UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

Virtual Cultural Experience

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2021 Virtual Case Study Presentation
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MEET OUR TEAM

Program Committee

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INTENT

INTRODUCTION

Due to COVID 19 and remote operations, institutions have noticed an increase of students experiencing:

Social Isolation   **Mental Health Challenges**   **Disengagement**

In order to navigate this, the committee proposes a virtual cultural experience to re-capture engagement with the university and other students.

GLOBAL IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES OF COVID FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

- Worldwide, universities only prepared 1-3% of courses for online formats before COVID 19 forced the universal transition to remote instruction (Salmi, 2020).
  - Without intentionality behind virtual classes and programs, universities have been underserving students in educational experiences, leading to diminished learning, engagement and persistence (Kuh et al., 2016; Martin & Bolliger, 2018).
- Students face social isolation due to limited social contact, travel, and gatherings. This impacts mental, physical, academic, and interpersonal wellness (Pressman et al. 2005).
  - Social connection is being sought out now more than ever given these circumstances (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Suedfeld, 1974).
  - Without an opportunity for social engagement, institutional loyalty and a sense of belonging will continue to dwindle (Clark et al., 2021; Seltzer,2020).
- As students and institutions alike face financial hardship, it is vital that opportunities be provided at little to no cost to students to address these issues.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Intentional activities to engage students from each university and create a better understanding of cultural values, perspective, traditions, and ideologies

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Opportunities for students to network with others outside of traditional environments and explore their own identities in relation to the community

FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS

Lay groundwork for future cooperative programs that provide services to students who are not able to access traditional experiences with traveling abroad

EDUCATION

Improved comprehension and retention of materials shared than traditional class environments due to the uniqueness of the student experience in this program

NO-COST STUDENT EXPERENCE

With extreme financial hardship among students, this program will provide an avenue to avoid this concern while providing a creative learning enviornment

GOAL 1: SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT & INTERACTION

- This program is targeted towards first-year students to increase persistence by providing them with an educational and meaningful opportunity that supports engagement and interaction through a university partnership.
    - Student engagement in educationally purposeful activities has a positive relationship with persistence and academic outcomes of first-year students (Kuh et al., 2016).
    - This virtual cultural experience will provide multiple opportunities for students to not only interact with others at their institution but also engage with students from a different culture.
- Studies have shown that students who leave their institution prematurely are often less engaged than their counterparts who persist at their institution (Kuh et al., 2016).
    - In order to prevent students from experiencing boredom and isolation, it is important for institutions to provide activities that enhance engagement (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).
- Student engagement is developed through fostering interaction amongst students, which is essential to student comprehension and satisfaction with online learning (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

GOAL 2: CULTURAL COMPETENCIES

- This program will address the stagnation of intercultural competency development amidst the international shutdown of exchange programs.
    - Cultural exchanges have proven to help students with problem-solving, language skills, geo-historical knowledge, diminished ethnocentrism, and cultural sensitivity (Anderson et al., 2006; Gaines, 2012).
    - Meaningful contact with other cultures also helps students gain perspective about their own cultural values, and dismantles perceptions of cultural essentialism (Stier, 2006).
- While study abroad and related travel experiences can be very enriching, studies show that disadvantaged and minoritized populations are typically left out of these opportunities (Esmieu et al., 2016).
    - Less than a quarter of students in the US are able to access study abroad opportunities. This rate is even lower for those attending Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) due to financial concerns (Esmieu et al., 2016).
- This pilot program will create the groundwork for affordable long-term opportunities for virtual cultural experiences in place of physical travel.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

Social Engagement & Interaction
- Demonstrate communication skills and the ability to interrelate with others.
- Develop a sense of personal identity and form mature, respectful relationships.
- Create connections with students and/or faculty from the program through participation in networking and social events.

Cultural Competencies
- Identify differences in values, ideologies, or lifestyles between themselves and partnering institution participants.
- Gain knowledge and experience about cultural differences by participating in program workshops and discussions.
- Understand how to respectfully inquire about cultural differences and value the strength of diverse perspectives.

Partnership with Universidad de Guanajuato

- With UNR emerging as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), focusing on our partnership with the Universidad de Guanajuato will provide support to underrepresented populations.
  - With already having established partnerships with colleges in North America, Universidad de Guanajuato has the resources and networking needed to expand this partnership with UNR (Top Universities, 2015).
- A notable portion of the student population that attends UNR comes from rural communities.
  - This portion of the population will benefit from gaining perspective in the program, and support better relationships on campus (University of Nevada, Reno, (n.d.)).
- Many Latinx students at UNR are of Mexican descent and would benefit from the opportunity to connect with and learn more about their culture (University of Nevada, Reno, (n.d.)).

