4-1-2009

Application of Project Management in Study Abroad Project

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An Internship Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the

Master of Public Administration

Kennesaw State University

March 15, 2009

Executive Summary

The Office of International Services and Programs is a major component of the Institute for Global Initiatives, and is also an important department of Kennesaw State University. With the awareness of internationalization and global integration, it shares different cultures and customs, serves and helps international students, and greatly develops the study abroad programs.

During the internship in the office, I realized the importance of international communication and mutual learning. Thus, I paid much attention to the ISEP (International Student Exchange Programs). Majoring in Public Administration, I tried to combine the theory of project management to the practice of ISEP. Thus I observed, discovered and understood the whole process of ISEP, including the publicity, application, cost and so on. Moreover, project manager plays an important role in project management. Thus, I often discussed and talked with my supervisor, Michele B. Miller, about more details of ISEP.

Project management is useful and helpful not only in the private sector, but also in the public sector. Thus, I tried to analyze ISEP with related theory and methodology, hoping that the knowledge will actively influence my future work in Liuzhou government.

Contents

I. Introduction

Since January 6 2009, I have been interning in the Office of International Services and Programs (OISP). This office falls under the Institute for Global Initiatives (IGI). As part of my internship assignments, I had to observe the organization and study the whole process of the ISEP for the students and scholars at the Kennesaw State University (KSU).

II. Institute for Global Initiatives (IGI)

The IGI has developed the following vision, mission and goals:

Vision--"As a recognized leader in global learning, the Institute for Global Initiatives will steward resources, offer academic services and programs through partnerships, and promote research and scholarship to understand and impact our complex, interconnected world."[1]

Mission--"The Institute for Global Initiatives promotes and collaboratively leads global learning and regional studies among KSU's faculty, students, staff and the community through academic services and programs, research and scholarship, and partnerships."[2]

Goal--The IGI aims to heighten the reputation of KSU as an international university, to promote study abroad programs, to develop recruitment strategy, to provide good exchange opportunities and scholarship for U.S. and international students, and to promote incentives and motivations for faculty among others.

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[1] Source from http://www.kennesaw.edu/globalinstitute/about.htm, April 6, 2009.
[2] Source from http://www.kennesaw.edu/globalinstitute/about.htm, April 6, 2009.

Structure

"The IGI reports to the Associate Provost in the Office of Academic Affairs. It carries out its campus-wide functions directly or indirectly through its component units and in collaboration with global learning centers and committees located in the colleges."[3]

There are four component units of the IGI: Center for African and African Diaspora Studies (CAADS), Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS), Office of International Services and Programs (OISP), and the Confucius Institute (CIKSU). The current structure is shown in Figure 1 below.
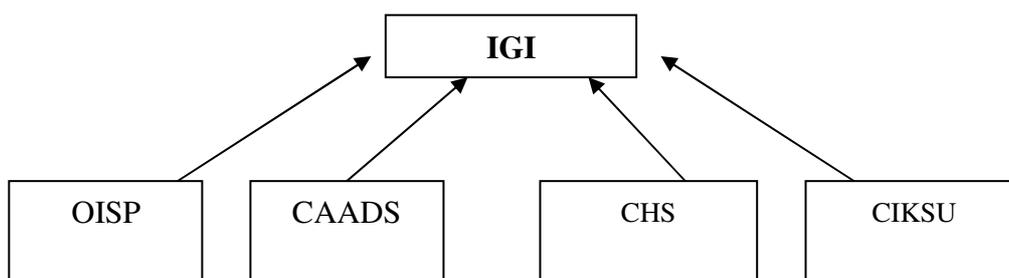

Figure 1: Structure of IGI

III. Office of International Services and Programs

Serving KSU and Georgia since 1988, the OISP is at the heart of KSU's global education. It holds a belief that "international education involves a transformation of social consciousness beyond national consciousness."[4]

OISP "prepares students to become responsible global citizens. It helps to clarify values that seem to be in contradiction by developing an understanding for and

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[3] Source from http://www.kennesaw.edu/globalinstitute/about.htm, April 6, 2009.
[4] Source from http://www.kennesaw.edu/globalinstitute/oisp/index.htm, April 6, 2009.

