

AASCU's Global Challenges: Promise and Peril in the 21st Century Course

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Abstract

In 2006, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) launched its Global Engagement Initiative and began developing a set of curricular tools for faculty to use in educating globally competent citizens. A national blended-model course was developed in 2011 and has now been delivered to more than 1,200 students on 15 campuses across the country and abroad. The blended-model course is the first in what AASCU hopes will be a series of National Blended Course Consortium (NBCC) courses. In this article, the authors share the AASCU NBCC model for the *Global Challenges* curriculum and offer case studies on how that curriculum has been successfully delivered on two campuses.

Keywords: global engagement, AASCU, global citizenship, first year, general-education

In this current climate of increased criticism of the traditional ivory tower, faculty have been shifting from what is perceived by some as an outdated “sage on the stage” model to a more active and engaged approach to teaching. Many have spearheaded efforts to meet an increasing needs for interdisciplinary global learning that capitalizes on technology to foster collaborative learning (Alavi, 1994; Bruffee, 1999; Resta & Laferrière, 2007), engender global citizenship (Cogan, 2000; Olds, 2012; Shattle, 2009), and enhance global empathy (Bachen, Hernández-Ramos, & Raphael, 2012). Yet confounding these efforts is the pressure on tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty to balance demands on their time, much of which is taken up by service obligations (Flaherty, 2014). The American Association of State Colleges and Universities’ (AASCU’s) National Blended Course Consortium (NBCC) offers a course model for *Global Challenges: Promise and Peril in the 21st Century* that capitalizes on the use of technology in higher education, adopts an interdisciplinary approach to addressing key global challenges, emphasizes student learning outcomes such as critical thinking and collaboration, and provides up-to-date content drawing from the expertise of a team of AASCU Global Engagement Scholars responsible for developing and maintaining the course.¹ AASCU’s pre-packaged “adopt and adapt” course provides unique content and varied assessment tools to meet a set of robust outcomes while fostering student engagement. Designed to “educate and encourage the development of globally competent citizens and leaders,” the course provides a curriculum available across multiple learning management systems (LMSs) and suitable for a range of levels, from first-year to advanced capstone courses.²

In this paper, two of the Global Engagement Scholars offer distinct case studies of campuses utilizing the first AASCU NBCC course, *Global Challenges: Promise and Peril in the 21st Century*. The first case is a campus that has adopted the AASCU curriculum for a capstone course that satisfies its upper division

¹ The 10 current AASCU institutional participants that comprise the Global Scholars group are California State University-Fresno, Dalton State College (GA), Fort Hays State University (KS), Fort Lewis College (CO), Georgia College and State University, Kennesaw State University (GA), Stockton University (NJ), Southeast Missouri State University, University of Minnesota-Duluth, and Western Kentucky University. Both campuses presented as cases in this paper are participants in the AASCU Global Engagement Initiative, and each of the authors serves as an AASCU Global Engagement Scholar.

² The website for the initiative and current offerings is located at: <http://www.AASCUGlobalChallenges.org/>.

general education requirement and is required as part of the Kansas Academy of Math and Science (KAMS) curriculum. Multiple sections in both online and traditional formats are offered, and individual faculty teaching sections of this course have flexibility in decision-making regarding how much or how little of the pre-packaged materials to use. The AASCU *Global Challenges* curriculum allows faculty at this campus to satisfy the goals of its general education requirement: providing students an opportunity to delve deeper into one or more interdisciplinary problems in order to synthesize content knowledge and skills acquired from prior coursework.

The second case is a campus utilizing the curriculum for a new dynamic online “summer bridge” program to address what has been identified as “summer melt” —drops in college enrollment that occur in the summer between high school graduation and fall classes, often by low-income and underrepresented students (Castleman & Paige, 2013, p.78). This summer bridge program, run by a partnership of the campus E-Learning team and four faculty, consists of providing a no-cost, online, four-credit course in July and August for approximately 125 incoming students. The partners selected AASCU’s *Global Challenges* curriculum for this program to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the campus and learning outcomes that align with recently adopted essential learning outcomes (ELOs), and to provide opportunities for students to forge peer-to-peer and student-faculty connections in the critical stage of their first year.

This article will be of interest to faculty, administrators, and staff involved in campus-wide initiatives to introduce or improve efforts to infuse global learning, emphasize interdisciplinary approaches to pressing global challenges, and foster learning outcomes that align with the AASCU Global Engagement initiative. First, we present the background, learning outcomes, and components of the AASCU *Global Challenges* curriculum. Each case study then follows. Students from both campuses participated in a pre/post-survey in 2013-2014, with select disaggregated results cited in this paper (Mills & Sun, 2014). The conclusion highlights future directions for the AASCU course and these two campuses as each seeks to improve and expand their programs.