UNIVERSITY COMPARISON

Universidad de Guanajuato
(Top Universities, 2015)

- ~17,000 Undergraduates
- Hosts over 550 international students
- Founded in 1732 as private religious institute, became public in 1832

- Mid-sized public universities
- Originally founded with technical majors (mining, teaching, agriculture) and added modern degrees (business, engineering, health sciences)
- Comparable institutions with a shared mission for global civic engagement and responsibility

- ~18,000 Undergraduates
- Hosts over 600 international students
- Founded in 1874 as land-grant institution from federal government

University of Nevada, Reno
(University of Nevada, Reno, (n.d.))

IMPLEMENTATION

TIMELINE

PLANNING
JAN 26-FEB 23

The committee will work with departments across campus to plan a weekend long event. The planning process will take four weeks to create sessions, workshops, and finding guest presenters for an engaging and meaningful experience for all participants. At this time an interest survey will be circulated across both campuses.

MARKETING
FEB 23-MAR 18

Marketing for the event will start three weeks prior to ensure that students have ample time to plan for a weekend off from other obligations. Marketing will be completed through social media posts along with advertisements on campus webpages. During this time frame, students will be asked to fill out a pre-assessment survey.

EVENT
MAR 19-MAR 21

The Virtual Cultural Experience is planned to be a weekend event offering an experience at no cost to students. This scheduling will prevent students from missing class or related weeknight engagements. After the event ends, students will be asked to participate in a post-assessment for evaluation of learning outcomes.

Event Breakdown

This program is organized around three components over a three day period.

- **Workshops**
  - Sessions will be hosted by faculty members at each institution to provide different educational components to students.
  - Students will learn from the presenter and each other as they navigate session topics.
- **Networking**
  - Through this program offering, students and faculty participants alike will be able to connect across institutions to establish lasting relationships.
  - The connections formed during the event will support the partnership between both universities for future cooperative events.
- **Activities**
  - Dining halls and catering services on campus will provide one meal per day to participants that is in line with the cultural focus of the event.
    - Recipes and instructions also made available for at-home students to try
  - Evening activities and socials will occur daily.

PROGRAM SESSIONS

Friday

- Dinner Welcome Event
- Evening Activities
  - Icebreakers
  - Game Night
  - Trivia
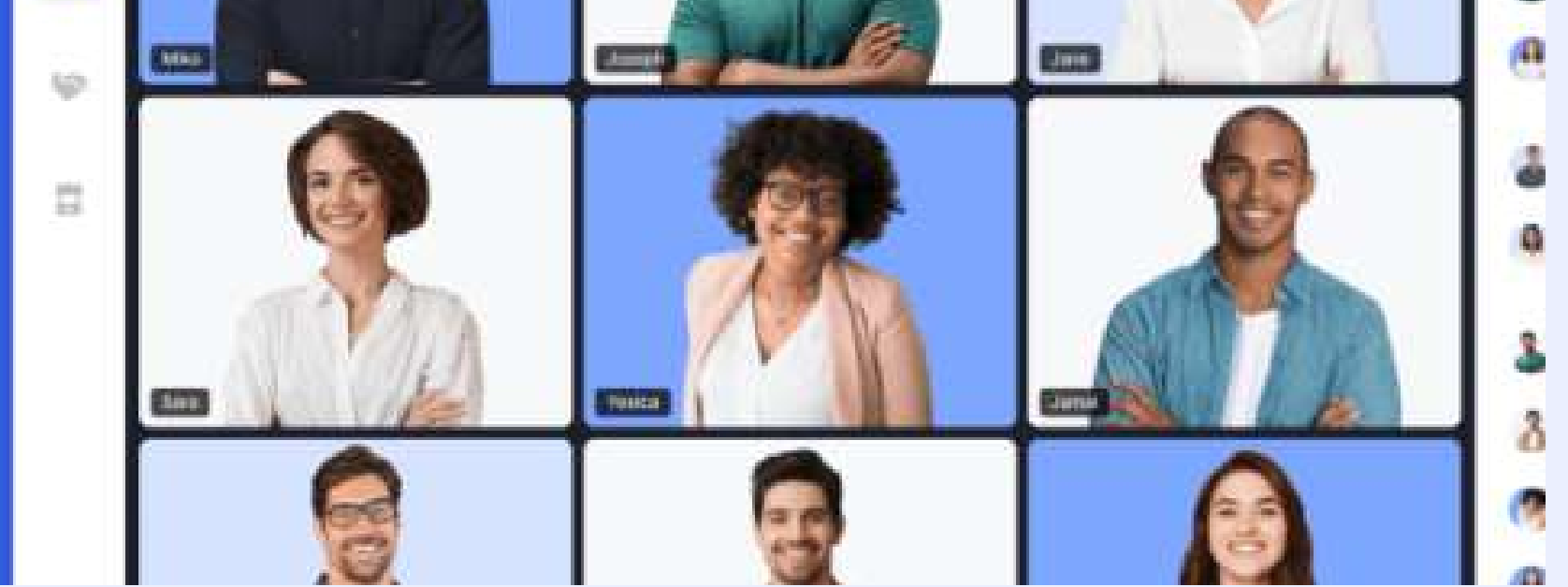 - Virtual Hangout

