

**Embracing Internationalization in Higher Education: Introducing an Interdisciplinary  
International Degree Program to Produce Globally Competent Students**

L. Jade Halliburton  
Louisiana State University  
268 E Knapp Hall, Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Phone: 225.578.5850  
lhalli1@lsu.edu

Shelli E. Danjean  
Louisiana State University  
268 E Knapp Hall, Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Phone: 985.607.4045  
sdanje1@lsu.edu

J. Joey Blackburn  
225 Knapp Hall, Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Phone: 225.578.7892  
jjblackburn@lsu.edu

J.C. Bunch  
Louisiana State University  
223 Knapp Hall, Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
Phone: 225.578.2108  
jcbunch@lsu.edu

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**Introduction**

The future of agriculture in the United States rests upon the ability to develop globally competent professionals (Navarro, 2005; Doerfert, 2011). As such, U.S. land-grant universities have been called to reassess their current priorities and adopt internationalization into their institutional missions (Doerfert, 2011; Norris & Gillespie, 2009). Contemporary higher education must be designed to produce graduates well versed in global issues and knowledgeable about the world and its people (Moriba, Edwards, Robinson, Cartmell, & Henneberry, 2012). Upon graduation, many agriculture students will be expected to participate as global citizens and compete in a culturally integrated workplace (Navarro, 2005; Schnusenber, de Jong, & Goel, 2012). Moreover, these graduates must possess a developed global mindset, the ability to enter a diverse workplace with clientele of various cultures, and a knowledge base of global agriculture that allows them to approach local issues by framing them within the global scope (Childress, 2009; Ludwig, 2007; Navarro, 2005; Norris & Gillespie, 2009; Schnusenber et al., 2012). After all, “global citizenship does not come with our genetic structure,” but is acquired through education (Hamelink, 1999, p. 6). Therefore, the department of Agricultural and Extension Education and Evaluation (AEEE) at Louisiana State University has implemented an extensive, international focus area into its graduate framework that includes coursework across multiple disciplines, international experiences, and an internship abroad.

**How it Works**

Agricultural and Extension Education faculty at Louisiana State University were formally moved from the College of Education (COE) to the College of Agriculture (COA) beginning with the 2014–2015 academic year. Currently, the graduate program in Agricultural and Extension Education (AEEE) is in the process of transitioning from the COE to the COA. This transition has provided an opportunity to refocus the departmental mission from one focused solely on traditional agricultural education (i.e., teacher training/extension professional development) to one focused on preparing students for agricultural and extension education on a global scale. As part of the effort to fulfill this mission, an interdisciplinary graduate level concentration area in international agriculture, housed in AEEE, was proposed and approved by Louisiana State University faculty. This international concentration area is a non-thesis option, inclusive of a comprehensive exam and requiring 18 core credit hours through AEEE and 12 credit hours of approved courses for the international concentration. Unique to Louisiana State University’s program is an expansive list of approved courses across departments, which allows for an unprecedented interdisciplinary approach in agricultural and extension education. Further, as part of this program, students are required to obtain six credit hours through study abroad and/or

international internship. Graduate students may choose from various opportunities and destinations that best suit their interests and research/career goals.

### **Results to Date**

Currently, this degree program is in its final stages of university approval. However, one student has enrolled in the current master's degree program and will formally switch to the international concentration of the AEEE master's degree once the program is officially approved. The department has been actively recruiting both domestic and international students for the degree program and hopes to increase enrollment over the next few years.

### **Costs**

To date, departmental expenses do not exist for establishing this area of concentration. However, student cost includes tuition, fees, books, and the cost of living abroad during the internship experience and/or study abroad experience. It is estimated to cost a student \$20,000 to complete and successfully earn the degree.

### **Future Plans**

Faculty in AEEE at Louisiana State University will continue recruiting actively for this master's degree program and, upon formal university approval, will begin advertising the international concentration area online and through other university outlets. Once the program has reached two years of continuance, AEEE faculty will evaluate the program and seek ways to improve upon the existing approach. One of the ways in which this is to take place is through graduate interviews and evaluations. Lastly, diligent efforts will be made to establish new connections for graduate student internship opportunities and global experiences.

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