Background of AASCU *Global Challenges* Curriculum

AASCU’s Global Engagement Initiative began in 2005 (Falk, Domagal-Goldman, Hoerrner, 2014) and later became the platform through which AASCU

introduced its first National Blended Course Consortium (NBCC) course, *Global Challenges: Promise and Peril in the 21st Century*. In 2010, George Mehaffy, Vice President for Academic Leadership and Change at AASCU, addressed three challenges facing higher education in the 21st century—“declining funding, rising expectations and rapidly developing technology” (Mehaffy, 2010, p. 4). The use of technology had already been recognized as an effective tool for fostering collaborative learning (Alavi, 1994; Bruffee, 1999; Resta & Laferrière, 2007). In response to these three forces, Mehaffy offered his AASCU Red Balloon Project to “design new models, processes, and programs that respond to the three core challenges”:

Lower Costs:

- Maximize cost-effectiveness (either hold costs constant while increasing the number of students involved, or reduce costs).
- Make programs scalable (increase the number of students served while reducing per-student costs).

Increase Participation:

- Create more effective student engagement. Engagement is the key to great learning outcomes.
- Produce greater learning outcomes documented by a rich array of instruments and assessment strategies.

Respond to the Challenge of Technology:

- Focus on the development of 21st-century skills to create 21st-century learning and leadership outcomes.
- Rethink teaching, learning, and faculty roles. (Mehaffy, 2010, p. 18).³

The following spring (in 2011), Mehaffy charged a team of teaching faculty from the AASCU Global Engagement Scholars group to build the *Global*

³ The name “Red Balloon” was inspired by the 2009 Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) competition to identify the location of ten 8-foot red weather balloons released at random locations around the country on a single day. Relying on a network of social media and other technologies, MIT’s winning team took less than nine hours to find the balloons. The lesson Mehaffy drew from the DARPA competition was that public universities could learn from this “example of the development of a new kind of adaptive, networked knowledge” (Mehaffy, 2010, p. 10).

Challenges: Promise and Peril in the 21st Century course. The course was piloted in the spring of 2012 and has undergone a number of critical changes since; AASCU's project, too, has undergone changes. The National Blended Course Consortium (NBCC) concept under which the Global Challenges course is now offered involves the following elements:

- A National Course model taught at many campuses.
- Created collaboratively by a team of teaching faculty.
- Supported by appropriate public/private partners.
- Focused on citizenship development.
- Blended design (part face-to-face, part online).
- Available at any level, but targeted to first year.
- Using materials available in any learning management system (LMS).
- Designed such that local faculty can adapt, with particular emphasis on adding local elements and considerations.

The NBCC project now includes a second course, "Stewardship of Public Lands," which is in the development phase. In addition, the NBCC recently announced a third course focusing on economic opportunity and inequality; development of this course began in the summer of 2014.

The following section describes the learning outcomes of the AASCU *Global Challenges* course, connecting this initiative to the broader movement centering on global learning. Then, we provide details about the content of the AASCU course, noting the types of sources utilized for online materials and the variety of assessment tools included for faculty use.

Learning Objectives of the AASCU *Global Challenges* Course

The overarching goal of the AASCU Global Engagement initiative and the *Global Challenges* course is to "educate and encourage the development of globally competent citizens and leaders" (AASCU, 2015) "who possesses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to understand the world and work effectively to improve it" (Falk & Hamlin, 2014, p. 1). The curriculum is designed to support and complement broader efforts to address a recognized need to define and promote global awareness or global learning. Defined by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), global learning comprises six dimensions: global self-awareness, perspective-taking, cultural diversity, personal and social responsibility, understanding global systems, and applying knowledge

to contemporary global contexts (Anderson & Blair, 2013). Previous work on global citizenship (Cogan, 2000; Olds, 2012; Shattle, 2009) has served as a catalyst for organizations such as AAC&U and AASCU to emphasize this as an important component of higher education.