appreciation of different cultural perspectives. It seeks to find a common ground. It is learning to create cultural bridges. It requires that students understand culture as the context in which people solve their problems, not as the cause of their problems. Conflict arises when different groups fail to understand their problems as mutual. International education emphasizes the development of multicultural communities centered on creating respect for differences as well as addressing common problems affecting humanity. Through an interdisciplinary and experiential approach to international education, KSU, especially the OISP, creates opportunities for students to immerse themselves in systems of meaning different from their own. The more they know about other countries and cultures, the better they will understand their own." The OISP tries to promote "international and cross-cultural understanding, both on the KSU campus and in the communities" it serves. "The OISP enhances international education by working collaboratively with a wide range of academic departments, student groups, and community organizations. Through its activities, the OISP expands teaching and learning on the international subjects at the university." [5]

Hierarchy

According to Dr. Neuby's course--Classics of Organizational Theory, we know that hierarchy refers to categorization of a group of people according to their ability or status. There is clear and firm hierarchy in Office of International Services and Programs, as shown in Figure 2. (Shafritz, Ott, and Jang. *Classics of Organizational Theory, 6th Ed.* (NY: Wadsworth, 2005), 7.)

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[5] Source from http://www.kennesaw.edu/globalinstitute/oisp/index.htm, April 6, 2009

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                    │  Study Abroad   │
                    │     Advisor     │
                    │                 │
                    │ Bernard Anderson│
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                    │  Study Abroad   │
                    │     Advisor     │
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                    │ Emily Plum Guclu│
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        │  Study   ││  Administrative │
        │  Abroad  ││    Assistant    │
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                    │ Maryellen Skiles│
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┌──────────────┐    ┌─────────────────┐
│ Director of  │    │Program Specialist│
│International  │    │  & Exchange     │
│ Services and │    │  Coordinator    │
│  Programs    │    │                 │
│              │    │  Michele Miller │
│ Dr. Daniel J.│    └─────────────────┘
│  Paracka     │    ┌─────────────────┐
└──────────────┘    │  Administrative │
                    │    Assistant    │
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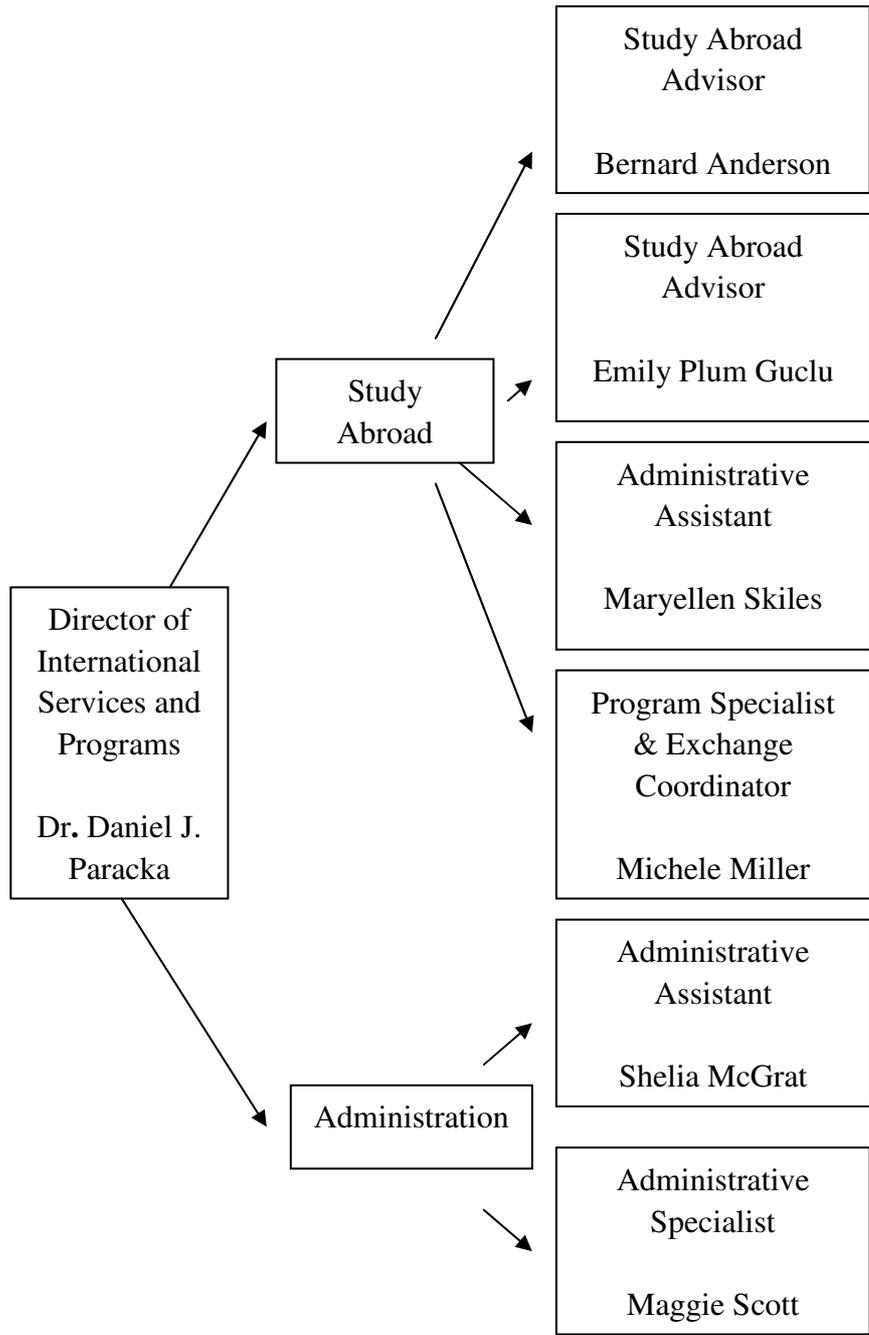
Figure 2: Hierarchy of OISP

