

Cooperative Education in the Andean Countries: A Case Study of International Education Efforts

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Since 2001, the Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM) at The George Washington University (GW) has managed a cooperative education program with a network of nine respected universities in South America. This “governance and political management” program serves working professionals in the civil service, political party offices, advocacy groups, non-governmental organizations, labor unions, business leaders, and the press, not unlike working professionals described in UPCEA’s 2009 publication, *The New Face of Higher Education: Lifelong Learning Trends*. GSPM faculty travel to the region to lead weekend workshops to educate these working professionals in the tools, skills, and strategic management of communication, organization, and advocacy—an education not otherwise available in the region. Over 7,000 students have graduated from the GSPM program since its launch.

International programs advance GW’s goal of being a global university, but they are difficult to design, launch, and maintain. GSPM’s innovation was to create the program with a sponsor in the region and to provide faculty to teach in programs offered, administered, and accredited in the regional nations. This cooperative-education model allows GSPM to focus on the content of the courses while the sponsor funds the effort and regional partners administer the program.

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The GSPM program can be a useful model for creating a cooperative international program that meets an educational need, addresses the challenges of running such a program, and successfully launches a partnership to bring world-class coursework to an underserved audience.

THE NEED: LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS

Latin America's democracies are quite young; despite having won independence from Spain almost two centuries ago, most of the countries faced a long road to mature democracy. Revolutions and military coups intervened from time to time, with the current democracies only taking root in the 1970s and 1980s. Economic development followed, as these nations tried to emerge from decades of weak growth.¹ Their economies had depended almost exclusively on extractive industries (mining, logging) and agriculture, and regional political and business leaders knew they would need to diversify their economies if they were going to grow. In addition to aid programs from global partners such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, the five Andean nations (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela) jointly founded the Corporación Andina de Fomento (Andean Development Corporation, or CAF) in 1966 to invest in economic development.

These efforts all underscored an issue that demanded attention: no amount of economic aid would ever achieve the goal of building strong, diversified economies connected effectively into the emerging global economy without political stability.² Leaders realized that without that, only those powerful enough to take what they wanted would share economic benefits, not the whole population (García 187-202). None of the regional political systems were mature—that is, they had not become fully accepted by all their citizens, nor were all the citizens yet able to participate in their own government.

Further, political parties in Latin America had not become institutionalized in most countries. Parties were frequently cults of personality, built around a famous politician, and when the politician retired from politics, the party had to rebuild around some new heroic figure.³ Citizens were asked for their votes every four years during election season, but then were ignored after the winners took office. Most Latin American nations also have a long tradition of strong, centralized state power—the regional and local governments, if there are any, are weak and ineffective—and they suffer from the same lack of ongoing connection to the citizenry that the national parties

face. When some local official of a government or a party was successful, they usually were promoted rapidly to a position in the capital, robbing their localities of political talent. In this environment, political legitimacy is difficult to build. And if the citizens did not trust their leaders, instability was likely to persist—with obvious and negative implications for regional economic development (Stein et al. 22-124).

In 2000-01, CAF determined that it needed to help build a cadre of effective political leaders in the Andean states if their own development work was to succeed. CAF decided to focus on building effective local political leaders, knowing that political stars would rise to regional and national positions over time. CAF realized that no training programs or educational opportunities that were required existed in the region. IDB and Organization of American States officials in the region and at the Washington, DC, headquarters of the two organizations discovered a possible partner for this training program at The George Washington University: The Graduate School of Political Management.

GSPM's mission is "to make politics better by educating students and professionals in the tools, principles and values of participatory democracy, preparing them for careers as ethical and effective advocates and leaders at the international, national, and local levels," and has been training students to become effective, ethical political leaders since its founding in 1986 in New York City by lawyer and long-time political activist Neil Fabricant.⁴ GSPM moved to Washington in 1991 and became part of George Washington in 1995. Now a division of GW's College of Professional Studies, GSPM has more than 500 students from around the US pursuing five graduate certificates, three master's degrees, and an undergraduate exchange program (Semester in Washington). The College of Professional Studies offers associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees in 17 fields that address emerging professions in the Washington metropolitan region. GSPM's five graduate certificates—PACs (Political Action Committees) and Political Management; Public Relations; Community Advocacy; Online Politics; and Campaign Strategy—and three degree programs—Legislative Affairs, Political Management, and Strategic Public Relations—prepare students for professional success in the field of applied politics. Rather than focusing on the theoretical study of politics, which is the aim of political science, applied politics refers to the skills, knowledge, and strategy required for effective participation in politics—as a candidate, campaign manager, pollster, media consultant, fundraiser, public affairs specialist, or lobbyist.⁵

THE CHALLENGE: WORKING IN LATIN AMERICA

Having discovered a potential partner in the United States, CAF quickly became aware that working with a US institution would complicate the effort to launch its political development program in Latin America. CAF would need to address the challenges that a US-based partner would confront: cost, connection, culture, and credit.