Thus, the course includes a set of specific learning objectives aimed at equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become more globally competent citizens. These learning outcomes are also consistent with the VALUE rubric, which was developed by a sub-committee of AAC&U's Global Learning and Social Responsibility initiative. Reflecting work across hundreds of campuses, the AAC&U rubric "offers a common language and some foundational stepping stones to help campus practitioners ... address the challenges related to defining, mapping, implementing, and assessing global learning outcomes" (Anderson & Blair, 2013). The AASCU Global Scholars worked over time to develop the learning objectives, which reflect stages in Bloom's Taxonomy, ranging from knowledge and comprehension to synthesis and evaluation (Falk, Domagal-Goldman, Hoerrner, 2014). These learning objectives are:

Knowledge and Skills. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify issues and impacts for key global challenges, drawing from various disciplines.
2. Explain the relationships between and among global challenges.
3. Employ credible resources in learning about key global challenges (information literacy).
4. Analyze political, economic, social, and/or environmental impacts of key global challenges.
5. Evaluate various approaches and/or solutions to key global challenges.
6. Create a solution towards a more preferable future for issues related to one or more key global challenges.

Attitudes. Upon completion of the course, students will have:

1. Developed a sense of global empathy (i.e., an awareness of how these trends are affecting and being affected by different groups of people).
2. Recognized the importance of key global challenges.
3. Acquired an intellectual curiosity about key global challenges.
4. Developed an interest in taking action and being engaged locally or globally.

Each lesson slightly modifies these learning objectives to include the specific content of that lesson. For example, after completing the “Population” lesson, students—in fulfillment of the “Knowledge and Skills” objectives—should be able to:

1. Identify issues, trends, and impacts related to population growth, aging, migration, and urbanization, drawing from various disciplines.
2. Explain the relationships between population and other global challenges.
3. Employ credible resources and evaluate the integrity of available information, data, and research about population growth, aging, migration, and urbanization (information literacy).
4. Analyze political, economic, social, and/or environmental impacts of population growth, aging, migration, and urbanization challenges.
5. Evaluate approaches and/or solutions to population growth, aging, migration, and urbanization challenges.

AASCU Global Challenges Course Content

The NBCC model for AASCU's *Global Challenges* course provides flexibility to faculty to deliver an interdisciplinary, globally focused course across different levels and formats while adhering to a set of learning outcomes recognized as critical for higher education. Furthermore, the course can serve as a platform for extracurricular and other interdisciplinary programmatic efforts focused on global challenges and can become a part of a robust institution-wide effort to "internationalize" a curriculum or campus culture. The course is aimed at first-year students, but many campuses, including some of the scholar campuses, have preferred to use it with upper division students. As such, the AASCU *Global Challenges* curriculum has previously been used in first-year-experience (FYE) courses, honors courses, general education courses, and discipline-specific courses. Finally, the curriculum lends itself to innovative pedagogical techniques, such as problem-based and team-based learning, with simple adaptations by instructors.

The pre-packaged Global Challenges course is presented in three parts with a total of 10 lessons. AASCU Global Scholars update the entire curriculum annually, providing access to up-to-date content across each lesson. Each lesson's "learning activities" include reading lesson-specific content, watching embedded videos, and visiting specific sections of linked websites and a variety of open educational resources. In Part 1, students are introduced to the series of global challenges adopted from the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS's) Seven Revolutions framework, aimed at studying key trends shaping the world and forecasting what the world may look like in the next 20 years (CSIS, n.d.).⁴ Consistent with the AASCU NBCC external partnership model, the Global Engagement scholars collaborated with CSIS to build a curriculum around this framework. Slightly adapting that framework, the course covers the following seven global challenges: population, resources, technology, information, economics, conflict, and governance.

Part 1 also introduces students to elements of critical thinking and the futurist perspectives. Students are asked to "think about thinking" by exploring the online Foundation for Critical Thinking's Universal Intellectual Standards

⁴ CSIS is a leading non-partisan think tank that provides strategic insights into a wide range of public policy arenas such as defense and security, economic development, energy and climate change, global health, human rights, and technology.

(Foundation for Critical Thinking, n.d.). The futurist perspective is then provided as a framework for students to consider possible, probable, and preferable futures for these global challenges in subsequent lessons. Both the critical thinking and futurist perspective frameworks are reinforced throughout the course.

Part 2 of the course includes a separate lesson for each of the seven global challenges. Students are introduced to each global challenge with readings from the AASCU student guide (Hill, Hoerrner, Shinholster, & Zappile, 2013), the National Intelligence Council's *Global Trends 2030 Report* (NIC, 2015), and online resources such as reports and modules from academic (e.g., the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs human rights module [<http://www.unlhumanrights.org>]) and non-government sources (e.g., the Council on Foreign Relations' Academic Initiative [<http://www.cfr.org/educators/>]). Dynamic presentations of supporting evidence and data, maps, and other visual tools accompany up-to-date stories from multiple media outlets and videos from leading experts in respective fields—all tackling these global challenges from a variety of perspectives. Original sections authored by AASCU Global Engagement Scholars provide context for this material, drawing from the futurist perspective, critical thinking standards, and their own expertise. Additional resources, such as links to research and organizations, and a short list of “questions to consider,” are included in each lesson and provide faculty the opportunity to use the curriculum as a building block for more in-depth research projects, essay or paper topics, in-class presentations, and other applications such as service-learning.