Dr. Paracka is the Director of the OISP. He administrates and supervises two main divisions: study abroad programs and international admissions. Bernard Anderson, Emily Plum Guclu, Maryellen Skiles and Michele Miller are in charge of study abroad, while Shelia McGrat and Maggie Scott are in charge of administration.

SWOT Analysis

"SWOT analysis is a tool for auditing an organization and its environment. It is the first stage of planning and helps administrators to focus on key issues. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors. Opportunities and threats are external factors." [6]I have analyzed the OISP and conducted a SWOT analysis for the OISP. The results of the SWOT analysis are shown in Figure 3.

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
Professional personnel and every one got a master degree at least ★Personnel work hard and seriously ★Harmonious and comfortable work environment	★ Ineffective and inefficiency order procedure ★ Too much stress on the personnel ★ Work overload ★ Lack of incentives
Opportunities: ★ More students begin to be interested in studying abroad ★Good international reputation ★Wide use of network	Threats: ★International students who violate the rules or laws ★Increasd competition.

Figure 3: SWOT Analysis

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[6] Source from http://www.marketingteacher.com/Lessons/lesson_swot.htm, April 6, 2009.

From Figure 3, we can see that there is a good work environment in the OISP because every staff gets on well with others. They respect and care about each other. If someone gets ill, other people will call or visit her/him, trying their best to offer help. The personnel are well educated. Each has a master degree or above. The organization has good opportunities for growth in future as a lot of students are interested in study abroad programs all over the world. And since it is a member of ISEP, it means that more students will need its help to study abroad. A girl called Lauren Young joined the ISEP program last year. She studied in London. Now she is back and is so happy with her rich and interesting experience that she was voluntary to welcome more students joining in ISEP. This means that the students who benefit from the ISEP program can make OISP acquire a high reputation. With the ISEP website, students can easily get information about the profile of ISEP program.

According to Ms Miller's and based on observation, we also find that although the office time is from 8:30am to 5:30 pm, sometimes Ms Miller needs to work half an hour more without any overtime pay. And she also feels a lot of pressure due to the Director's stringent requirements to work and the lack of incentives to encourage the other personnel. Moreover, there are not enough spare office supplies. When office supplies run out, Ms Miller has to ask Maggie, the administrative specialist to order some. But after the order, we still have to wait at least one week. This is very inconvenient and ineffective. In addition to this, some international students who study in KSU do not go back to their home countries even when their passports are due to expire. This is the biggest threat to the OISP.

