



Leadership in Fostering Academia and Industry Cooperation

Final Report of RNDr. Zdenek Vrbka

Background

I am doctoral student at Faculty of Informatics, Masaryk University (FI, MU), Brno, Czech Republic. In June 2009 I was appointed a coordinator for a Service Science, Management, and Engineering Program Coordinator (SSME – IBM worldwide program initiative), a master study program, which responds to the needs of business for qualified IT professionals. Apart from education in informatics, it provides students with a broad multidisciplinary overview, especially in management, presentation and communication skills, and drivers of a service economy.

Integral part of SSME study is a half-year internship in service-oriented company – so called Interim Project. Interim Project represents a mechanism of experience learning, which is an uncommon way of teaching at Czech universities. This scheme requires close cooperation with industrial companies and thus significant changes in the culture of Czech academia and industry, because they are not used to cooperate with each other in such a way. From SSME point of view, Interim Project prepares graduates for their immediate engagement in the business environment.

As a SSME Program Coordinator, I am responsible for Interim Project strategy, management, and communication with business partners. I work with the SSME Program Leader and prepare most of the strategic and operational documents. Before I left for the Young Leaders Program, I trained new SSME Program Coordinators and I am supposed to lead a team of three SSME Program Coordinators after my return.

The Young Leaders Program fits exactly my needs – I have expanded my leadership skills, learned more about change management, and learned more about American education system and cooperation of American universities with business.

Program Arrangement

The most difficult part of arranging my program was to satisfy all requirements of the Graduate School of Business at Loyola University, Chicago (GSB LUC) and to obtain US visa. Since my education is in IT and not in business and my diplomas are from outside the United States, GSB LUC was very demanding and I probably would have failed to successfully pass the application process in time without the enormous help of my friend, associate professor at Loyola Sandra Kumorowski, and Dr. Dordal, Director, Computer Science Graduate Program. Even with their tremendous help I acquired all documents required for US visa just two weeks before the start of my program and obtained my visa just six days before my departure to the United States.

American Partners

Loyola University, Chicago, was my partner for executive training, the first part of my internship. I also planned to attend the University of Washington, Seattle.

Graduate School of Business, Loyola University Chicago (GSB LUC) is one of the top business schools in the United States. Colleagues from LUC have great experience with organizing students' internship in business organizations and with leading of master study programs. I planned my stay at LUC from August 20 to November 20, 2010 (Fall Quarter 2010). To improve my leadership and management skills, I have selected the following courses:

- **Strategy and Leadership** – this capstone course explores the manner in which companies develop and implement a strategic plan and also examines characteristics of effective managers and leaders.
- **Organizational Change and Development** – this course focuses on the manager's role as a change agent in implementing effective change management and organizational development.
- At the same time I wanted to follow the teacher of **Software Quality, Metrics, and Testing** and the teacher of **Quality in Systems Development** to learn how testing is taught at an American university, to improve my teaching abilities and to adjust the content of my course **Testing**.

University of Washington, Seattle, has a Global Integrated Systems Engineering Program (GISE). Similarly to Faculty of Informatics, Masaryk University, Brno, the GISE includes student projects that enable students to fuse their knowledge from a previous semester and apply it to a real-world problem using real data and presenting their results to an evaluation panel comprised of practitioners, academics, and client representatives. I planned to attend my stay at UW from January 10 to February 15, 2011.

Brief Evaluation Statement

My program was an exciting journey full of opportunities, learning, networking, and exploring. All my objectives were met; some of them were even significantly exceeded.

My study at GSB LUC and research in cooperation between American academia and industry gave me deep insight into the American education system and inspiration for my responsibilities at home.

My personal experience is that the program cannot be planned in great details – the goal of the proposal and the criteria of the Young Leadership Program create a framework. What I found inspired me to adjust my plan and to use new opportunities. It was great to have an ally, Sandra Kumorowski, who encouraged me to take advantage of them.

Detailed Description

My partners were Graduate School of Business at Loyola University Chicago for my executive training and several US universities and study programs for my internship. Contrary to the original plan, I didn't split my stay into two separate phases. I needed to lower my expenses, because AFCSLS declined to cover my estimated budget for both phases. I stayed in the United States from August 25 to December 19, 2010.

I have passed my **executive training** at Graduate School of Business, Loyola University Chicago (GSB LUC). The study at GSB LUC was a great experience for me. I have learned key features of strategy, leadership and organizational change:

- **Strategy and Leadership (MGMT 430)** – This course mainly enabled me to learn the importance of strategic leadership for our SSME program and provided me with a framework to implement our long-term strategy. As part of the course, my colleague and I have designed the business plan for a US distributor of AdvaICT (company, spin-off of Masaryk University), which is willing to enter the US market. This business plan helped AdvaICT narrow their strategy for the US market and is highly appreciated by management of AdvaICT.

- **Organizational Change and Development (MGMT472)** – This course provided me with a deep understanding of organizational change management and effective framework for managing the significant changes in both academy and business culture, that SSME program at FI, MU represents. As part of the course, my colleagues and I have analyzed the recycling initiative of LUC from change management perspective and compared it with Green Campus initiative of Masaryk University. This activity increased the visibility of Masaryk University in the United States. Professor Anne Reilly, Ph.D., our instructor, also sent the paper "*Recycling Initiatives at Two Urban Universities*"¹ based on our final report to the North American Management Society Conference, Chicago. The paper was accepted and my colleagues will present it in March 2011.
- I also shared my experiences teaching testing and quality assurance with Plamen Petrov, teacher of course **COMP 370: Software Quality, Metrics, and Testing** at LUC.