In Part 3, students think about what it means to be a *global citizen* as they integrate materials learned throughout the semester to make connections between and among the challenges. Although the course is globally focused, the emphasis on citizenship includes local contributions to these global challenges, highlighting the fact that local communities impact and are impacted by these challenges and that local economic and political action can help solve them. Specifically, lesson nine includes the following components of global citizenship: human rights, social justice, and the lives of women. Students in this lesson engage with materials and complete assignments covering each of these topics, designed for them to synthesize content from previous lessons along these three dimensions. Lesson 10 integrates the previous nine lessons and demonstrates the connections

across each global challenge, including a section on the role of identity and culture in experiencing and developing solutions for each challenge.

There are a variety of pre-packaged course assessment tools that can be adapted to suit different levels. Already embedded in the curriculum are assignments with pre-loaded grading rubrics. Within each of the 10 lessons, students must complete three assignments. One is a course-wide “In the News” blog post in which students select and analyze a recent news article related to the challenge presented in that lesson, using the provided set of questions as a guide. In this activity, students utilize the pre-packaged *New York Times* digital subscription that is included with the course subscription fee. In the second assignment, students also participate in a Critical Thinking Discussion Board in which they are asked a series of questions pertaining to that challenge. This also requires them to respond to each other’s comments, engaging with one another to discuss salient issues such as ethical considerations of technology advancements in genetics. Finally, in the third assignment, students research and write a Global Villager blog post about each global challenge from the perspective of a randomly assigned Global Villager whom they follow throughout the semester. The Global Villager spreadsheet of roles to assign students are pre-packaged with the course, providing faculty a template that includes age, gender, country of origin, and geographical coordinates that vary from rural to urban settings. Students can also interact with each other through this assignment and are asked explicitly to do so in lessons 9 and 10, though faculty can require such interaction for earlier lessons as well.

The pre-packaged assignments are intentionally designed to support specific course outcomes identified in the previous section. For example, the “In the News” and Global Villager assignments support information literacy, while the Global Villager assignment also supports numerous attitudinal outcomes such as global empathy. Similarly, the Critical Thinking Discussions are designed to advance critical thinking skills through its set of guided questions that rely on the Critical Thinking standards presented in lesson 1. Each lesson also has an accompanying online objective quiz that is intended for students to take up to five times to achieve their best score, encouraging them to revisit and master course

content.⁵ There is also a midterm exam after lesson 5 and a final exam after lesson 10 comprising essay questions which students are allotted several hours to complete in one sitting.

The pre-packaged course is available in Blackboard 9.1 or higher, Moodle Rooms 2.5 or higher, Desire2Learn 10 or higher, or Common Cartridge 1.0 and 1.1. As these learning management systems (LMSs) share a large percentage of the higher education market, *Global Challenges* is readily available for delivery in the platform used on most U.S. college campuses. Availability in the local LMS facilitates the “adopt and adapt” course design. While the course is designed turnkey, each element of the model course is fully customizable. Faculty can edit any and all aspects—for instance, changing learning objectives, uploading their own syllabus, and/or adding or deleting specific reading material, videos, or even entire lessons. The quiz and exam pools, too, are fully editable. Indeed, faculty are encouraged to customize the learning experience to include local elements appropriate for their campus, course, and students.

Case Studies

The purpose of the two case studies discussed in this article is to identify how faculty, administrators, and staff can incorporate the AASCU *Global Challenges* curriculum in a campus-wide program designed to achieve a variety of campus-specified goals that are supported and complemented by the learning outcomes emphasized in the course. The cases provide distinct models for incorporating the AASCU *Global Challenges* curriculum at the upper division undergraduate level and incoming first-year level. The first case is Fort Hays State University (FHSU), which provides individual sections of an upper division general education course in a variety of models from an on-campus course—a “flipped” classroom where students complete work from the pre-packaged course online to use for in-class activities or discussions—and a strictly online model. One of the sections highlighted in this case study includes a component of service-learning, extending the classroom experience to engage with the community and demonstrating how the AASCU curriculum can be used as a bridge to connect course content to additional pedagogical goals emphasized in their general education program. The second case is Stockton University, which

⁵ Mastery of content was established as a key learning outcome of the pre-packaged course based on student and faculty feedback from previous experiences with the course. Complete quiz pools are included in the pre-packaged course.

introduced a six-week online summer bridge program in 2014 to support a variety of goals, including fostering peer-to-peer connections. The AASCU curriculum in this case is used as a vehicle to introduce first-year students to an interdisciplinary problem-based curriculum and foster learning outcomes such as critical thinking while also providing students with a “bridge” between high school and their first fall semester. Both of these cases reflect each campus’ commitment to global awareness, or what is often referred to as the process of “internationalizing” the campus, with support from administrators to institutionalize their respective course offerings beyond the scope of individual faculty members.