I consider that the OISP can do the following to address some of its weaknesses and threats:

1. Set up an effective management system to supervise international students, scholars and specialists. For example, students must sign an agreement to ensure they will return to their own country as soon as their passports are on the expiring date. Otherwise, those students will be responsible for their illegal behaviors.

2. Provide more details about job description and attractive incentives to encourage the personnel to work better and harder. For example, every month the personnel can anonymously select a person who works hardest and then this person can get extra reward.

3. Provide flyers and presentations in order to attract more students for such a study abroad program.

4. Set up an agreement for the international students to ensure they will return to their home countries as soon as their passports are due to expire. Otherwise, those students and their parents will be responsible for their illegal behaviors.

Michele B. Miller

According to Dr. Zimmermann's course--Leadership, leadership style emphasizes the behavior of the leader, and focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act, which includes the actions of leaders towards subordinates. Leadership is composed of two general kinds of behaviors: task behaviors and relationship behaviors.

In the OISP, Michele B Miller, my supervisor, is an Administrative Specialist,

which requires her to focus more on interpersonal relationship than on task achievement, de-emphasizing productions, stressing the attitudes and feelings of people, and making sure the personal and social needs of followers are necessarily met. Ms Miller tries to create a positive, helpful, comforting, humanistic, uncontroversial, friendly organization atmosphere. Her main job is to receive and manage international students, scholars, professors and specialists and to help and attend to those who are going to study abroad. Thus, she is good at helping people with different Visa categories meet their needs. The Visa categories include J-1, F-1, B-1, B-2, H-1B, WB, and WT.

According to Northous (2007, 269), "Women's leadership is different from men's on either interpersonal oriented and task style or democratic and autocratic style. Women are more effective than men in education, government, and social service." For Ms Miller, her leadership is more democratic, responsible and participative. She is a patient, warm-hearted and excellent communicator. She has been working in this office for around 15 years. Thus she has rich work experience and can greatly understand what international students need and how they can get used to the life in other countries, including dealing with the meals, courses, housing, transportation, language, financial aid and so on.

Daily work

This year Ms Miller wants to promote the Study Abroad Program, especially the ISEP. As part of my internship assignments, I have been providing assistance to Ms Miller to promote awareness of the program among students and motivate them to be

interested in the program.

ISEP

ISEP was established in 1997. It is non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors, supported by member fees and fees for service, and administered by a central office in Washington, D.C. and by the designated coordinator at each member institution. It consists of 275 post-secondary institutions in the United States and 38 other countries, cooperating to provide international educational experiences for students all over the world.

ISEP offers ISEP-Exchanges (reciprocal exchange programs) and ISEP-Direct (fee-paid study abroad programs) to the students all over the world. It includes both semester (spring, summer or fall) and year program. ISEP promotes academic and cross-cultural learning through its worldwide collaborative network of higher education institutions. ISEP facilitates academic mobility through innovative and affordable exchange and study programs. ISEP enhances institutional infrastructures for these programs and fosters campus internationalization.

Promoting the program

In order to promote the program, first of all, I prepare an information board with flyers about studying in different countries, and make some leaflets as well. I need to reserve a table on Tuesdays and Thursdays. During the table time, when there are students coming for consultation, I briefly introduce the whole program and let them leave their information about how long they want to go abroad, which countries they prefer, what their majors are and which languages they want for the courses. I

introduce them to the ISEP home page and send more information to them. On the top of that, Ms Miller sometimes prepares an ISEP discussion for the students who are still interested in any study abroad program because through the face-to-face communication, she can answer their questions about the cost, housing and related questions and help them further understand the program.

After the students make their choices, we can help them fill in all the application forms and we establish contact with a staff that works in ISEP and is in charge of a specific country. Each program has its own deadline and seat limitation. Thus, if a student really wants to go abroad, he/ she must complete all the procedures as soon as possible. After completing the application forms, the next steps for them are to choose the suitable courses that can be equivalent to their current ones, apply for scholarship, pay for the whole program, and apply for financial aid and personal insurance. Then they can begin their study abroad program because the amount they paid includes tuition, fees, housing and meals.

