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TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING: LESSONS LEARNT FROM STINT TEACHING SABBATICALS

CALIE PAPERS #6

CALIE
SWEDEN-USA PROJECT FOR COLLABORATION, ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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This report examines how the different educational traditions in Sweden and the United States impact teaching and learning. To provide a point of departure for future discussions, this report aims to highlight the experiences of Swedish academics teaching at select American universities within the framework of the STINT Teaching Sabbatical program.

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Purpose

This report examines how the different educational traditions in Sweden and the United States impact teaching and learning. To provide a point of departure for future discussions, this report aims to highlight the experiences of Swedish academics teaching at select American universities within the framework of the STINT Teaching Sabbatical program.

Introduction and Background

CALIE Project[1]

Preparing for the needs and challenges of a future society is a common responsibility of universities worldwide. In order to strengthen the capacity of higher education and research to respond to these needs and long-term challenges, the university leadership of four Swedish universities—Lund University, University of Gothenburg, Stockholm University and Uppsala University—have joined together to explore the topics of academic leadership and renewal of education in the collaborative project CALIE: the Sweden-USA Project for Collaboration, Academic Leadership and Innovation in Higher Education. These topics are considered as key aspects for enabling change for the future.

The primary target group is university leadership. Through joint workshops and seminars with Stanford University, University of California at Berkeley and the University of Washington, the project participants will explore strategic and operational aspects of their work, share experience, best practices and strategies in order to inspire change in the participating institutions and to develop a platform for further academic collaboration. In addition, acknowledging that all participating universities have examples of good practice, study visits to and/or in-depth knowledge about selected educational programs/centres or other initiatives give the participants opportunities to compare and be inspired. The findings are being disseminated throughout the project via the project website and CALIE Papers. They will also be published in a final report and presented at a final conference. The project seeks to influence policy on a national level in Sweden and to be a source of inspiration to all Swedish universities.

Study Objective

As academic leaders around the world aim for academic excellence at their respective universities, there is a growing trend to investigate new and innovative educational models that aid in the education and graduation of globally minded graduates. The CALIE project has commissioned this report to review the similarities and differences in educational traditions in the United States and Sweden to gain insights and inspiration on teaching and learning for the future.

[1] Source: CALIE Paper #1 (https://calieproject.com/caliepapers/)

Structure

The authors of this report have identified some themes of relevance to the CALIE project and present them, along with concrete examples, in the following pages. These examples and experiences have been obtained by reviewing a dozen reports submitted by Swedish academics who taught for one semester at a US university, including the University of California at Berkeley, by way of the STINT Teaching Sabbatical program (see *Background 1. STINT Teaching Sabbatical program* for program details). The analysis also includes material from the CALIE visit to UC Berkeley and Stanford in October 2019 and in CALIE Paper #3. Sources remain anonymous, but, when relevant, the name of their host university is given. This report also includes insights from other CALIE activities and reports.

Background 1. STINT Teaching Sabbatical program

STINT's Teaching Sabbatical program aims to develop both individuals and institutions. By giving Swedish researchers and university lecturers, who are passionate about education, international experiences relevant to their teaching role rather than their research one, STINT wants to contribute to educational renewal and the creation of new networks. Great emphasis is put on the added value of the stay abroad, which is why STINT encourages candidates to search for new international experiences.

STINT collaborates with selected universities and colleges based in Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and the US. They represent a diversity of institutions committed to high quality education in their respective regions around the world. Participating lecturers will reside at the foreign institution of higher education for the autumn semester (August to December). The intention is for them to teach, either by giving a course themselves or in partnership with a colleague at the host institution.

There is great emphasis on involving the university leadership and how universities will use returning lecturers' experiences in various ways towards positive dissemination impacts. Therefore, nomination from the Swedish university is required; lecturers cannot themselves apply directly to the program. Nominees must hold a doctorate degree, be employed by and well established at a Swedish university.

The following US institutions participate in the program: Amherst College, Arizona State University, The Ohio State University, The University of Texas at Austin, University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Los Angeles, Williams College.

Higher Education Landscapes in Sweden and USA

With US and European universities dominating the top spots of major university ranking lists, it is of great importance to note that facilitating such high-quality education and research outputs in these respective regions is achieved through similar and sometimes radically different policies, structures and funding models.

Higher Education Policies and Structures

At the regional level, we can see a major distinction in the role of national and intergovernmental cooperation when it comes to higher education policy and practice. In Europe, the emergence of the Bologna Process in 1999 has, until now, engaged 48 European counties in a series of exercises to create a more harmonized higher education system across the continent. Through the harmonization of degree length, learning outcomes and quality assurance systems, the Bologna process aims to strengthen "cross-border academic cooperation and the mutual recognition of study periods and qualifications earned abroad"[2]. Sweden introduced an updated educational and degree system in 2007 as part of its efforts to adapt to the recommendations of the Bologna Process.

This voluntary harmonization of the European Higher Education Area is a stark contrast to the higher education landscape in the USA which, to date, does not harmonize most standards, policies, etc. at the national level. Instead, we see in the US differences in educational standards and quality based on several factors, including funding model, achieved accreditation and curricular decisions.