Fort Hays State University (Kansas)

At Fort Hays State University, the *Global Challenges* curriculum is offered in the General Education program. The FHSU General Education Program notes that “a liberally educated person is”:

A knowledgeable person who engages in rational inquiry and critical thinking; possesses basic quantitative skills; is an articulate communicator; and is acquainted with the major achievements, concepts, and methods of the humanities and the sciences.

A civic person who is responsive; is responsible; has the desire and the courage to act; and is intellectually prepared to take an effective role in community life.

A reflective person who is sensitive and perceptive; exercises good judgment; is curious about the world; and has a lifelong commitment to continued learning and full development of potentials.

A holistic person who understands and appreciates his or her relationship to the wider society, culture, and environment; is tolerant and values diversity. (FHSU, n.d.-a)

The AASCU *Global Challenges* curriculum, with its emphasis on educating globally competent citizens, fits well as a course tailored to produce students with these qualities. FHSU’s upper division integrative course requirements add the following expectations:

[They] should impart society’s cultural heritage (conserving, continuing and providing critical access to enduring human achievements) and cultivate in the students the potential and desire for lifelong intellectual, personal and

moral growth Not only should liberal arts courses provide a shared fund of knowledge, ideas and experiences regarding the development of civilization, they should also teach students the modes of inquiry (i.e., ways of thinking) intrinsic to the disciplines in the humanities, the social and behavioral sciences and the mathematical and natural sciences, making possible an integrated view of the human condition and a grasp of the diversity of our culture. Above all, these courses should encourage and develop in the students the qualities of the liberally educated person--one who is knowledgeable, civic, reflective and holistic. (FHSU, n.d.-a)

Further, the upper division integrative courses must:

be designed to facilitate the affiliation of fields of knowledge, i.e., to enable students to make connections among subjects and disciplines they have previously studied, thereby integrating, synthesizing, and consolidating bodies of knowledge and developing a holistic way of thinking...

1. Courses should develop the students' understanding of the connections among conceptual frameworks and modes of inquiry (i.e., ways of thinking) intrinsic to the liberal disciplines.
2. Courses should develop the students' understanding of the value of interdisciplinary studies in integrating, synthesizing, and consolidating particular bodies of knowledge.
3. Courses should promote an understanding of the interrelationships among (a) the bonding and unifying aspects of our cultural heritage, (b) the need to recognize and cherish cultural diversity, and (c) the need to address society's on-going concerns about the meaning and quality of modern life.
4. Courses should develop the students' understanding of the value of holistic thinking making informed and well-reasoned judgments and in applying ethical values in their lives.
5. Courses should develop the students' ability to read carefully, think critically, discuss meaningfully, argue persuasively, and write effectively.
6. Courses should draw from all three the major divisions of the liberal arts, but not be required to cover all the material from the

three major divisions, only draw from them knowledge and modes of thinking pertinent to the focus of the course. (FHSU, n.d.-a)

The AASCU *Global Challenges* course learning objectives are readily applicable to the articulated goals of the FHSU General Education upper division integrative course.

Within the upper division integrative section of the General Education program, each student must choose one three-credit-hour course, and *IDS 407: Global Challenges* is one of 13 courses from which a student may choose. The following is the IDS 407 course description:

The purpose of this course is to educate and encourage the development of globally competent citizens and leaders. The course is designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be engaged, responsible and effective members of a globally interdependent society. Most importantly, students will be asked to think deeply about their world (including its future, current issues, its impact on their local area, and our personal responsibility as global citizens). (FHSU, n.d.-b)

The FHSU course incorporates the AASCU *Global Challenges* learning objectives, listing those objectives in the course syllabus along with the course description from the university catalog. The FHSU course is offered in both on-campus and fully online formats and is taught by faculty from a variety of disciplines. Recent instructors have included faculty from Political Science, Leadership Studies, Justice Studies and Biology. Furthermore, assigned instructors frequently make use of the expertise of colleagues from additional disciplines by inviting them as guest speakers in the on-campus class or by including them in the virtual arena through pre-recorded video presentations.

