

FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (TEACHING AND LEARNING)

SMU
EXPERIENTIAL
EDUCATION
DAY



SMU EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION DAY (SEED) DIGEST – ISSUE 2

Initiated by the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) in partnership with SMU-X Team, SEED serves as a platform where faculty members share their expertise with the SMU academic community in experiential learning and/or its related topics.

SMU-XO: Nurturing Global Citizens Through Experiential Learning 05 March 2019

In this issue of SEED Digest, we feature Associate Professor Angela Leung and Associate Professor Chi-Ying Cheng from the School of Social Sciences (SOSS), and Assistant Professor Clarence Goh from the School of Accountancy (SOA). They shared on their approaches and experiences, and how they overcame the challenges with teaching the SMU-X Overseas (SMU-XO) courses.

INVITED SPEAKERS



Angela LEUNG
Associate Professor of
Psychology
PGR Coordinator



Chi-Ying CHENG
Associate Professor of
Psychology
Deputy Chair, IRB



Clarence GOH
Assistant Professor of
Accounting (Practice)
Director, Professional
Development

ABOUT SMU-XO COURSES

SMU-XO courses can be study missions or offered as electives. The real difference between a XO course and a Study Mission being that the former involves students working with an overseas partner to solve real-world problems. The objectives of a XO course are to:

- Familiarise students with the issues and challenges facing global organisations
- Provide students with an intensive experience working on projects in regional organisations
- Build mindshare among global organisations and universities that SMU prepares students with future-ready skills to make meaningful impact
- Provide global exposure to our students so as to enable them to become culturally sensitive global citizens
- Familiarise students with the power of informal networks and the opportunities and possibilities from SMU networks when working globally

Faculty members can work directly with organisations where they can source for projects from their own contacts or via the SMU-X team. Alternatively, faculty members can work through partner universities to source for projects. This is a joint programme where students from the partner universities can also participate in the XO course and/or projects. This approach is useful especially if language is a barrier and limited access to organisations.

The structure of a typical XO course is as follows:

- 20 to 30 SMU students per course (Decision is made by the school on the course enrolment number)
- 6 to 8 weeks of lessons are conducted in Singapore, followed by an overseas stint (takes place usually after Exam Week though the project and mentoring can already start in Singapore)
- Minimum 5 days overseas (not including travelling period)
- Must fulfil the minimum 39 credit hours

CREATING
MEANINGFUL IMPACT



INTERNATIONALISATION



INDUSTRY



INNOVATION



INTEGRATION

ABOUT THE PSYCHOLOGY AND ACCOUNTING SMU-XO COURSES



PSYC307 Psychology Study Mission: Cultural Impact on Creative Industries

This SMU-XO was designed with the following objectives:

- Provide an advanced understanding of the theoretical and empirical work on the psychological studies of creativity/innovation and relevant areas (e.g., design thinking, creative cognition, the roles of bicultural identity and multicultural experience in creativity) conducted to date by the main scholars in the field
- Offer students a working knowledge of these theoretical and applied issues through the case study of the iconic department store with the longest history in Taiwan, the Hayashi Department Store
- Engage SMU students in hands-on cross-cultural collaboration experience with the Taiwanese students from National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) through working together on the client-based project

This course comprised three components: seminar sessions in SMU, a two-day symposium held at SMU that brought together students and faculty members from both SMU and NCKU, and a one-week study mission to Tainan, Taiwan. As an essential course component, the Taiwan field trip provided students with cultural immersive experiences where they gained the insights of applying and exemplifying what they have learnt in the real world.



K.P. COMPANY LIMITED



ACCT001 Accounting Study Mission (Asian-Laos)

This SMU-XO course was designed with the following objectives:

- Understand Laos and its political economic development and socio-political diversity
- Solve real-world problems through a student consultancy project
- Incorporate experiential and peer-learning
- Incorporate active mentoring by faculty and project sponsors
- Learn how to handle uncertainty in a project

The course also provided students with a deeper understanding of Laos and its political economic development and socio-political diversity. In addition to visiting companies and organizations operating across a range of industry areas in Laos, students also worked with K.P. Company Limited - a prominent Laotian family-owned business – to solve real-life issues faced by the accounting/finance functions of the company. The first component of the course included six seminar sessions in Singapore and a Skype call held during Week 2 (3 hours) with the project sponsor. The second component of the course entailed a weeklong Study Mission to Luang Prabang and Vientiane, Laos from 8 - 15 December 2018.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE STUDY MISSION

Prior to the **Psychology Study Mission** to Tainan, Angela shared that students attended three seminar sessions, which introduced them to most current theories and empirical investigations about culture and creativity. Additionally, a two-day symposium was held at the SMU Labs. The event congregated students and faculty members from both SMU and NCKU and featured *state-of-the-art* research that informed theoretical and practical applications of culture in creative industries. There was also a presentation showcase of students' project proposals based on the client's problem. A Design Thinking workshop was also organised for the students as part of the Symposium. Students were equipped with the knowledge and skills of creative problem solving, which they eventually applied when trying to solve the client's problem.