Cost

It was immediately obvious that bringing the envisioned number of students from South America to Washington for the program would be unbearably expensive. In addition to the travel costs of several hundred students, CAF would have to house and feed them in Washington, DC, one of the most expensive metropolitan regions in the United States. CAF would also need to pay for the coursework. GSPM's own experience with short courses bears out this analysis. GSPM hosts three conferences for Latin American political leaders on the GW campus every year: two- to three-day courses in the spring and fall, and a weeklong seminar every July. Total costs (travel, seminar registration, food, and lodging) run to nearly \$5,000 for the short courses, and as much as \$10,000 for the summer course.⁶

An additional cost made the idea of doing the program at GW's main campus untenable: the target students are all working professionals, and would have to leave their jobs, families, and homes to attend courses in Washington. The idea of losing that much worktime made participation impossible for the students who most needed this education.

This analysis made it clear that the program would have to take place in Latin America, where the students lived and worked. The cost of sending a US-based instructor to the region for a short time to lead a workshop was much more reasonable, and CAF knew it could sustain such a program.

Connection

Although the program would be more economical to run in the region, operating in the region with faculty from GW would be tough to manage logistically. Who would identify the students, enroll them, and manage their attendance? Where would the courses take place? Where would participants stay while attending a workshop? How would student questions be answered? A Washington-based, primarily English-speaking faculty like the GSPM would be at a double disadvantage in trying to develop and manage a regional education program alone.

CAF recognized this early on and began to explore partnerships with regional schools as a way to handle the necessary logistical tasks. Working with a consultant in Washington, Luis Raul Matos, a former Venezuelan government minister with extensive educational and professional connections around South America, CAF envisioned a network of host schools in the Andean countries that could monitor and supervise the students, leaving the direct teaching tasks to GSPM's faculty.

Culture

The idea of creating a regional educational network also addressed the third concern for the emerging CAF program: the potential for a cultural disconnect between GSPM's faculty and their potential students in South America. Would GSPM's faculty be able to understand the very different history and political systems of South America? Could GSPM faculty adapt their coursework to local mores and local needs? How would they identify those needs? And of course, in addition to the historical and cultural differences, there was the language gap—few of the likely students would be adept at English, and almost none of the GSPM faculty could teach in Spanish.

Partnership with regional schools could provide the context, culturally appropriate topics and examples, and translation help with class materials, readings in Spanish, and research support. Each GSPM faculty member could share his or her materials with host universities in the region, and adapt or modify those materials so that the course would be effective in that particular setting.

As an example, the introductory workshop, "Politics and Public Policy," explores the intersection of party politics and government policymaking. In English, the idea is clear and the examples, drawn from US national politics, offer instances of how political decisions shape policy outcomes and how policy goals influence political battles. In Spanish, however, "politics" and "public policy" are the same thing: la política. So the workshop evolved, becoming "El entorno político de elaborar políticas públicas," or "The Political Environment of Public Policy-making," which expressed the same idea in a manner that would make sense in Peru. The workshop used healthcare reform as a prime example because Latin Americans understand the challenges of maintaining national healthcare systems, and this example would demonstrate the differences between US policymaking and political structures and those of Latin America.

Credit

CAF consultant Luis Raul Matos identified a final, key challenge: How could CAF address the cultural, legal, and institutional difficulties that make international joint degrees so tough to design, build, and run? GW, like many large American universities, has a complicated process for establishing new degree programs. Each of GW's nine colleges⁷ reviews proposals from internal divisions (programs or departments) and forwards the promising proposals to the registrar and the vice president for academic affairs (provost) for final approval. It is difficult to create joint, inter-college programs sponsored by multiple GW colleges, which is one of the reasons GW founded its College of Professional Studies in 2001 as an incubator for such cross-disciplinary programs. The educational, management, legal, and accreditation hurdles faced by a multidisciplinary program to be offered by GW and partner universities in South America were likely to be insurmountable without a major, long-term effort. Not only does GW have a complicated process for vetting new degrees, each of the partner universities in Latin America would also have to comply with its own nation's degree-approval processes, managed centrally by the ministries of education in the respective countries. CAF's program would not be able to launch soon unless an alternative to this long, drawn-out process could be devised.