The *Global Challenges* course is a required course in the Kansas Academy of Math and Science (KAMS) curriculum; thus the on-campus sections of the course tend to include a high percentage of KAMS students. Established by the Kansas Legislature in 2006 and housed at FHSU, the KAMS program offers high-achieving high school students the opportunity to complete their junior and senior years of high school concurrently with the freshman and sophomore years of college while living in residence on the FHSU campus. The on-campus sections of the *Global Challenges* course also tend to attract a significant number of international exchange students. As an example, the fall 2013 on-campus section

had 25 students, of which seven were KAMS students, seven were international exchange students from China, and three were international exchange students from Turkey. The online sections of the course have included student enrollments from around the United States and from some international locations.

All on-campus sections and some of the online sections emphasize service-learning as an additional required component. To provide ample time for service-learning activities, these sections do not utilize all of the built-in components of the AASCU blended-model course. For example, in the spring 2014 on-campus section, the course did not include the "In the News" assignment in order to create additional time for service-learning; however, in the fall 2014 online section, taught by the same instructor, students were not assigned a service-learning assignment and, instead, made use of all of the pre-packaged materials.

FHSU offers individual faculty who teach sections of the course flexibility in decision-making regarding how much or how little of the pre-packaged materials to use in their section. Faculty also determine whether to use the pre-packaged materials in their original online design or to modify them for in-class use. Differing approaches to the Global Village assignment offer an excellent example. In the fall 2013 on-campus section, the faculty member used the Global Village activity and required students to post their blogs online but did not require any online interaction among students. Rather, at the end of the semester, each student presented a summary of his or her blog in an informal presentation to the entire class. In the spring 2014 on-campus section, the faculty member assigned the online Global Village blog and used class time every few weeks for a discussion about the Global Villagers created by each student, engaging them in conversation about what they were learning. In contrast, the fall 2014 on-campus section did not use the Global Village assignment at all, allowing for more time for service-learning elements.

While online sections of the course make full use of the Critical Thinking Discussion Question assignments, the on-campus sections tend to use the same assignments as in-class discussion prompts rather than online posts. A hybrid option has also been employed: In the fall 2013 semester, the on-campus instructor utilized online posts for three of the Discussion Forums, but the remaining Discussion Forums were used either as in-class discussion prompts or essay questions on the midterm or final exam. Similarly, FHSU faculty have taken varied approaches to the use of exams and quizzes. Some faculty have used the

online lesson quizzes but have required in-class midterm and final exams. Others have not made use of the online quizzes at all but instead have conducted all quizzes and exams in class, making use of some but not all of the pre-packaged quiz and exam questions in those in-class quiz/exam activities. Although in general the online sections have made the greatest use of the pre-packaged content, even in that environment, course delivery has differed by faculty member and semester. For instance, some faculty have included service-learning activities even in online sections. A final element of discretion in the use of the course pertains to the local and global aspects of the material. All FHSU faculty have chosen to add local issues to the course, but the choice as to what local issues to include and how to include them has been left strictly up to the individual instructor and has varied from semester to semester, encompassing contemporary topics and events.

Although the AASCU *Global Challenges* blended-course design does make it possible to reduce face-to-face classroom time, faculty teaching the on-campus sections of the course at FHSU have not used the course to do that. The FHSU on-campus sections still meet three hours a week during the entire 16-week semester. They have, however, used the blended learning features to facilitate a “flipped classroom.” Even in sections where some of the online material has been used during face-to-face class sessions, there is still ample material used in the online format to make possible expanded use of class discussion, to provide time for class service projects, and to facilitate other interactive activities that are generally not possible in lecture-intensive classes.

Stockton University (New Jersey)

At Stockton University, the AASCU *Global Challenges* curriculum is offered as *GSS1236: Go Global!* in the School of General Studies (GENS), the interdisciplinary school through which all faculty offer courses and all students complete a portion of their curriculum.⁶ *Go Global!* was originally developed as a first-year General Social Sciences (GSS) course in GENS and then transformed to an online summer course available to admitted first-year students prior to their first fall semester. In the summer of 2014, Stockton enrolled over 100 admitted first-year students in five sections of *Go Global!*, a six-week summer session

⁶ Stockton also worked with Rowan University as it initiated a similar summer program in 2014.

taught by faculty from Political Science and Education. Additional programming opportunities were offered to participants in the fall semester as well.

