Division of Student Affairs High Impact Practices (HIP)
Cover Sheet 2013

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Name of HIP: Spring Leadership Exchange
Approximate # of TAMU students involved in the HIP: 24

Please check the TAMU learning outcome(s) associated with this HIP:

Bachelor’s:  
☐ Master the depth of knowledge required of a degree  
☐ Demonstrate critical thinking  
☐ Communicate effectively  
☒ Practice personal and social responsibility  
☒ Demonstrate social, cultural, and global competence  
☐ Prepare to engage in lifelong learning  
☒ Work collaboratively

Master’s:  
☐ Master the degree program requirements  
☐ Apply subject matter knowledge  
☐ Communicate effectively  
☐ Use appropriate technologies  
☐ Develop clear research plans  
☐ Choose ethical course of action

Doctoral:  
☐ Master the degree program requirements  
☐ Apply a variety of strategies and tools  
☐ Communicate effectively  
☐ Develop clear research plans  
☐ Use appropriate technologies  
☐ Teach and explain the subject matter

Please check the QEP learning outcome(s) associated with this HIP:

☒ Improve student learning by developing habits and skills for lifelong learning — Curiosity, Initiative, Independence, Transfer, Reflection
☒ Improve student learning by developing habits and skills for integrative learning — Connections to experience, Connections to discipline, Transfer, Integrated communication, Reflection and self-assessment
Abstract

The Spring Leadership Exchange (SLE) is a joint venture between Texas A&M University College Station (TAMU-CS) and Texas A&M University Qatar (TAMU-Q). Students from each campus visit the partner institution during their respective spring break period. Students participate in this 3 month experience which culminates with a two-week exchange. During this experience students are challenged to consider leadership from a global perspective. At the end of the experience, students developed a culminating video highlighting a specific aspect of leadership that they wanted to explore more deeply.

Description of the activity

a) Invest time and effort to purposeful tasks. Please describe the length of time of the experience.

Twenty-four students from both the Qatar and College Station campuses are selected for the program. Three months prior to the exchange students engage in three intentional pre-departure meetings. A portion of the time is spent completing necessary paperwork to travel abroad. During these meetings students are placed in small groups where they are asked to present on a specific aspect of the culture that they have researched. In addition, both groups watched the Ted talk “The Danger of a Single Story”. Staff debrief about the importance of coming to the exchange with an open mind and willingness to learn from both groups. During this timeframe, students are partnered with a student on the other campus and they are tasked to connect via some form of social media prior to the trip. An all group Skype session was held so that students could interact with one another the week prior to the arrival of the Qatar students in College Station.

Both groups of students have the opportunity to work together. Prior to the trip, the College Station students formulate and execute plans to host the Qatar students in College Station. In that same vein, the Qatar campus students develop plans to host students while in Doha.

Students participating in the SLE experience prolonged engagement with one another as they travel to Qatar and College Station over the course of two weeks. During the two weeks while we are away both groups blog about their experience and what they are learning. While in College Station, students:

• engage in a leadership discussion focused on relational and global leadership,
• participate in a service-learning project at a local non-profit,
• engage in conversation about strengths in a multicultural world,
• visit the Hillel Foundation,
• experience American and Tex-Mex foods,
• and experience Aggie traditions from the lens of main campus (Silver Taps, Aggie basketball, Reveille, Yell Leaders, Corp of Cadets, tour of campus, Kyle Field, and the Bonfire Memorial).

While in Doha, College Station students:
• tour the city (Corniche, Pearl, City Center Mall, Museum of Islamic Art, Souq Waqif, Museum of Modern Art),
• experience culture in Qatar by visiting the National Mosque and engage in an interfaith dialogue,
• explore what it is like to be a TAMUQ student by touring Education City and visiting the new residence hall,
• discuss global citizenship,
• experience Middle Eastern foods,
• and culminate the experience by developing a digital leadership story that highlights one facet of leadership that they wanted to explore more deeply.

Please note that a detailed schedule can be provided upon request.

b) Interact with staff, advisors, and/or faculty about substantive matters usually over extended periods of time.

Prior to the trip staff advisors facilitate discussions focused on understanding the country they are traveling to, exploring cultural norms, and reflecting upon their personal and global views of leadership. During the trip, student participants interact with staff advisors throughout the experience. Specifically, staff advisors lead and coordinate discussions and reflection focused on what they are learning from the exchange. As mentioned previously, the experience is over a three month period.

c) Interact with peers about substantive matters usually over extended periods of time.

Student participants serve as hosts at their home institution and will constantly be interacting with one another, engaging in in-depth dialogue together, and producing a culminating project over the course of the experience.

d) Experience diversity through contact with people who are different from themselves

The Spring Leadership Exchange is represented by a diverse group of students. The Qatar campus is represented by seven different countries, four engineering majors, and a variety of student involvement and faith disciplines. The College Station campus is represented by 12 different majors, two countries, and a variety of student involvement and faith disciplines.
Throughout the three month experience students will be interacting with students that are different from them both on their home campus and abroad.

Qatar students had the opportunity to engage in conversations with other TAMU College Station students as well as faculty and staff on main campus. College Station students had the opportunity to interact with individuals beyond the TAMU students. Specifically, students engaged in conversations with a variety of tour guides as well as Qatari citizens and American expats that were living in Doha. On both sides of the trip students participated in family dinners where they had dinner in a home of a citizen of that country.

e) **Receive frequent feedback about their performance – both formal and informal – in settings that allow them to respond to that feedback**

Not a tremendous amount of formal/informal feedback is structured in the program. Anecdotally, I would venture to say that cultural faux pas are addressed between staff and peers. Feedback in the sense of a question and answer session is provided during the developmental stages of the culminating digital leadership story.

f) **Are provided opportunities to integrate synthesize and apply knowledge gained from their classroom/discipline to their co-curricular experience and vice versa. Students are provided opportunities to discover the relevance of learning through application and practice in a range of contexts.**

Interfaith, leadership, and cultural dialogues provide a forum for discussion related to connections between in and out of classroom experiences. Faculty and staff facilitate these conversations and professionals in cultural organizations (e.g. Fanar, Hillel Foundation). The art of Socratic questioning is utilized to engage students in formulating their own ideas related to some of these complex topics. Furthermore, the culminating experience at the end of SLE grants students an opportunity to apply what they have learned from the experience to a tangible product.

g) **Are provided opportunities to become aware of their values and beliefs and thus to better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world.**

Faculty and staff facilitate interfaith, leadership, and cultural dialogues in order to provide a forum for student participants to reflect about their values and beliefs in relation to others and the larger world.
Assessment

Staff coordinating the Spring Leadership Exchange employee a variety of assessment methods to document learning from the program. A pre and post assessment with both quantitative and qualitative questions is conducted at the beginning and end of the program. This assessment focused on the outcomes listed below, what was the most significant aspect of their learning, and provided some general evaluation questions related to the program. Students also documented their experiences in a blog that was shared with faculty and staff at Texas A&M. Finally, students were divided into four teams that were a mix of Qatar and College Station students. They developed a culminating video highlighting a specific aspect of leadership that they wanted to explore more deeply.

Program Outcomes:

- Participate in meaningful dialogue between students from the Qatar and College Station campuses
- Be exposed to different concepts in leadership and cultural relevance of leadership
- Collaborate with a diverse group in a shared experience
- Synthesize learning from leadership workshops, cultural experiences, and individual reflections throughout the program