS Quarterly*, 18(2), 159-165.
- Avison, D. & Banks, P. (2008). Cross-Cultural (Mis)ommunication in IS Offshoring: Understanding through Conversation Analysis. *Journal of Information Technology*, 23(4), 249-268.
- Beard, D., Schwieger, D., & Surendran, K. (2008). Integrating Soft Skills Assessment through University, College, and Programmatic Efforts at an AACSB Accredited Institution. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 19(2), 229-240.
- Chen, F., Sager, J., Corbitt, G., & Gardiner, S. C. (2008). Incorporating Virtual Teamwork Training into MIS Curricula. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 19(1), 29-41.
- Chilton, M. (2012). Technology in the Classroom: Using Video Links to Enable Long Distance Experiential Learning. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 23(1), 51-62.
- Cramton, C. D. (2002). Finding Common Ground in Dispersed Collaboration. *Organizational Dynamics*, 30(4), 356.
- Davis, A., Germonprez, M., Petter, S., Drum, D., & Kolstad, J. (2009). A Case Study of Offshore Development across IS Courses: Lessons Learned from a Global Student Project. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 24(21), 351-372.
- Del Vitto, C. (2008). Cross-Cultural "Soft Skills" and the Global Engineer: Corporate Best Practices and Trainer Methodologies. *Online Journal for Global Engineering Education*, 3(1), 1-9.
- Earley, P. C. & Mosakowski, E. (2004). Cultural Intelligence. *Harvard Business Review*, 82(10), 139-146.
- Harris, A. L., Belanger, F., Loch, K., Murray, M. C., & Urbaczewski, A. (2011). Study Abroad as an Education Experience: Challenges, Realizations, and Lessons Learned. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 28(2), 17-30.
- Heinzl, A. & Leidner, D. E. (2012). Information Systems and Culture - The World Might Be Flat, but it is Culturally Rich. *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, 4(3), 109-110.
- Johnson, J. P., Lenartowicz, T., & Apud, S. (2006). Cross-Cultural Competence in International Business: Toward a Definition and a Model. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(4), 525-543.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Leidner, D. E. & Jarvenpaa, S. L. (1995). The Use of Information Technology to Enhance Management School Education: A Theoretical View. *MIS Quarterly*, 19(3), 265-292.
- Leidner, D. E. & Kayworth, T. (2006). A Review of Culture in Information Systems Research: Toward a Theory of Information Technology Culture Conflict. *MIS Quarterly*, 30(2), 357-400.
- Ng, K.-Y., van Dyne, L., & Ang, S. (2009). From Experience to Experiential Learning: Cultural Intelligence as a Learning Capability for Global Leader Development. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 8(4), 511-526.
- Osmani, M., Weerakkody, V., Hindi, N., Kapoor, K., Al-Esmail, R., & Eldabi, T. (2016). Skills and Attributes of IT Graduates: Evidence from Employer's Perspective. Paper presented at the Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS).
- Phang, C. W., Zheng, J., & Zhong, Y. (2007). Global Deployment of Enterprise Systems in MNC: Exploring the Importance of Intercultural Social Knowledge. Paper presented at the Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS).
- Reichard, R. J., Serrano, S. A., Condren, M., Wilder, N., Dollwet, M., & Wang, W. (2015). Engagement in Cultural Trigger Events in the Development of Cultural Competence. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 14(4), 461-481.
- Shen, J., Hiltz, S. R., & Bieber, M. (2006). Collaborative Online Examinations: Impacts on Interaction, Learning, and Student Satisfaction. *IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man and Cybernetics*, 36(6), 1045-1053.
- Thomas, D. C. & Inkson, K. (2003). *People Skills for Global Business: Cultural Intelligence*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Venables, A., Tan, G., & Miliszewska, I. (2013). Developing Cross-Cultural Awareness in IT: Reflections of Australian and Chinese Students. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Innovations in Practice*, 12, 91-99.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Alanah Mitchell** is an Associate Professor of Information Systems in the Department of Information Management and Business Analytics in the College of Business and Public Administration at Drake University. Her Ph.D. is in Information Technology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Professor Mitchell's research focuses on the design, implementation, and use of information and communication technologies for collaboration, specifically in global virtual teams. She has published in such journals as *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, *DATA BASE*, *International Journal of e-Collaboration*, and *American Journal of Business* as well as others.





**Rob Benyon** is a lecturer of Information Systems at Rhodes University. He graduated with a Master's Degree in Information Systems from Rhodes University. His teaching and research areas cover the undergraduate and post graduate curriculum and include IT Service Management, IT Governance, IT Management, Cooperate Communications, Information Security, and Project Management.