Stockton's E-Learning Office recruited individual faculty to offer sections of the pre-packaged online course as part of a three-pronged strategy to:

- Increase retention of admitted students by providing them the opportunity to take a tuition-free course for credit.
- Introduce first-year students to Stockton's "essential learning outcomes" (ELOs) that are reflected in the pre-packaged *Global Challenges* course.
- Emphasize the strong commitment to an interdisciplinary approach that is fundamental to Stockton's core mission.

For these and other reasons, administrators decided to make the course tuition-free. The E-Learning office collaborated with other campus offices, including Admissions, to manage student enrollment and ensure that students were able to successfully register and access the online course through the LMS. This required coordination across campus offices because the incoming students were admitted students at the time and had not yet officially enrolled. Students were invited to register for the course in waves based on eligibility criteria established by administrators. This process was designed to ensure student success in the course. The following is an excerpt from the student invitation letter:

Congratulations on your admission to Richard Stockton College! As a benefit of [insert scholarship here] you have been selected to participate in a program this summer where you can take a six week, online summer course: GSS XXXX: Go Global, **at no cost to you**. By completing this course, you will get a jump start on completing your degree program at Stockton and will earn four (4) credits toward your degree that can be applied to the General Social Science (GSS) requirement in general studies (S. Davenport, personal communication, August 1, 2014).

Another purpose of Stockton's pre-first-year campus model was to underscore the emphasis on a set of 10 recently adopted ELOs for incoming students (Stockton University, 2015). The following identifies key Stockton ELOs advanced by specific components of pre-packaged materials utilized in Stockton's *Go Global!* course:

- Global Awareness: Introduction; lesson-specific content (all lessons); Global Village Blog Activity (all lessons); Global Citizenship emphasis (lesson 9).
- Critical Thinking: Lesson-specific content (lesson 1); Critical Thinking Discussion Questions (all lessons); subjective Midterm and Final Exam essay questions.
- Information Literacy and Research Skills: In the News Activity (all lessons); select lesson-specific content (lesson on 'Information').
- Communication Skills: Responses and interactions in Critical Thinking Discussion Questions (all lessons); Final Global Village Blog Activity (lesson 9 and 10).
- Ethical Reasoning: Select Critical Thinking Discussion Questions (e.g. lesson on 'Technology').
- Quantitative Reasoning: Select lesson-specific content (lessons on 'Resources', 'Technology', 'Information', and 'Economies'). (Stockton University, 2015)

Complementing this emphasis on learning outcomes is the interdisciplinary nature of the pre-packaged ASSCU course as incorporated in *Go Global!*. Stockton's commitment to interdisciplinarity is both structural and cultural: Faculty offices are distributed across campus with little regard to one's department, students can pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies (Liberal B.A., or LIBA), most faculty are required to teach in the interdisciplinary General Studies curriculum for up to one third of their courses, and a variety of graduate degrees and academic centers are founded on an explicitly interdisciplinary approach to a particular area of study. Enrolling incoming students in an interdisciplinary course focusing on a series of global challenges introduces students to the type of thinking that will be expected of them during their college career at Stockton in a way that goes beyond communicating this through brochures or orientation sessions.

Stockton's approach to AASCU's "adopt and adapt" pre-packaged course was simple. The Office of E-Learning facilitated the selection of faculty who then coordinated with E-Learning staff to identify opportunities for adapting the course and to make the desired revisions. Stockton's Global Engagement Scholar served as the on-campus liaison, leading the faculty team to make revision decisions by consensus rule. Adaptations to the Stockton online course included the addition of

a pre-recorded video message from the provost welcoming students to campus, a new section titled “Welcome to Stockton” that highlighted campus-specific information pertinent to first-year students, including content from a “Reaching 40” celebratory publication (Richard Stockton College, n.d.), and a robust feedback system that relied on rubrics included in the pre-loaded course, in addition to course-wide emails and announcements. Finally, the “In the News” activity was cut from the curriculum due to time restraints of the six-week course. Aside from these adaptations, the Stockton course was based entirely on AASCU’s pre-packaged online curriculum.

A key component in preparing students for their first course on a new campus was running in-person sessions as part of a required first-year college orientation to provide an overview of the LMS and the course, and to distribute hardcopies of the course syllabus and calendar schedule. The orientation sessions represented the only time enrolled students met with Stockton staff prior to the start of the course. Future iterations of *Go Global!* will include improvements of this orientation session as an important intervention in facilitating student success in the course. This may mean requiring some faculty instructors and all enrolled students to attend orientation, expanding the level of detail about the course presented in this session, and emphasizing the calendar features in the LMS to enhance the success of online delivery within a short time frame.