My program at GSB LUC gave me a great insight into the American education system and enabled me to improve my teaching abilities. The level of cooperation with business and support of teamwork and soft-skills development is amazing – students work on real projects for real companies, work in teams and present their projects in classes, teachers use reputable case studies and bring real stories into their classes. American students, for example, pay high tuition and thus are highly motivated. Many GSB LUC students also start their MBA study after few years of work and have real business experience. For these and other reasons, it is difficult to apply all best practices from American universities to SSME program at FI MU. However, my study at GSB LUC provided me with many ideas to improve our SSME program.

At GSB LUC I also experienced many issues confronting foreign students. I highly appreciate the help of International Office at LUC and different social events organized by International Students Group. This experience prompts me to improve support for international students in our SSME program.

During my **internship** at several American Universities, I have met representatives from Loyola University Chicago, Northern Illinois University and North Carolina State University to learn more about cooperation between academia and business in the United States. I have visited different departments and talked to professors, faculty staff, students and even managers of students' businesses to gain deep insight into management of this cooperation and to learn more about pros and cons of different models of cooperation between academia and business. As a roommate of Michael Brosko, Director of Capital Planning and leader of Loyola Flats (students' business) I was also exposed to various aspects of students' education from experience learning perspective.

It was a great experience to see that experience learning significantly improves the ability of students to be immediately and effectively engaged in the business environment after their graduation. This confirms that our activities within SSME program at FI MU address the real needs of modern education system. Based on this experience, I have also identified new ideas for further development of the cooperation between SSME program at FI MU and companies in the Czech Republic.

To learn more about SSME programs in the United States, I have met representatives of SSME education, both in computer science and business, from North Carolina State University and Northern Illinois University. I have also visited IBM center in Raleigh, North Carolina and met with representatives of IBM who are responsible for the university relations to share our experiences from SSME studies and to discuss the possibilities of further cooperation.

It was a pleasure to see that education focused on service approach is highly supported and appreciated by both students and industry in the US. This again proves that our activities at FI MU are meaningful. I have also discussed the possibilities of students exchanges between SSME program at FI MU and several US universities and acquired specific contacts at Loyola University Chicago (Patrick M. Boyle, Associate Provost), North Carolina State University (Douglas S. Reeves, Director of

¹ Birger Buesching and Rita Gonzalez and Niyati Mehta and Jeff Roberts and Stephanie Szoko and Zdenek Vrbka and Anne H. Reilly, Ph.D. Recycling Initiatives at Two Urban Universities. In Proceedings of 47th Annual MBAA International Conference. USA, 2011.

Graduate Programs) and Northern Illinois University (Mark Rosenbaum, Fulbright Scholar) for further cooperation in development of students and teachers exchange programs.

Program Cost

My estimated expenses of \$20,000 were higher than the \$15,000 grant from AFCSLS. I decided to stay in the United States from August 25 to December 19, 2010, rather than splitting it into two separate phases. This reduced the cost of my program. Also, tuition was lower than I expected. I have co-financed the expenses for my study from my own resources and I should be granted some funding from FI MU. Estimated and real expenses are listed in the following table:

Item	Cost Estimate in US\$	Actual Cost in US\$
Executive training seminars	2 x 3,672	5,844
Internship	0	0
Administrative fees (visa, registration fees, etc.)	500	800
International travel	2 x 1,200	1100
Local transportation	500	900
Medical insurance	800	360
Monthly maintenance (accommodation, transportation, food)	2,000 (x 4 months)	8,400
Contingency	500	0
Total	20,044	17,404

I highly appreciate that AFCSLS provides sufficient resources to cover all necessary costs. This approach enables participant to fully focus on the goal of the program (for example visit more universities in more states to share experiences) without dealing with insufficient resources.

I encourage all future AFCLS participants to consult their estimated costs with their American partners in formulating their program budget.

Program Benefits

Main benefits of my study and internship are:

- I have enhanced my education and experiences in strategy and leadership and organizational change and gained many ideas for improving the SSME program at FI MU.
- I have gained deep insight into the American education system from the perspectives of teachers and students and gained inspiration for enhancing courses suitable for the SSME program at FI MU.
- I have seen cooperation of American universities and business and gained arguments, success stories and ideas for SSME program at FI MU.
- I have created many connections to US universities which can be used for further cooperation, especially teachers and students exchange.

I plan to use the outcomes of my AFCSLS program to further develop the SSME program at FI MU. I mainly plan to use my change management skills to improve the current state of experience learning between Czech academia and industry; my strategy skills to help with design of a long term development strategy for SSME program at FI MU; and my experiences from US universities to implement the best practices in our SSME program. To reach these goals I will create and lead a team of SSME program coordinators, use the ideas and energy of our students and closely collaborate with the leader of SSME program at FI MU.

Risks

The biggest risk related to the implementation of my new experiences and ideas at FI MU is given by different cultures and environments. Fortunately, my education in organizational change and development stressed the issues of different cultures and provided me with the framework how to transfer best practices between different cultures. I believe that my position of SSME program coordinator will allow me to successfully implement many of the ideas I gained and to further develop both teaching methods at SSME program and cooperation between FI MU and business.

Thank You Note

I would like to thank AFCSLS for providing me with the opportunity to enhance my education and experiences in the United States. I would like to thank my American colleagues, Sandra Kumorowski for her friendship, support and positive energy; Michael Brosko, my roommate, for his effort that enabled me better understand American culture. And last but not least I would like to thank my wife Monika, who supported me in my plans; and to all the people who enhanced my stay in the United States.