CAF's solution was to base any degree-granting portions of the program in the partner universities in the region. GSPM's faculty would in essence be hired by the host university to teach the specific course as a part of a designated program at the host university. Since the GSPM is not offering the program for academic credit and since GW does not have to manage either an internal joint program or a joint degree program with the regional network of schools, CAF could avoid asking either GW or the regional universities to wade into the complicated business of international joint degrees.

THE POLITICAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAM

The "political management and governance program" developed by the GSPM and CAF consists of three modules, each of which is offered in a series of weekend seminars led by a GSPM professor traveling to the campus or extension site of one of the regional partner universities. Each regional partner schedules workshops in coordination with the GSPM Latin American office. The partners select those portions of the program most

useful in their countries, and the required GSPM faculty then travel to the partner's site(s) to lead the workshops.

The first module, "Governance and Political Management," includes the introduction to political management and how it differs from political science; the political environment of public policy-making; strategic planning and transformational leadership; ethics in politics; and how political management connects to political marketing (how most Latin Americans study politics—as a type of marketing concentrating on party brands and candidates).

The second module, "Management of Technology," deals with the way political players in and out of government can use technology to foster better relations between the government and the citizens. The main focus is on using emerging technologies to create a system of interaction where none previously existed: social media, cell phones, and good websites can help share information and hear concerns and questions from the populace. In addition, this module offers instruction on budget and tax policy, and project management and development.

The third module, "Communication and Social Management," builds on the previous two and closes the program with workshops on management of social projects (developing and launching projects that involve government-citizen participation), strategic communication with the government (for parties, candidates, non-governmental organizations, and advocacy groups), advanced political marketing, and grassroots politics (how to organize, educate, and train citizens to take part in advocacy).

The GSPM Latin American office plans visits by GSPM faculty to the region to provide the modules each regional partner requests. The full program is designed so that students can complete it in one year; this means that GSPM cycles through all three modules in every partner country each academic year.

THE CAF-GSPM PARTNERSHIP

After drafting the program described above (completed by Luis Raul Matos and GSPM faculty), CAF then proposed to GSPM in 2001 that the GSPM and CAF create a network of local universities in South America to help launch the local governance program. CAF's proposed network consisted of two entities: a Latin American office in GSPM to develop and teach the courses, and the local network of universities in the Andean countries to recruit and manage the students. CAF agreed to grant the necessary fund-

ing to GSPM for the office in Washington, and also provided sufficient funding to each of the regional partner universities to support the work of building and launching the program. The figure depicts the relationships among the key offices.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE PLAYERS IN THE CAF-GSPM NETWORK

Since its inception in 2001, CAF has supported the office of Latin American programs in GSPM, currently staffed by two people. Luis Raul Matos joined the GW faculty as a research professor and leads the office, supported by one full-time staffer and two to three research assistants, partially funded by the CAF grant. Because of his long political and professional career in Venezuela, Matos brings to the GSPM instant credibility in the region, and his skilled efforts in designing the program and establishing the network are key to the whole project: Matos is, in effect, GSPM’s ambassador to Latin America. The office developed the required coursework in conjunction with GSPM teaching faculty, built the regional network, and plans the trips for faculty going to the region to conduct the workshops. The office monitors three to five trips per semester. Each trip lasts two to five days, and can involve visits to up to three separate universities or extension campuses in the region.

The second half of the CAF program consists of the regional network, which now comprises nine universities⁸ in South America and Mexico; CAF issues grants to each of the member universities to support its participation in the network. Table 1 lists the participating universities since 2001.

Bolivia	Universidad del Valle
Colombia	Universidad de Francisco de Paula Santander
	Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga
	Universidad del Rosario
Ecuador	Pontificia Universidad Católica de Ecuador
	Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayquil
Perú	Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú
Venezuela	Universidad Católica Andrés Bello
México	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Table 1: Participating regional universities, 2001–2010

Each CAF network partner offers a graduate degree for working professionals with the precise nature of the degree differing from country to country. The discipline of political science is nascent in Latin America, and only two programs (at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú and the Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil) offer master's degrees in political science and political management, respectively. The remaining programs are usually housed in business schools and are called "MBAs in political marketing."