Moreover, even after the students have gone abroad, Ms Miller still keeps in touch with them in order to know how they are coping in the new environment, and about the study conditions. She also keeps close contact with the coordinators abroad to help those students solve any problems. Ms Michele also encourages university students to choose ISEP-exchange program due to their benefits and their reasonable costs.

IV. Study Abroad Project Management

What is project management? According to Dr. Baker's course—Project

Management, I have learnt that it is a field in which you have to manage resources such as people effectively. It will help to complete the project in time with desired quality. It also reduces the cost of project through better methods. Project management includes developing a project plan, which includes defining project goals and objectives, specifying tasks or how goals will be achieved, what resources are needed, and associating budgets and timelines for completion. It also includes implementing the project plan and ensuring that the plan is being managed according to plan. After three months' internship and three-semester study on project management, I apply related theory to analyze what I have learnt during the internship.

Definition of Project

According to Kanabar and Warbuton (2008, 2), all projects share three common characteristics:

a. Projects are temporary with a distinct beginning and end.

b. Projects are undertaken to provide a unique result or service known as the deliverable.

c. Projects are developed by breaking them down into smaller steps or stages (progressive elaboration).

ISEP study abroad program is continuous. However, ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009 Plan is considered as a project. It begins on January 8 2009 (at the beginning of the spring semester at KSU) and ends when all the students go back to their home school and finish their credit transfer, which lasts about 1 year. This project provides a good

opportunity for US students to study in another country. To ensure the success of the program, the following strategies are adopted:

a. Publicizing information on the ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009:

b. Applying

c. Enrolling

d. Assisting and managing

e. Finishing credit transfer

I have tried to analyze this project through the theory of project management. The benefits of this approach are several, viz. to improve the chances of project success and deliver the expected benefits for the project, to avoid stress and increase the satisfaction for all stakeholders; to complete the project within the time schedule and within budget allocation, and with acceptable quality to optimize use of organizational resources; to enable customer focus and to introduce quality focus, and to reduce risks of unexpected events and project failure.

Theoretical Basis of Project Management

There are life cycles for all kinds of activities associated with project management, but project life cycle is the most important. According to Kanabar and Warbuton (2008, 12), the project life cycle refers to a typical sequence of phases and sequential progression of a project. A typical project life cycle goes through these phases: Conceive the idea, Develop the idea, Execute the idea, and finally Finish the idea. Based on this understanding, project management activities can be categorized into five process groups:

1. Initiating: Introduces the project and the project manager and defines the charter for the project.

2. Planning: Describe the project scope in more detail. Detailed project plans for schedule, cost, risk, quality, and communications, among others, are defined here. A realistic project baseline is committed to.

3. Executing: The project has begun and the project manager uses various tools and techniques to make sure that the project is progressing smoothly.

4. Monitoring and Controlling: The project manager monitors the project for deviations from cost, schedule, or quality and takes corrective action if needed.

5. Closing: The focus of this process is on acceptance and approval of the project deliverables and documenting lessons learned.

During the five process groups, there are nine knowledge areas, namely integration management, scope management, time management, cost management, quality management, human resource management, communications management, risk management and procurement management.

Project Manager

A project manager is assigned at the beginning of a project and must be responsible for the success of the project. The project manager must master the necessary knowledge and skills to perform the duty required by this role. The main skills required of a Project Manager are:

a. Project-related competencies—applying related methodologies, making and implementing project work plans, managing project's scope and daily operation;

b. Financial management—understanding basic models, forecasting its revenue and expenditure, managing budget and also the project accounting;

c. Communication—communicating effectively and efficiently with all clients, project teams, reporting relevant important information to superiors, delivering prepared presentations and deal with problems timely;

d. Understanding of project environment—take culture, internationalization, politics and physical environment into project considerations; and

e. Organizational and interpersonal skills—being capable of influencing the success of a project and of negotiating with related groups, of having good leadership and motivation, and of managing any conflicts and risks.

