COIL Reflection Spring 2021, OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS MGT ODS 333

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This COIL project is a collaborative effort between Salem State University (USA) and Xi'an University of Posts and Communications (China). From the Salem State University side, ODS 333 is the course that hosted the COIL component. This course was offered in an asynchronous online format with 63 students enrolled in three sections in spring 2021. The majority of students were juniors and seniors. The course from Xi'an University of Posts and Communications that participated in this project was Introduction to Management and Business Etiquette and Negotiation, out of which there were 65 students.

The start and end of semesters in the U.S. and China are different. There were only eight overlapping weeks in the spring semester of 2021. The COIL project started from the week of March 22 in 2021. The project length is 5 weeks. Students from both universities were randomly paired in 20 teams for collaboration. There were approximately three students from Salem State University and three students from Xi'an University of Posts and Communications in each team. The contact information (name and email address) of each team member was shared within the team. Students were given the flexibility to choose how to communicate with each other through phone calls, emails, social media, video conferences, shared documents, and so on.

During the five-week period, students were given one assignment each week. Canvas is the Learning Management System (LMS) used at Salem State University. Assignments are posted on Canvas at the beginning of each week. Students from Salem State University submit their work through Canvas. Their COIL project is 20% of the total grade in ODS 333. Separate submission and

evaluation (with different rubrics) were managed at Xi'an University of Posts and Communications. The details of all five assignments are provided in the Appendix.

The purpose of the first two weeks' assignments was to give students an opportunity to introduce themselves to each other in the team. This process was challenging because most students had never seen each other (in person or virtually), including students at Salem State University. Meeting with students who do not share the same native language or culture background was new to many U.S. students. Meeting with someone remotely completely via traditional phone calls or texts, online technology, and social media is also a new experience to many students. The time difference (12 hours) and banned technology (for example, Google and Facebook in China) added layers of challenges. The first week was given to students to get to know their team members from their own universities. The second week was designed for 20 teams to connect to all their team members from both Salem State University and Xi'an University of Posts and Communications.

The third and fourth weeks were the actual time students collaborate on course related assignments. The Week 3 assignment was designed to emphasize ODS 333 course content – operations strategies and sustainability as well as intercultural experience and diversity. Students had a chance to learn more about operations strategies and sustainability from another country. Week 4 assignment was carefully designed to link course content with current events (COVID-19 pandemic). During the COVID-19 pandemic, food logistics (food delivery) had rapid growth both in the U.S. and China. Students were given the opportunity in Week 4 assignment to compare and contrast their operations, packaging, warehousing, competitive advantages, and so on. This provided students a rare chance to research because food delivery during the pandemic was still very new and under development.

The last week of the COIL project was to summarize their learnings in a report and to fill out an anonymous survey. Students' comments and suggestions are discussed with more details in the next two sections.

In their submitted reports, students rated the COIL project very highly. For example, they described COIL as "eye opening", "extremely unique", "amazing learning opportunity", "my favorite part of the semester", "easily the coolest most interesting experience that I had in school", "interesting and diverse way of learning…a lot of great educational purposes", "wasn't like anything that I have done before with a group", "an interesting experience and definitely one of the most unique school assignments I've had to do".

A lot of students enjoyed the COIL experience and hoped to have COIL again in the future. Selected comments are shown below.

- It is not only great for educational purposes, but also just for life experiences that I probably would never have been able to experience if I was not enrolled in this course.

- I am especially grateful that the school has such a project that allows students from other universities to work on the same project.

- (COIL is) a very exciting project for Salem State to incorporate into our courses. … It is without a doubt a valuable experience and I am thankful I have had the opportunity.

- It also adds in a needed element of real, practical life instead of just classroom life into our education experience at Salem State. … I hope I have another COIL project before I graduate!

- I look forward to seeing more group assignments like this in my future studies at Salem State.

- I do hope that eventually in my fall or spring semester I come across something like this because of how engaging it is.

- I would hope that more courses offer this same kind of COIL assignment to expose students to more environments outside of Salem State University.

Based on students' feedback, the COIL project was a success and has great potential to be implemented again in the future. Despite the positive outcomes from the first trial of COIL, during the project preparation and implementation period, several challenges were discovered. Typically, a Zoom meeting can be scheduled for all students from both universities to meet for the first time. ODS 333 was taught asynchronously online so there were no Zoom classes in this course. Due to the fact that over 120 students participated in this project, Zoom meetings do not seem manageable to schedule or hold. It is also noted that the time difference between the U.S. and China is 12 hours. Scheduling a Zoom meeting during an agreeable time period is not practical.

Second, Salem State University uses Canvas as the LMS, but Xi'an University of Posts and Communications does not. Enrolling students (from China) in the Canvas course of ODS 333 is challenging because of the license agreement at Salem State University. Additionally, the duration of the COIL project is five weeks and students from China were not taking the whole course of ODS 333. As a result, there is no common LMS used in this project.

Third, instead of requiring students to use certain communication tools, students were given the flexibility to choose what tools they would like to use. This is partially because certain websites or tools are prohibited in China, such as Google, Facebook, and so on. The lack of some commonly used websites or tools inspired students to be creative. For example, students used WeChat, one of the most popular social media in China to communicate.

Fourth, because there is no common LMS used in this project, assignment submission was managed separately at Salem State University and Xi'an University of Posts and Communications. In

this COIL project, students take different courses: ODS 333, Introduction to Management, and Business Etiquette and Negotiation. Each course has its own goals and objectives so adopting the same rubric was not necessary or realistic. Therefore, evaluation was managed separately at both universities.

Fifth, during the last week of the project, one task for students to complete was an IRB approved anonymous survey. The application of IRB only includes the U.S. students as the objects. The faculty at Xi'an University of Posts and Communications developed a separate survey for students in China.

Additionally, other challenges identified but not unique to this COIL project include language barriers for students whose first language is not English, culture differences, and personality differences.