Before embarking on their **Accounting Study Mission** to Laos, Clarence focused on equipping his students with knowledge about Laos (e.g. history, culture and traditions, economy, political developments and relationships with other ASEAN countries including Singapore). Students reviewed a learning package on Laos ([link](#)), which was a collaborative effort put together by the SMU-X team, CTE and the SMU Libraries. Thereafter, Clarence asked his students to deliver individual presentations on their understanding about the country.



PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH GLOBAL EXPOSURE THROUGH CULTURAL AND COMPANY VISITS



To expose students to the culture of Tainan, the students in Angela and Chi-Ying's course visited places of interest in Tainan City. Chi-Ying shared that the students visited the Hayashi Department Store and were treated to an invited guest lecture by Mr. Yeh Chung-Li, the founding Chief Executive Officer of the Department Store. Chi-Ying shared how the students benefitted from the lecture, where Mr. Yeh walked students through the rich culture and history of Tainan. Students also visited the Institute of Creative Industries Design (ICID) and attended a Design Thinking workshop conducted by Associate Professor Yang Chia-Han to further develop their understanding in design thinking.



Clarence shared about how his students' understanding of Laos were deepened via the visits to places of interests (e.g. Monk's alm procession, Wat Xieng Thong Temple, the Royal Palace and the Buffalo Dairy Centre), and the visits to companies (e.g. K.P. Company Limited, National University of Laos, Laos Security Exchange, BCEL, EDL-Generation Company and KPMG). The tour of K.P.'s premises and operations and the discussions with the potential users provided students with a greater understanding of the ground truths that proved useful in improving students' proposed solutions.

DELIVERING PROJECT SOLUTIONS

For the **Psychology Study Mission**, Chi-Ying highlighted that understanding the target audience as key to devising creative strategies to enhance the business growth of Hayashi Department Store. Students were made to compare the wants, goals and challenges of the local customers and tourists. Based on their data analyses, students diagnosed that the department store could benefit from the use of more engaging storytelling methods, encouraging employees to interact with the customers and share stories about the products and artefacts in the store, and expanding space for bold presentations of promotional materials. This information, together with the utilisation of multiple cultural lens and creative theories, was used to develop prototypes on floor layouts and marketing brochures. The winning team created a mock-up of the Hayashi showroom that displayed many artefacts that reflected the rich and cultural heritage of Tainan.



For the **Accounting Study Mission**, one key area of the students' work with K.P. focused on exploring how to extract insights from K.P.'s existing accounting data. Clarence shared the two-part approach that his students took in solving the sponsor's problem. Prior to visiting Laos, Clarence released the bulk of the data to his students in Week 1 along with the rest of the project details. In the weeks leading up to the Study Mission, he also requested for additional data from the company. This data was released to students as and when it was received. His students met with the client via the Skype call in Week 2 as part of the problem diagnosis and fact finding stage. Three key student consultancy areas stemmed out of the discussion: building balanced scorecards and dashboards to give senior managers insights into the performance of their Yamaha and Bridgestone sub-units, performing valuation analyses for the Yamaha and Bridgestone sub-units, and putting forth recommendations to the sponsor for setting up an overseas holding company. Students also presented on their proposals (Week 5) and progress (Week 10) to Clarence and the Adjunct Teaching Mentor to ensure that they were on track to completing their projects. The projects concluded with final presentations and reports by students to K.P.'s senior management in Laos.



HEARING FROM OUR STUDENTS

Tan Peng Peng, a third-year student at SOSS, who went on the **Psychology Study Mission** last December, was invited to share her experiences. She recounted how working in a team which consisted undergraduate and postgraduate students, and the differing working styles of SMU students and the Taiwanese students, had taught her about the importance of communication. Peng Peng also shared that it was challenging having to deal with ambiguity at the start of the project. She quoted that “students not knowing that they did not know what the sponsor wanted” was exasperating. However, students were able to overcome this with guidance from the Instructors to relook and rescope the client’s problem. Overall, she found the learning experience of working on a real-world project gratifying and eye opening.