According to Kanabar and Warburton (2008, 7-8), the major responsibilities of the project manager are as follows:

a. Guide the project team to its given goal to deliver a high quality project on time, within budget, and with no surprises

b. Manage the planning, organizing, executing, controlling, and reporting of the project through all phases to ensure successful implementation

c. Develop and coordinate resources

d. Communicate across the organizational hierarchy and with stakeholders

e. Motivate and nurture team members by providing feedback, coaching, and rewards

f. Evaluate risks to senior management and manage those risks effectively throughout the project life cycle

g. Solve problems—projects rarely progress as planned.

In this project, Michele B. Miller is the project manager.

V. Practical Operation of Project Management

Usually, when initiating a project, we need to establish a project charter and establish a preliminary project scope statement.

In the ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009, the project charter is shown in Figure 4.

Project Charter

Project Title: ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009

Project Start Date: Jan 2009

Project Finish Date: Dec 2009

Project Description: ISEP provides seats in more than ten countries for studying abroad, such as Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Korea, Mexico, Norway, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sweden, Thailand and so on. The amount of cost for the students who will apply for this project is around $ 6,500, including tuition, fees, housing and meals.

Stakeholders:

The students who have successfully applied for this project

Collaborating universities

ISEP organization

OISP

Michele Miller is assigned as the project manager.

(Signature for every key party to sign the charter to demonstrate their commitment to the project)

Print Name: Signature:

Date: Title

Figure 4: Project Charter of ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009

The project scope statement, describes the project, the justification (problem or opportunity), goals, objectives, deliverables, milestones, limits and constraints, statement of work and the customer interface are shown in Figure 5.

Project Scope Statement

Project Title: ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009

Project Start Date: Jan 1, 2009

Project Finish Date: Dec 31, 2009

Project Goal: Provide a good chance of studying abroad to all KSU students and help them choose an available country and university and choose the courses that fit their majors.

Description of All Objectives, Characteristics, or Requirement:

Steps for ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009:

Step 1: Publicize and apply for this project

Step 2: Finish all procedures of application for the students who are going out

Step 3: Receive and help exchange students who are coming in

Step 4: Ensure all exchange students return to their home university

Step 5: Finish their credit transfer

Determine requirements and deadline of application

This project is good chance to help students study in other countries. Through one semester studying abroad, students can know different culture and customs, experience different education model and improve their foreign language.

Project Justification: (Problem or opportunity)

Some students still think the cost is too high to afford. The amount of exchange students who are coming in will be probably more than those who are going out. More and more students begin to be interested in study abroad. And KSU provide scholarships which can prove attractive to students.

Known Issues, Risks, Obstacles:

Many students consult this project but only 5 of them have applied for it.

Some students wanted to change or cancel their current courses

Failure or incomplete of students' courses

Project Success Criteria:

The goal is to complete this project in one year. When students come back or return to their hometown, a face-to-face survey is necessary in order to know how they think about this project.

Figure 5: Project Scope Statement

After initiating a project, what the project manager should do is to plan the project. The planning process refines the project goals and documents the best way to achieve them. This phase comes up with project plans for schedule, costs, risks, quality and communications. Thus I have developed a work breakdown structure (WBS) for the project, as depicted in Figure 6.

Project Tasks

1. Initiation

    a. Project begins

    b. Determine major stakeholders

2. Planning

    a. Apply for a table in Social Science Building or Student Center

    b. Prepare project leaflets and relevant books or web sites

    c. Design and create a new publicity board with ISEP flyers

3. Execution

    a. Give publicity to all the KSU students

    b. Make a name list of those who take interests in it.

    c. Make an ISEP presentation and discussion to communicate with students

    d. Connect with those students to give them more information

    e. Assistant students to complete all necessary documents, including participant profile, legible copy of the identification page of the passport, host site request list, language proficiency report, personal statements, academic reference, course request list and so on.

f. Receive incoming exchange students and help them deal with housing, meals and courses.

g. Keep contact with relevant tutors or professors

4. Control and Monitoring

a. Keeping the project on schedule

b. Keeping contact with students both going out and coming in

c. Resolving issues

5. Closing

a. Ensure all students return to their home university

b. Finish their credit transfer and keep a record

Figure 6: Work Breakdown Structure

During the execution phrase, the project manager should ensure that the project's requirements and objectives are being met. The project manager also motivates the project team so that its effort is focused on the project deliverables.