The local universities advertise the CAF program, recruit the students, register them for classes, and integrate the GSPM courses into their curriculum. Since the GSPM coursework is offered as a component of their degrees, the host universities incorporate grades from GSPM courses into their transcripts and manage the accreditation, credentialing, and graduation requirements they must adhere to under the laws and regulations of their particular ministry of education.

Program support from CAF allows the host universities to hire an administrative staffer to help manage the program at the local universities. CAF also assists the host universities with upgrades of the existing extension services so that extension offices can support the CAF-sponsored students. While several of the partners offer their courses on their main campuses, many of the participating universities were selected because they provided comprehensive extension services, which allow CAF's governance program to reach almost everywhere in the target nations.

CAF support has also been vital in helping regional universities explore possible new degree programs. Both the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú (Lima, Peru) and the Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil (Ecuador) were able to develop and launch their master's programs (political science in Lima and governance and political management in Guayaquil) in part through support from CAF; the additional faculty and administrative support made possible by the CAF grants also allowed for course development and curriculum expansion at the two universities.

CAF's initial annual grant of \$200,000 allowed the GSPM to work in all five Andean countries; the grant was doubled in 2006 to grow to nine nations by 2010. Table 2 lists the countries the program has operated in over time.

Year	Countries Added to CAF Program
2001-02	Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Venezuela
2007-08	México, Dominican Republic
2008-09	Argentina
2009-10	Brazil
2011	Panama (planned)

Table 2: Growth of CAF program, 2001–2011

Future plans for the CAF program include two new initiatives, as well as continuing current relationships with regional partners. First, GSPM is raising funds to support as many as four research assistants to help the Latin American office with its work. These assistantships go to political management students from Latin America, making it possible for more international students to attend graduate school in Washington. The office can do more with additional staff, and since each student is fluent in both English and Spanish, the research assistants have enabled GSPM faculty to revise all their courses and improve them significantly. Second, GSPM has proposed a new graduate certificate on strategic governance and political management to be offered in Spanish. If approved, the certificate will be delivered as a hybrid program: two courses in Washington, and four completely online. The certificate would also be the first credit-bearing program at GW offered entirely in a foreign language. If the program is successful—marketing targets 20 to 25 students per year—the GSPM Latin American office is also working on a second certificate to supplement the initial program; taken together, the two graduate certificates would be combined into a master of professional studies degree in political management.

CONCLUSION

International education is a worthy effort for the US institution and for the local students. GSPM's local governance program also advances George Washington University's goal of being a global school. GW's role in making politics better in Latin America is noted by all GW's regional partners, and by the more than 7,000 graduates of the program since 2001.

These programs are complex, challenging, and expensive, and navigating the realm of joint international degrees can prevent a program from launching. But with an ambassador to manage the program and a partner in the region to help finance and build local connections, such a program can address regional needs in a culturally appropriate way—and be successful. 🌐

A version of this paper was presented at the University Continuing Education Association's 94th Annual Conference in Boston, MA, on April 3, 2009, as a concurrent session for the Education in a Globalized World track.

ENDNOTES

1. Excellent economic overview data can be reviewed in Birdsall and Menezes.
2. García, especially chapters 1-5.
3. Mark P. Jones summarizes many of the challenges facing party politics in Latin America.
4. See the GSPM website for more details of the School's history and mission (<http://www.gspm.org/about-gspm>).
5. GSPM also offers an undergraduate program, which is particularly focused on opening political careers to underserved populations, including Native Americans, African Americans, and Latino students.
6. See the GSPM International website for details of the summer 2010 seminar (<http://gspminternational.org/>).
7. GW operated eight colleges and schools until 2001, when the Board of Trustees approved the formation of the College of Professional Studies. GW's Board of Trustees agreed in May 2010 to establish a tenth college, the College of Nursing, to open at the start of the 2011 academic year. This college will teach programs for associate's, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in nursing, and has been a part of the School of Public Health and Health Sciences. It will be the tenth stand-alone school at GW once it launches in 2011.
8. Several other universities in Argentina, Venezuela, and Mexico have worked with GSPM in recent years, but they are not formally members of CAF's program.

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