Faculty instructors were intentional in how they approached this course, understanding the challenges inherent to teaching from an interdisciplinary perspective in an online format. This included engaging in informal communication through a faculty email thread regarding frequency of student feedback, how to effectively apply rubrics to creative Global Village assignments, and how to best engage students through online delivery. This inter-faculty communication followed a series of formal meetings in the semester prior course delivery. The online *Go Global!* course was also evaluated as part of the campus’s 2014-2015 peer observation process, with a focus on determining where faculty “teach” when using a pre-packaged or custom-built online curriculum. This process has coincided with an overall effort on campus to improve online delivery by focusing on best practices in online education and recognizing the need for faculty to tailor how they teach when using this format. To that end, to teach this course, faculty utilized LMS announcements and emails, provided subjective feedback in grading rubrics, sent emails to “teach” the course, and communicated

with students in a way that enforced and/or enhanced existing content. These efforts were evident in student feedback on formal faculty evaluations, with scores for one faculty's sections falling in the "higher than campus" category across most constructs.

Assessment of Effectiveness of Each Case

FHSU and Stockton University students participated in a pre/post-survey in 2013-2014 (Mills & Sun, 2014). The total sample of 200 from both the pre- and post-tests included 63.4% of students from Stockton and 27.8% from FHSU. Stockton University students "felt more connected to people in different parts of the world after taking the course," moving from 48.3% to 72.2% (p. 3). The full sample including Stockton and FHSU students identified "a greater sense of efficacy in shaping local than in shaping global communities" after taking the course (p. 4). Stockton students also reported significant positive increase in reading about other parts of the world regularly, a result that the authors hope holds over time (Mills & Sun, 2014). The larger sample also reported "increased knowledge about course-related topics" and "knowledge about specific facts," with Stockton University students demonstrating strong positive increases along these two dimensions for most categories assessed in the survey (p. 4). In addition to this cited study on the effectiveness of the AASCU curriculum, there are ongoing efforts by the AASCU Global Scholars to improve the existing instrument and expand participation rates in order to better assess progress along the dimensions included in the improved set of learning outcomes.

Anecdotally, student and faculty responses to the FHSU course have been positive. For example, a student in the spring 2014 on-campus section wrote in his/her evaluation of the course, "This was one of those life/mind-changing classes for me." In addition, faculty are eager to teach the course and frequently request the opportunity to teach it again in future semesters. One faculty member who has taught the FHSU course three times observed that the course design forces greater engagement on the part of students because it is more difficult for students to passively listen to lectures and then take an exam; the interactive course content requires students to watch, read, write and discuss.

Stockton University students participated in a student panel with Rowan University students at the AASCU Global Institute held in November 2014, in New Jersey. Those students reported that the Global Villager and Critical

Thinking assignments in particular forced them to apply the material from the courses in unexpected and challenging ways. Furthermore, they reported that during on-campus orientation, they were able to meet with other students from this course and forge a bond, even if only temporary. This was also evident at the reception held afterward for all *Go Global!* students, faculty, and assisting staff. Qualitative feedback from student evaluations included the following: “I really enjoyed this course because it gave me a chance to learn about other cultures aside from my own. I was never granted a chance to participate in a course like this at my high school”; “Really good course. Definitely has changed my view on the world and future”; and, “I definitely enjoyed the class as well as became more globally aware.” Formal assessment of the effectiveness of *Go Global!* as a summer bridge program is ongoing, with a longitudinal study tracking student retention and degree completion beginning with the 2014 cohort.

Conclusion

The experiences of both campuses discussed in this paper highlight the degree to which AASCU's pre-packaged *Global Challenges* course can be adapted to suit a variety of institutional and faculty needs. Whether used to emphasize engagement with the community through service-learning or as a tool to underscore the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to challenges that are transnational by definition, the pre-packaged content and mode of delivery can be tailored by faculty. Plans for future iterations of Stockton's innovative summer *Go Global!* pre-first-year online course include enhancing the number and quality of campus-specific components, such as short videos that highlight professors' research, research centers, and other resources that correspond with specific topics in the pre-packaged course to enhance its effectiveness as a summer bridge program. FHSU will continue to utilize the AASCU curriculum as part of its General Education program. AASCU plans to continue offering the pre-packaged online curriculum from the “adapt and adopt” perspective, providing resources for campuses and faculty interested in utilizing the curriculum in online or on-campus settings. This includes providing a new curriculum on an annual basis with content updates from the previous year to keep the material cutting-edge in terms of both content as well as the holistic approach of viewing global challenges critically from an interdisciplinary perspective.

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