Saturday

- Keynote Speaker
- Lunch
- Workshops
  - Intro to Language
  - Cuisine
  - History
  - Campus Life
  - Life in a Pandemic
- Evening Activities

Sunday

- Brunch
- Reflection Activities
  - Guided Groups
- Ending Remarks
- Open Networking

Virtual Platform: Hopin

- The virtual platform, Hopin, offers options for events of any size with the ability to host sessions with participant interaction.
- Hopin allows for both large scale sessions as well as break out rooms and the ability to guide 1:1 conversations.
- This venue allows for us to create the most real "face-to-face" event possible while following guidelines of the CDC.
- By hosting this event virtually we will also be able to bring in guest speakers that may have been difficult to include in the past, being able to broaden our students view points even further.
- Closed captioning and translation services automatically available in 12 languages.

MARKETING

The committee will create a marketing campaign during the planning stage of program development, allowing for different marketing techniques to be used to reach the greatest amount of students. A primary approach is social media platforms. Posts will allow for students to understand the event and what will be available in the sessions, as well as a way for them to share the information easily with peers at each university. Word of mouth will also be a key marketing tool used in classes and throughout student organizations, making sure that professors of first year courses are promoting the event during class sessions and explaining the value of opportunities such as this.

SOCIAL MEDIA

BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER

Social media platforms will be used for this event in three ways; before, during, and after. **Before,** we will use these platforms to market the event for first-year students, targeting students that have an interest in cultural exchanges or global learning. Working with professors that teach first-year core learning courses to promote this event and encourage attendance. Using other university platforms such as student activities and study abroad pages that already exist in the university system, the team will broadcast the event. **During,** we will use these platforms to showcase students in sessions and workshops having fun while providing an educational platform that also creates a social space. **After,** social media will be used to promote future social events as well as a way for students to stay connected after the event. Students at both the University of Nevada, Reno and the Universidad de Guanajuato, will have this platform for students to keep in communication.

PROPOSED BUDGET

*Numbers are subject to change based on participation level

Item	Description	Cost
Hopin Virtual Platform:	$799 for Growth Plan. Includes 72 hours for each virtual event. Hosts up to 100 guests ($2 per addition) and five organizers ($99 per addition).	$2000
Advertisements:	This fee would cover the cost of advertisements to be posted around the institution and within the residential halls. We will also be sending virtual advertisements to students who do not live on campus.	$200
Presenter Fees:	At UNR it costs $1200 for a consultation fee. This would cover the cost of two speakers such as the keynote speaker or any outside consults needed.	$3000
Food:	The program will be offering three meals throughout the weekend: dinner on the first night, lunch on the second day, and breakfast on the third day (averaging $12 per person per day). These meals can be picked up at the campus dining hall.	$8,000
General Supplies:	Covers the supplies of notebooks, pencils, and pens for students to utilize for notes and reflection activities.	$300
Total:		$13,500
		~$67 per student for the weekend

ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT

EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY

- Creating fair and equitable assessments is essential in order to respect and value the responses of all students being assessed.
  - Learning is more than cognitive or physical differences
    - Depends on: age, gender, language, social class, ethnicity, and disability (Scott et al., 2014).
  - Be transparent about what is being assessed.
    - State the learning outcomes and goals to students so they know what is being assessed and if they met these goals (Gielen et al., 2003).
- It is important to acknowledge that not everyone has the same identities, so all of the students will have unique experiences (Hazel et al., 2007).

GOALS/AIMS

- Because students should have access to multiple opportunities to assess this program, they will be offered a pre-assessment prior to the event (Scott et al., 2014). Post-assessments will be offered at the end of each session and available at the end of the virtual experience.
  - Through these assessments, we want students to be able to explain what they have learned and how this event has impacted their personal growth and identity exploration.
  - The questions will be open-ended in order to allow students to individualize their experiences.

Pre-Assessment Strategies

Interest Survey

- The interest survey will be administered to students during the development stages.
- This will be used to gain information in what students hope to learn and session interests they have.

Pre-Assessment

- Offered the entire week before the event
  - We will gauge where the students are at with social engagement and cultural competencies.

Post-Assessment Strategies

- Offered after each session
  - Open-ended
  - Allow spaces for showcasing individualized learning and experiences
  - Gain feedback from students about what they enjoyed and what can be improved.
  - Use this to also assess the faculty and administrators who are leading the sessions.
- Assess the program as a whole
  - Understand what the student learned from this program.
  - Find methods to improve the program for the next time it is implemented.

Thank You/Gracias

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