Global Learning
Through the Co-Curriculum

An AIEA Thematic Forum
Virginia Commonwealth University • March 17-18, 2016

Final Report
Virginia Commonwealth University hosted an AIEA Thematic Forum exploring “Global Learning Through the Co-Curriculum” 17-18 March 2016 in Richmond. The Forum focused on the rich potential for global learning on campus beyond the classroom, including intentional and structured collaborations between international and domestic students. Co-curricular programming as a locus for internationalization has emerged as a highly effective means to achieve global learning outcomes. Over thirty participants represented twenty institutions and included campus leaders in Global Education, Students Affairs, and Academic Affairs, from large and small, public and private, traditionally residential and non-residential campuses. Participants discussed the advancement of global learning outcomes on campuses in both formal settings and in casual conversations, and presenters and participants shared proven and emerging strategies for globally engaging domestic and international students in classrooms, campuses, and communities, both face-to-face and virtually.
Goals and Outcomes

At the heart of campus internationalization efforts is preparing students, both domestic and international, for success in the globalized world present and future. The successful preparation of students in co-curricular global programming requires effective collaborations between multiple university units, including academic affairs, student affairs, and community engagement. This workshop brought together leaders in all of these fields to discuss effective ways to develop intercultural competencies among students, their faculty, and university communities. Session leaders focused on intentional, structured, and assessable global learning outcomes and strategies.

1 Participants considered how shared ideas and programs related to their particular students, faculty, and resources, and had ample time for informal and more in-depth conversations among participants and leaders.

2 Campus leaders charged with implementing and supporting internationalization and leaders in student and faculty development learned from each other and built relationships with participants facing similar challenges on their own campuses.

3 The emergence of intercultural competency as a central outcome of globalization was explored both in theory and in practice, and participants left with a full kit of tools for developing intercultural-skills-centered initiatives on their home campuses.

Feature speakers and facilitators came from a range of universities, representing academic affairs, student affairs, and internationalization administration. The sessions explored internationalization as it related to students in and outside of the classroom, and content was designed to cover topics and interests submitted by participants before the Forum began.
Sessions

The Forum began with a welcome from VCU President Michael Rao, who charged participants to think broadly and deeply about the important role innovative co-curricular programming plays in globally engaging campus communities. The sessions then asked participants to consider their institutions’ internationalization goals, resources, stakeholders, and challenges.

The first session was led by Heather Ward, Senior Program Specialist at the American Council on Education. She asked participants to consider carefully the importance of the co-curriculum as part of a comprehensive approach to internationalization, as well as opportunities to enhance international student integration and deliver transformative global learning through structured and inclusive co-curricular programs that align with curriculum.

The next session, led by Dawn Michele Whitehead, Senior Director for Global Learning and Curricular Change at the Association of American Colleges and Universities, explored the learning intersections of globalized curricular and co-curricular experiences where students have opportunities to practice intercultural competence skills through the examination of tools, learning outcomes, and assessment. She discussed the importance of identifying and collaborating with campus partners.

The last presenter-led session of the first day focused in detail on internationalizing the co-curriculum through student leadership, service, and community engagement. Led by Leigh Poole, Director of the International Center at Winthrop University, participants learned about and shared strategic co-curricular initiatives that had worked well at a variety of institutions and strategized how those initiatives could be adapted for their campuses.

The final session of the first day was a panel of domestic and international VCU students, sharing about their participation in global co-curricular programs and discussing with the audience their transformative experiences engaging across global, cultural, and personal borders. This session was followed by a reception with students and a fun evening at Richmond’s Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

The second day kicked off with a lively presentation and discussion led by Malaika Serrano, Associate Director of the Global Communities Living-Learning Program at the University of Maryland. The session focused on global living-learning communities and residence hall programming. Several program models were presented, and participants discussed implementation on their home campuses.

The Forum’s final session encouraged participants to collaboratively explore and reflect upon the development of globalizing co-curricular programs on their campuses. Participants articulated goals and desired outcomes, current and wished-for resources, and clear first steps to take upon returning to their institutions.
Forum participants were campus leaders charged with implementing and supporting internationalization and developing intercultural competencies in their communities. They left the Forum with a full kit of tools for developing intercultural-skills-centered initiatives on their home campuses, a new set of professional friends, and reporting that they had “a clearer understanding of meaningful co-curricular programs and their impact.”

The topic of global learning through the co-curriculum was a popular one, generating significant interest among higher education administrators and faculty in a variety of fields. Forum leaders and participants will be continuing the conversations begun at the Forum through a series of presentation round tables, workshops, and publications. A “working reunion” of participants is planned for the 2017 AIEA conference, as is a proposed workshop on co-curricular global learning, fitting nicely in with the conference theme of “Internationalization through Difference: Transcending Boundaries.” Virginia Commonwealth University is grateful to the AIEA for sponsoring the Forum, to session leaders for so ably sharing their knowledge, and to participants for delving into the subject matter with such enthusiasm and commitment.
JILL BLONDIN, Virginia Commonwealth University
Jill Blondin is the Director of VCU Globe, a global education living-learning program at Virginia Commonwealth University. In 2014, VCU Globe was designated as a Peace Corps Prep Program, and, in 2015, the program received the NAFSA Senator Paul Simon Spotlight Award for campus internationalization. Previously, Dr. Blondin helped to develop and launch Global Awareness through Education (GATE), a globally-focused living-learning program with a study abroad component at the University of Texas at Tyler. She holds a doctorate in art history from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

McKENNA BROWN, Virginia Commonwealth University
McKenna Brown is the Senior International Office at Virginia Commonwealth University. He is Professor of Foreign Languages at VCU, teaching Spanish language courses and courses on Latinos in the U.S. and indigenous literature and movements. He holds a doctorate in Latin American Studies from Tulane University.

AMBER BENNETT HILL, Virginia Commonwealth University
Amber Bennett Hill is the Director of International Student and Scholar Programs and the English Language Program at Virginia Commonwealth University, providing academic, cultural, and immigration advising and English language instruction and support to international students and scholars. She taught Anthropology and conducted archaeological research on historic sites in Virginia. She holds a doctorate in American Civilization from the University of Pennsylvania.

LEIGH POOLE, Winthrop University
Leigh Poole is Director of the International Center and an Assistant Professor at Winthrop University. Prior to joining Winthrop, she served as the Director of International Student Life at the University of Georgia. She holds a doctorate in Counseling and Student Personnel Services from the University of Georgia.
Malaika Marable Serrano, University of Maryland

Malaika Marable Serrano is the Associate Director for Global Communities at the University of Maryland. She is responsible for day-to-day operations, teaches several courses, and leads a service-learning study abroad program to the Dominican Republic. Previously, Ms. Serrano worked as an Associate Director at NAFSA, served as Study Abroad Coordinator at the University of Tennessee, and taught English in Venezuela. She received her M.A. in College Student Personnel from the University of Maryland.

Heather Ward, American Council on Education

Heather Ward is Senior Program Specialist at the American Council on Education. She was previously Associate Director for Internationalization and Outreach at George Mason University and Director of International Programs at Mary Baldwin College. She holds a Master of International Affairs degree from Columbia University.

Dawn Michele Whitehead

Association of American Colleges and Universities

Dawn Michele Whitehead is Senior Director for Global Learning and Curricular Change at the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Prior to joining AAC&U, she served as the Director of Curriculum Internationalization at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, was the faculty director for international service learning programs, and taught for the Global and International Studies Program. She holds a doctorate in Education Policy Studies with a concentration in African Studies from Indiana University Bloomington.