## **APPENDIX 1: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ASSIGNMENT**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this assignment is to:

- Improve your email and/or video conferencing skills.
- Allow you the opportunity to learn about another culture.
- Engage and improve your intercultural communication skills.

### **Requirements**

To work in international business today, we need to be familiar with technology options that allow us to communicate with people from another location/time zone/culture. For this assignment, you will be assigned a student partner from another country. You have the remainder of the semester to get to know your partner. Following this experience, you will submit a report summarizing what you learned about your partner as well as what you learned about international virtual collaboration.

The objective of this exercise is to learn about South African/U.S. culture, as well as the life of a student in South Africa/U.S. Your connection will begin via email. However, the easiest way to learn about your partner is to Skype them (which will allow you to see them and talk to them). Once you have established a connection, you are free to use any other collaboration technology you would like (Facebook, Twitter, What's App, SnapChat, FaceTime, etc.).

As soon as you get your partner's contact information, you should begin connecting. Do not wait until the last few days to gather your data. If you do not get much of a response from your student contacts, document your attempts (keep your emails as documentation) and let me know as soon as possible. (Note: grades will not be impacted due to lack of cooperation.)

Below are possible topics you might be interested to learn about. These questions are simply suggestions. Add any other questions that you can think of regarding each topic.

1. Learn something about your friends from a personal standpoint. For example: How old is the student? Where is he/she from? How many brothers or sisters does he/she have? What is the student's major? What are some of his/her leisure activities? What music does he/she like? What are other entertainment interests? Favorite Movies? Actors? What languages does he/she speak?
2. Learn something about higher education in South Africa/U.S. For example: How many years does it take to get an undergraduate degree? A Master's degree? What classes does he/she take for their degree? How are classes scheduled (for example TR at 9:30am or MWF at 11:00am)? How many hours does he/she spend in class a week? How much outside reading (textbook or other) or homework does he/she have a week?
3. Learn something about the job search process upon graduation. For example: What is the process for finding a job? What kind of job would he/she like to get? How much does he/she expect to make (converted to US dollars) in their first job?
4. Learn something about local cuisine. For example: What is his/her favorite dish? Typically, what does he/she eat for lunch? Dinner? What is his/her favorite beer or beverage to drink with dinner?
5. Learn something about living and transportation options. For example: What is his/her living arrangement while at university (Dorm, apartment, at home, etc.)? How many roommates do they have? Describe their apartment or living arrangements (number of bedrooms, bathrooms, etc.). How does he/she get from where they live to the University (e.g. tram, bus, walk, bicycle, etc.)? Does he/she have a car?

### **Deliverable**

The deliverable for this assignment will be a reflection paper. In your summary paper, you should include three sections:

1. First, you should talk about your student partner. Who were they? What did you learn about them? What surprised you about your partner? If you were unable to get in touch with your partner, you should use this reflection paper to document your attempts to reach out.
2. After, you have introduced your partner, evaluate your experience with this project. What went well? What didn't go well? Did you have any response issues? Communication challenges? Technology issues? What did this experience teach you about intercultural communication? What are your takeaways related to international virtual collaboration?
3. Finally, your paper should comment on what you liked and didn't like about this assignment. Would you recommend that I do this next time I teach the class? Do you have any recommendations to improve it? Any comments, suggestions, or ways to improve the experience would be helpful and appreciated.

### **Grading Criteria**

This assignment is worth 15% of your final grade. The deliverable will be graded on a series of 5 criteria, each of which are evaluated on a scale of 0 to 10. The sum of the scores will be the final grade.

- Completeness with respect to assignment guidelines (introduction, experience, reflection)
- Introduction of student partners; if communication challenges arose, documentation was included
- Discussion of experience successes and complications
- Included reflection of the assignment, likes and dislikes
- Organization, coherence, correctness, and clarity of writing





### **STATEMENT OF PEER REVIEW INTEGRITY**

All papers published in the Journal of Information Systems Education have undergone rigorous peer review. This includes an initial editor screening and double-blind refereeing by three or more expert referees.

Copyright ©2018 by the Information Systems & Computing Academic Professionals, Inc. (ISCAP). Permission to make digital or hard copies of all or part of this journal for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial use. All copies must bear this notice and full citation. Permission from the Editor is required to post to servers, redistribute to lists, or utilize in a for-profit or commercial use. Permission requests should be sent to the Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Information Systems Education, [editor@jise.org](mailto:editor@jise.org).

ISSN 2574-3872