

# Work in Progress - Fine-Tuning an Engineering Study Abroad Program

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**Abstract** – The University of Kentucky (UK) College of Engineering (CoE) has had a long-standing credit-transfer relationship with INTI International University College (INTI). In Spring 2006, two UK sophomores enrolled in ICM to begin what we hoped would be a vibrant and self-sustaining program. This paper will provide: an overview of the two institutions' motivation for starting this innovative study abroad program; a summary of the operational program details, including the participant support structure and efforts to ensure maximum course credit transferability; experiences of the first two participants, as recorded in a pre-departure guide; results of the recruitment and subsequent enrollment of the second study abroad cohort; and UK's formal program evaluation. Administrative details will be offered as counsel to other U.S. engineering colleges interested in study abroad relationships with similar American university programs. A more thorough overview of program benefits and current status is deferred until the paper presentation.

*Index Terms* – Assessment, International, Malaysia, Study abroad.

## CAMPUS PROFILES

The University of Kentucky ([www.uky.edu](http://www.uky.edu)) in Lexington is the state's comprehensive, land-grant university, with a campus population of 27,209. The College of Engineering (CoE) offers B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in eight program areas, as well as a B.S. in a new Computer Engineering major. The total number of undergraduates is 1835 and, interestingly, 90% are considered Kentucky residents for tuition-setting purposes. In support of the 2006-09 UK Strategic Plan, the College of Engineering has set a goal of 40 study abroad participants per annum by 2009.

INTI International University College ([www.inti.edu.my](http://www.inti.edu.my)) is comprised of multiple campuses in Malaysia, China, and Indonesia. Three American University Programs (AUPs) currently are in operation: INTI College Malaysia (ICM), in Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan; INTI College Subang Jaya (ICSJ); and INTI International College Penang (IICP). ICM is INTI's main campus and approximately 35% of INTI's 4000 students are "international". Besides the American

Degree Transfer Program, INTI also conducts twinning programs with a number of universities in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia. Students now obtain overseas degrees in Business Administration, Computer Science, Business Information Technology, and Engineering through the Degree Completion Program (3+0) at INTI, and a 4+0 American Business Degree in Marketing and Management launched in January 2007.

## PROGRAM ORIGINS

In the late 1980s, UK and Metropolitan College (MC) entered into a twinning arrangement, wherein students enrolled in an AUP in either engineering or business, with guaranteed credit transfer. During the last 20 years, it is estimated that over 400 students transferred to, and eventually graduated from, UK. After the Southeast Asia financial crisis in 1997-98, the UK-MC twinning program suffered a gradual decline, and in 2004 INTI purchased MC. INTI's data (Jan. 2007) shows that 219 students have transferred to UK since 1991, with a high of 41 in 1993. Over the past ten years, the average number of transfers has been 5.1 per year.

In August 2005 the CoE Associate Dean for Commonwealth & International Programs met with principals within the INTI Center for AUP and INTI's engineering administration. On the strength of over 70 specific INTI-to-UK transfer equivalencies, including equivalencies for several lower-division, transfer-critical courses, such as Statics, Dynamics, Thermodynamics I, and Circuits I, they agreed that a pilot cohort of UK study abroad students would be recruited for INTI's January 2006 intake. Consequently, two UK engineering sophomores (co-authors) started courses at ICM on January 2, 2006, enrolled in 12 and 13 credit-hours, respectively. Transfer equivalencies had been confirmed by their home departments prior to the students' departure.

## PROGRAM DETAILS

While the reports of the experiences of the first two "pioneers," which are overwhelmingly positive, are presented elsewhere [1], recruitment of the second cohort is now complete, and with the pioneers' return to UK, a program assessment has been administered, using an instrument previously developed and tested at UK [2]. Lastly, with the

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