Aw Jia Yu, a final-year student at Lee Kong Chian School of Business, who went on the **Accounting Study Mission** last December, was invited to share his experiences. Despite the rigour and demands of the course, he viewed that the pros greatly outweighed the cons. Jia Yu shared how working on real-world projects and the process of applying classroom learning to solve the sponsors’ problems, gave him the opportunity to appreciate the importance of sound accounting practices to organisations. He also benefitted from the interactions with the Laotians, citing them as “very friendly” and forthcoming in sharing their knowledge and ideas with him. Jia Yu added that the work did not stop after the final project presentation. The students worked tirelessly to incorporate the clients’ feedback and suggestions into their solutions before handing over the prototypes to the managers. The mix of SOA and non-SOA team members provided diverse and complementary skill sets and perspectives which he appreciated greatly.

ENSURING COURSE SUCCESS

Angela, Chi-Ying and Clarence spoke of how they overcame the challenges by turning them into opportunities:

1. **Scope the projects in a way that benefit the sponsors and which students can manage.** Angela, Chi-Ying and Clarence emphasised the need for clearly defined project objectives. Scoping the projects was useful in ensuring that expectations were clearly established and communicated to students (e.g. workload, deliverables, timeline etc.), so that everyone is on the same page. Angela and Chi-Ying scheduled 1-hour consultation sessions with each student group to alleviate their concerns, check on their progress, and provided feedback on their project proposals. Clarence’s students presented on their proposals and progress updates to the sponsors.
2. **Extend preparations for the study missions outside of the seminar rooms.** Besides conducting seminar sessions on relevant theories, research findings and their applications, several sharing platforms were put in place to allow students to interact and exchange ideas with one another, industry and faculty experts, and the project sponsors. For instance, in Angela and Chi-Ying’s class, they organised design thinking workshops and a symposium for students to present on their initial project proposals to the sponsors. Clarence also had students reviewed curated resources to better understand the history, culture, economy and politics of Laos before the trip. While overseas, students went on cultural and company visits to engage with the sponsors, which led to improvements in the quality of their project solutions.
3. **Support students in their roles as “Project Consultants”.** In this respect, guidance from the instructors was critical as students could not immediately identify themselves as professionals confident of giving advice on the best practices to use in a given situation, and had little prior knowledge and experience with working on real-world projects. Some ways Angela, Chi-Ying and Clarence implemented to support their students in their roles as Project Consultants included:
 - providing students with guidance on problem solving frameworks (e.g. Design Thinking) and data cleaning computational skills (e.g. Visual Basics Programming Language)
 - having multi-discipline and multi-nationality student teams
 - arranging cultural and company visits
 - organising guest speaker lectures/workshops
 - having discussions with sponsors prior to the final presentations and report submissions for their feedback and to evaluate the practicality of the proposed solutions, and
 - hiring Adjunct Teaching Mentor (for Clarence’s class)
 - allowing for flexibility in the activity schedule and being open to arranging unplanned visits/activities



SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF SMU-XO COURSES

The SMU-X team and CTE works collaboratively in rendering support to faculty members who are keen to teach SMU-XO courses. The areas of support rendered by the SMU-X team include:

- Recce Trip for faculty member to visit the partner and/or partner university to assess its suitability for the XO course (case-by-case approval)
- Project and Partnership
- On Boarding Online Resource ([link](#)) and Advisory for Instructors
- Adjunct Teaching Mentor
- Teaching/Research Assistant
- Course Related Student Expenses
- Student Workshops and Online Resources
- Corporate Gifts

The areas of pedagogical support from CTE include:

- SMU-X Toolkit: CTE and the SMU-X team have curated relevant resources and best practices to better support SMU-X instructors in the design and delivery of X courses. Click [here](#) to access the latest copy of the Toolkit (login required).
- SMU Experiential Education Day (SEED): Initiated by CTE in partnership with SMU-X Team, SEED serves as a platform where faculty members share their expertise with the SMU academic community in experiential learning and/or its related topics. Each issue of the SEED Digest contains a summary of the presentation by the invited SMU instructor(s), best practices on designing and teaching SMU-X courses, and/or some reflections by their students who took the course. Click [here](#) to access past issues of SEED Digest.
- Teaching Consultation: CTE offers one-to-one consultations to faculty colleagues concerning any teaching issues on SMU-X courses related to course design/redesign, assessments and instructional strategies.



This SEED Digest is produced by the Centre for Teaching Excellence.
Please contact us at cte@smu.edu.sg to feature your stories and insights on best practices in designing and teaching experiential learning courses. We welcome your feedback!