

Seeking Global Partners for Organizational Communication Students at Northern Illinois University
Joseph Scudder, Presidential Teaching Professor

The Department of Communication at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois has a large undergraduate program in Organizational/Corporate Communication that graduates about 140 students per year. A large theme in our course is examining how organizations promote and communicate sustainability in a global context. Sustainability includes not only sustaining a livable environment for future generations, but it also includes meaningful jobs and opportunities in a world with great income disparity. My overarching goal is to get my students out of their ethnocentric worlds to be able to see problems from the perspectives of other people around the world. Beyond this, I have several specific goals for which I seek global partners.

Goal 1: Stimulate our NIU communication students to create global networks where they interact with students in other countries to develop a broader perspective of what students in other countries see as most important in life. I believe these exchanges could be mutually beneficial. This could be as simple as email exchanges much like the pen pal concept from my childhood, but would probably involve Skype or other video exchanges as well. Media encourage many misconceptions about other countries and cultures such as how many people think most people from the USA live in big houses and ranches like they see on the US television program *Dallas* still running in syndication around the world from 20 years ago. This type of program could provide more realistic perspectives that would reveal similarities and differences.

Goal 2: Create videos for use in classes to exchange with your country. We would determine common topics for which our students would create group videos and then exchange them with your students. These would be videos like the quality found on YouTube rather than professional videos.

Goal 3: Provide short-term and longer-term study-abroad exchanges at a reasonable cost where students can see how values and thinking patterns are similar or different from their own perspective. My own perspective is that students will never see their world in the same way after they have been in a culture that differs substantially from their own.

Goal 4: Explore whether our students could provide assistance through their communication skills sets to assist NGOs, humanitarian organizations, and corporations. Our students receive training in persuasive communication, interpersonal communication, and organizational communication. Many of our students are very adept with various types of communication technology. This very complex level would probably be a very small number of students each year.

The students in our organizational/corporate communication emphasis are fairly diverse. About a third of our students are persons of color with many of our other students having family backgrounds from diverse parts of the world. We are located a little over an hour from the world-class city of Chicago.

My email address is jscudder@niu.edu. If any of this sounds interesting to you, drop me an email. I am open to other idea. From May 13-June16 I will be in various parts of southern Africa, including Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Victoria Falls, Livingstone, and Kasane. I can send you a copy of my itinerary. If you have time for a cup of tea or coffee, I would love to chat for an hour. My cell phone that I will be bringing is 01-815-895-1027.

Let's do something different together,

Joe Scudder