International Experiential Learning in Agriculture

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Introduction
To effectively train the next generation of agricultural professionals, universities must provide an education that recognizes the global nature of today’s societies and develops the skills needed to address issues that are multidisciplinary, diverse and complex. U.S. institutions must see opportunities to embrace globalization through learning, scholarship and engagement. These opportunities occur through the internationalization of curriculum by offering opportunities for faculty and students to participate in international research and educational programs. It is important, however, to look beyond international student internships simply as work experiences. Rather, the hallmark of international agricultural internships is the concept of applied academics, wherein internships are designed to help the student gain a clearer perspective of a set of core and discipline specific competencies that are transferable to any work or career setting.

Purpose
The purpose of this carousel presentation is to discuss the development of guidelines in learning/teaching systems and evaluation methodology to evaluate the role of preflection/reflection in the learning process of students completing agricultural internships abroad.

Method
With funding from a USDA Challenge Grant, Iowa State University, in collaboration with Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESM), Mexico, is exploring an innovative theoretical perspective called preflection, which is the process of being consciously aware of the expectations associated with the learning experience. Research drawn from this collaboration will be utilized in the carousel presentation.

Major Points
Preflection will increase interns’ capabilities for focusing on learning during subsequent concrete learning experiences. While Kolb (1984) combined the concepts of reflection and experiences in his formulation of a four-state experiential learning cycle model, the expanded view presented here creates preflection as a new starting point. Students who are involved in facilitated preflection will be able to utilize the process of reflecting upon concrete learning experience in a greater degree than will those students who receive no preflective facilitation. The model proposed suggests that preflection increases the readiness capacity of students to learn from their experiences, thereby increasing their capacity to reflect upon the concrete experience and increasing the overall learning by the student. Preflection provides a bridge between thinking about an experience and actually learning from the experience.

Lessons Learned
Over the years, Iowa State University has offered and managed hundreds of internship experiences for graduate and undergraduate students, focused primarily on the work experience and on the concept of applied academics wherein internships help the student gain a clearer perspective of a set of core competencies that are transferable to any career setting. Preflection adds an
important component to developing core competencies and has the potential to further aid students in being able to reflect using higher order thinking responses and to generate knowledge.

**Educational Importance**

The research being conducted as part of this USDA Challenge Grant can result in a new paradigm for learning that will allow students, professors, and worksite supervisors to integrate the concepts of *preflection* into their collective skills for development of new knowledge.

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![Diagram](image)

**Enhanced Learning**

- Reflective Observation (observing)
- Concrete Experience (feeling)
- Preflection (preparing)
- Active Experimentation (doing)
- Abstract Conceptualization (thinking)