Since January 2009, Ms Miller has been working for the ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009. She also needed to recruit, advise, select and nominate students for the project. After basic training, she asked me and Amy, another girl who did the internship with me, to publicize information on the project on Tuesdays and Thursdays, through ISEP publications and the program website. When students came to enquire about the program, we briefly introduced the project and pointed them to the website for getting more details. After that, we asked them to leave their email address, phone number, major and favorite countries. On February 20, we did a presentation and discussion

with those students who took interest in this project. Ms Miller also advised them about financial obligations. Then she must ensure their applications were completed and the universities requested were academically appropriate. As some opportunities were limited, she helped students make realistic expectations regarding chances of placement based on current ISEP website information. The next step was to send students' applications and application fees to ISEP by the deadlines. Then, Ms Miller distributed placement packets to students and returned PPAFs (Participant Placement Acceptance Forms) to ISEP. When the students' application was approved by the ISEP, she helped them prepare for their absence: enrollment, financial aid, etc. Then those students would get the pre-departure orientation. Once the new semester began, Ms Miller would receive new exchange students and send their accurate university description for the Membership Directory and also the courses information (web links) to ISEP. Then the incoming students' applications were reviewed and letters of admission were directly sent to the students (not to ISEP), with information on housing, courses, registration, and pre-session language programs. Then Ms Miller made arrangements for housing, meal benefits and monitors implementation.

During the phase of control and monitoring, the project manager should monitor cost, quality, and schedule. The project performance is monitored by tracking the baseline schedule for variances from the project management plan. In this phase, Ms Miller's main responsibilities were to help solve problems and handle emergencies. She often connected with those cooperating universities to know the latest condition of the students. She could directly communicate with them by email, Skype and face

book. She must know whether they pass all the courses or not and what kind of help they need. Sometimes some students want to quit or change one or two courses because they felt it was difficult to complete the program. Ms Miller had to talk with their professors and tried to find good solutions for them. For some students who had applied for the scholarship, if they could not meet the required standard, Ms Miller had to inform them of the status of their scholarship. She would also help the students return (pre-registration, housing, financial aid) or approve their extension requests. For the incoming ones, she provided emergency contact information, academic advising and registration. Ms Miller was very kind to provide on-site support, including issuance of forms and information about extension, employment, and academic training authorization. Assisting with visa or work issues and emergencies formed part of her job as well.

At the end of the program, the project manager can use this opportunity to provide feedback on individual performance.

For outgoing students, Ms Miller ensured completion of their evaluation and completed credit transfer. Then she provided debriefing and re-entry orientation. Meanwhile, for the incoming students, she signed their exit form (final course schedule) and issued transcripts directly to ISEP and resolved grade disputes. After that, the project could successfully end.

Evaluation

Learning from the Public Policy Analysis course taught by Dr. Seelarbokus, I have analyzed the ISEP project based on four criteria: Effectiveness, Efficiency,

Equity and Improvement. I choose these criteria because I want to test whether this project is a useful, helpful, and successful.

Effectiveness: Based on the feedback from the outgoing students, I have found that they are all satisfied with the ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009 in view of the benefits of achieving their goals in a short time interval. The students can improve their foreign language skills by communicating with native people and attending relevant courses, and they can experience different cultures and customs while completing equivalent credit hours. They also have an opportunity to get scholarship and part-time job.

Efficiency: The deadline for the project is on May 1 2009. From publicizing the project to completing the students' applications, it takes only four months. Ms Miller and the consultants from ISEP were helping students complete all preparation for going abroad.

Equity: Any students of KSU can have the good opportunity to study abroad. The only requirement for application is that the student can complete the application procedure with the help of coordinators before the deadlines.

Improvement: Nowadays, with the internationalization of society, such a project is required necessity for our generation. Learning from different countries and accepting new things are good ways to improve ourselves. For the project itself, it still needs to attract more students.

In a word, the ISEP-Exchange Fall 2009 is a successful one.

VI. Conclusion

Through more than 300 hours internship, I have been able to adequately utilize

relevant theoretical knowledge and convert into the practical operation. I have realized the importance and usefulness of public administration. I consider that the internship experience will help me a lot for my future work in Chinese government, especially for managing a project.

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