

APAIE 2024



PERTH, AUSTRALIA 4-8 MARCH 2024

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Collaborating for sustainable impact: partnerships across the Asia Pacific

APAIE Perth 4 - 8 March 2024



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Session 13F: Thurs 7th March, 9:30 – 10:00

Best Practices for Establishing Long-Term, Sustainable Student Exchange Programs

Travis Senzaki
Akita International University, Japan

Chair

Xiaomeng Zhang
APAIE Advisory Council Member, Renmin University of
China, China

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Best Practices for Establishing Long-Term, Sustainable Student Exchange Programs

Travis Senzaki

International Collaboration Officer
Akita International University, Japan

Overview

- Student-exchange as a core internationalization strategy
- Identifying and evaluating target partners
- Pitching partnership proposals

Case Study: Akita International University

- Founded 2004, Akita prefecture, Japan
- **100% of students study abroad for one year**
- 200+ student exchange partnerships in 51 countries and regions
 - Appr. 80% activity rate
- Small: appr. 800 students / avg class size 16 students
- All courses taught in English
- #10 in Japan THE Rankings ('19)



Exchange-centered Internationalization

Benefits

- Quality of experience
- Low cost
- Sustainable / sustainable growth
- Direct relationships
- Campus internationalization

Challenges

- Preparing your university
 - Inbound/outbound buy-in
- Participants per program*
- Initial negotiation and validation
- Establishing initial partnerships

Preparing for Exchange Programs

- Emphasizing value to internal stakeholders
 - Personal development during immersion
 - Benefits of small numbers
 - Program sustainability
 - Cost-effectiveness for students
 - Internationalizing the campus
- Curriculum adjustments
 - Programs for inbound students
 - Credit transfer flexibility
 - Conflicts with internships / job hunting



Preparing for Exchange Programs

- Administrative support for inbound students
 - Application and visa processing
 - Housing
 - Medical support
 - Special accommodations



Identifying Potential Partners

- Initial Growth Phase – Foundation
 - Faculty connections
 - Seeking validation
 - APAIE (etc.)
- Later growth – Needs-based
 - Partner connections
 - Leverage expertise
 - APAIE (etc.)

Evaluating Potential Partners

- Know what you need – what are your red lines
- Academics
 - Course availability/flexibility
 - Quality of instruction (rankings?)
 - Ease of credit/grade transfer
- Participation
 - Academic calendar compatibility
 - Eligibility requirements
- Experience
 - Student support
 - Student life

Evaluating Potential Partners (cont)

- Potential for sustainable exchange
 - Financial situation
 - Their outbound needs – curriculum compatibility
- Potential pitfalls
 - Overeager faculty/administrators
 - Unclear activities
- Essential that the partnership meets both universities needs!

My Evaluation Checklist: Initial (Inbound)

- Do they participate in tuition-waiver student exchange?
- Do we have unmet demand that they could meet?
 - Do their English course offerings meet our expansion needs?
 - Do we have insufficient partners in their region?
- What quality indicators do they have?
 - Partner universities, ratings/rankings, achievements, accreditations

My Evaluation Checklist: Follow-up (Inbound)

- Courses for each of our majors
- Course restrictions for exchange students
- Credit system
- Typical enrollment
- Academic calendar / possible exchange periods
 - In / Out start semesters, summer program
 - Application timeline
- Eligibility requirements (grades, credits, language)
- Language courses? (Non-English)
- Housing availability and situation (including breaks)
- Insurance requirements
- Unique selling points

Pitching Partnership Proposals

- “Pitching” is not a dirty word (if you do it right!)
- Research first
 - Degree programs/ compatibility
 - Existing international programs
 - Exchanges
 - In your country
 - Common partners

Pitching Partnership Proposals

- What makes your university unique **for exchange students?**
 - Curriculum / offerings
 - Unique programs
 - Language + content
 - Student care / student life
- Tailor your pitch to each university!



My pitch structure

- Highlight unique characteristics
 - All in English + Japanese language
 - 100% study abroad
 - ~25% international students
 - Small and highly interactive (university/class size)
 - Rural location and community engagement
 - Guaranteed housing
- Targeted content
 - Which of their programs we would be good for
 - What we offer compared to their other programs
- Request meeting



Takeaways

- Student exchanges offer low-maintenance, sustainable, immersive, cost-effective international experiences, but are slow to build up and require institutional buy-in and preparation.
 - It may be necessary to develop new programs to meet partners' needs
- Determine what matters to you in an exchange partner and develop a system to evaluate those elements.
- Determine (or create!) your program's unique benefit to exchange students. Use those strengths to pitch each potential partner according to their anticipated needs.

Thank you for listening!

Travis Senzaki

Akita International University

ico@aiu.ac.jp

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