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## BUILDING GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET TODAY'S STUDENT NEEDS

### [ABSTRACT]

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### ABSTRACT

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Local issues are global issues. This collaboration between US and Finnish institutions aims to understand and share experiences and insights around global education opportunities for students in rural regions and to build program offerings with collaborative expertise in entrepreneurial sustainability.

Recent study abroad and international education experience surveys from students indicate that students in both Finland and the US prefer short term travel, with global lessons and experiences. And faculty-led travel courses were specifically requested by some students.

The research project sought to gain insight and understanding of student needs and preferences for internationalization of education. As a result, a travel course with several components was created by an institution in the United States in collaboration with partner institutions in Finland. This educational opportunity included several cross institutional collaborative workshops and lectures which were offered both online and in-person as part of a faculty-led travel class. The class involved travel to several countries and visits to partner communities, institutions, and businesses during which students from ten majors in two cross-disciplinary courses sought to understand sustainability in rural Oregon by learning lessons and best practices from the countries visited including Finland, Estonia, Sweden and Iceland.

The research project surveyed students pre and post courses but also illustrated how faculty learn from each other, local businesses and organizations, and the local host communities and cultures. This learning can then be incorporated into future courses taught by the faculty. The significance of

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this project lies in the lessons shared and learned about student and faculty preferences for global education and collaboration. These insights and best practices are then shared again by the participants with interested parties to develop new ventures, protocols and business practices that incorporate internationalization into courses, projects and future careers.

One result is that innovative opportunities and practices bring in new people and ideas to a community. However, disregard or lack of knowledge around other ideas, practices, and business sustainability for example can lead to long term community decline. This together with the impact of out-migration from rural communities worldwide creates an important role for sustainable innovative, entrepreneurial ventures and ideas. Collaboration across international borders also provides critical connections and a supportive international dialog to share best practices and innovative concepts. Creating a variety of pathways for understanding and sharing key best practices for sustainable entrepreneurship, internationalization of education, and supporting rural economic development via seminars, press releases, and academic conference presentations is then incorporated into developing opportunities for green business thinking and process development. Long-term impacts will be seen as students become professionals and start implementing lessons learned from specialized international courses and experiences, in their own business decision making, communication, and sustainable development practices.

**Methodology:** This project employs a mixed-methods case study approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The research design emerged from a collaborative brainstorming process informed by prior work and current practices. Data collection includes pre- and post-travel qualitative and quantitative surveys of students and faculty participating in a summer travel class. Additionally, document review and analysis of experimental global course offerings at and between the partner institutions provide contextual and comparative insights.

This comprehensive approach ensures a robust understanding of the impact and dynamics of international educational experiences within applied learning contexts.

**Keywords:** global education, international, travel courses, collaborative, modernizing, entrepreneurship, sustainability, rural, arctic

## AUTHORS

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**Dr. Sonja H. Bickford** is an expert in study abroad and global education and program development. With a doctorate in Global Business and Leadership, Dr. Bickford's research interests include topics in leadership, communication, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility. Dr Bickford is also interested in international and transdisciplinary projects as well as addressing issues in martial arts, youth leadership, stakeholder engagement, and environmental and social impact assessments. Dr. Bickford served as the Director of Continuing Education, Study Abroad, and the R.N. to BSN programs at the University of Great Falls in Montana from 2008-2015 where she was also an assistant professor in the Business

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**Dr. Ruth Claire Black** is an experienced university administrator and faculty member with a career focus in online education. Prior to joining Oregon Tech in August of 2023, as Dean of Online Education and Global Engagement, Ruth's prior appointment was as the Department Chair of the MSc in Digital Health Leadership and as the Chair of the dissertation year curriculum from the Institute of Global Health Innovation (IGHI) at Imperial College London. Prior to joining Imperial College London in 2018, Ruth spent 2017 as a visiting scholar for technology and innovation at Namseoul University in Seoul, Korea. From 2011 to 2016, Ruth served as Executive Director of Online Innovation and Online Education for the California State University System, where she led system-wide initiatives around online program design, development and delivery. Ruth's academic and research interests include developing professional identity, coaching to improve retention and student success and student satisfaction as well as measurement and attainment of learning outcomes. Ruth holds a BA in Political Science, with minors in English and History from the University of California, Irvine, a Juris Doctorate from Vanderbilt University and a Doctorate in Education from the University of Southern California.



**Anzelika Krastina**, MBA, M.Ed. is a senior lecturer at Lapland University of Applied Sciences in Finland with over 20 years of teaching experience in international BBA and MBA programmes, currently focusing on international project management, sustainable entrepreneurship and circular economy subjects. Passionate about forward-looking education, she experiments with innovative pedagogy to ensure the development of future skills. Anzelika has developed pedagogical methodologies such as the Creative Steps 2.0 innovation workshop and the Sustainable Entrepreneurship for Climate Action methodology for creating sustainable business solutions, fostering future business leaders to address today's challenges with impactful and innovative approaches. In addition to the role of a lecturer, Anzelika has a responsibility in international strategic partnership development with partner universities abroad and development of international RDI projects to enhance international collaboration and RDI activities. Academic and research interests include forward-looking education development in particular in the context of business and entrepreneurship education where transformative learning is integrated with sustainability-focused leadership.