The models imply different possibilities and challenges from a teaching and learning perspective. Several Swedish academics noted opportunities for and challenges with having to create "exciting" course content to attract students to enroll in their courses. This added pressure to innovate and market their courses seems like a new and/or foreign concept for Swedish teaching staff as with the Bologna model, the curriculum appears to be less flexible. This is due to the focus on pre-determined student learning outcomes (see section Teaching and Learning Context for more examples of the differences in the Swedish and US education models). The latter point was highlighted by one individual who reported that:

> *"Rules, practices and standardizations tend to limit people's creativity. Rules and practices are often ways to try to control quality. But as a professional teacher I would like to be given the trust to use my judgment to determine what to do and how to do it. At Williams College I had that opportunity."*

[2] Source: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/bologna-process-and-european-higher-education-area_en

Another reported:

> *"I think my ability to use learning objectives as the foundation for assessment and grading as in the Bologna agreement from a Swedish context proved to be useful…[however] it has in my opinion de-humanized the teaching situation, making it into a transaction and an agreement".*

Funding Models and their Implications on Education and the Student Experience

According to the OECD, Sweden invests about USD 14 505 per student[3] on primary to tertiary educational institutions where the USA spends approximately USD 17 993 per student[4].

In the USA, 65% of total expenditure in tertiary education come from private sources, including student tuition fees. Dependence on private donations varies across the country, but most/all universities, to some degree, depend on private donations to round out their fiscal budget. This becomes problematic for US institutions as certain disciplines will inevitable attract more and larger donations than others. And on top of that, often there are some criteria or requirements attached to the donation and how the money is to be used. Therefore, education could be either enhanced or constrained depending on the terms of the donation.

In Sweden, there are no tuition fees (for Swedish citizens/residents and residents from EU/ESS/Switzerland) and universities are largely funded by public resources as determined by the Parliament (Riksdagen). The existence of student tuition fees, or lack thereof, inevitably broadens access to education.

A working paper[5] from a CALIE delegation visit to UC Berkeley and Stanford University highlighted the relationship between student engagement, a university's funding model and its potential impact on the (undergraduate) students experience:

> *"At UCB, student engagement during their educational experience is noteworthy – the sense of pride of being part of the community. Swedish students focus on the program vs. the institution. Their pride comes from being a member of a certain disciplinary community. At UCB, student loyalty extends even after graduation. Each year, the annual event 'Homecoming' is just that—an event to welcome home alumni to their former home. Previous discussions alluded that this might be due to the fact that universities need alumni donations whereas Swedish universities get their funds from taxes" (p. 10).*

[3] Source: OECD (2020), "Sweden", in *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/a69c8a01-en.
[4] Source: OECD (2020), "United States", in *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1bf82b9d-en.
[5] Source: CALIE Paper #2 | Swedish Delegation Visit to Bay Area (1-4 October 2019) - https://calieproject.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/calie_paper_2_bay_area_visit_final.pdf

Another interesting learning from this visit was the concept of student identity or 'university citizenship', as it is called at Stanford University. This concept focuses on an understanding of the university's mission, vision, and complexities, and how faculty and students can contribute to the continued development of the university. This message pervades the university and is communicated to staff in leadership courses, and to students throughout their education. At UC Berkeley, they have an introductory undergraduate course, Berkeley Connect, for all students. (CALIE Paper #2[6]).

The physical manifestation of this can be seen in the strong of US students literally wear their pride. One Swedish teacher noted that US student wore lab coats with school logo, use cups with school logo, etc. which was described as rare to see in Sweden.

Background 2. About Berkeley Connect

"Part of the Division of Undergraduate Education Berkeley Connect is an academic mentoring program that combines the intellectual firepower of a world-class research university with the nurturing inclusiveness of a small liberal arts college. Our motto is 'you belong here': we work to strengthen students' sense of belonging and community so they can get the most out of their undergraduate experience at Berkeley.

Berkeley Connect offers students a chance to build relationships** with their peers, graduate students, professors, and alumni/ae **based on a shared love of ideas and a common desire to support one another during and after their time at Berkeley."

Teaching and Learning Context

One major difference between the Swedish and American higher education systems is that Swedish programs tend to be more specialized from the first year of a bachelor's program than those at a typical US university. This difference is largely due to the adoption of the liberal arts model in the United States. The liberal arts model of education encourages students to take a breadth of courses during their four years of study. Advocates for such a model, including UC Berkeley, Stanford and the University of Washington which utilize this educational model, suggest that there is an added benefit for students who need more time to discover their true academic interests, as well as the value of graduating well-rounded graduates equipped with a broadened perspective.

In Sweden, on the other hand, students enter directly into a vocational-based program upon beginning their undergraduate studies. In a previously published report[7] by the CALIE project, speaking of the curricular implications of the different educational models, the author wrote:

[6] Source: CALIE Paper #2 | Swedish Delegation Visit to Bay Area (1-4 October 2019) - https://calieproject.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/calie_paper_2_bay_area_visit_final.pdf
[7] Source: **CALIE Papers #3 |** Lessons from Liberal Arts Models: A General Survey - https://calieproject.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/calie-papers-3-lib-arts-final.pdf

> *"From a curriculum standpoint, the Swedish emphasis on strict progression in programs and program structures including only courses directly related to the area of study suggest extreme narrowness in the curriculum when compared with the liberal arts tradition" (p. 27).*

The report went on to state:

> *"The dedication of teachers to their students at small liberal arts colleges is the stuff of legend in the US…Successfully drawing students from disparate educational backgrounds into a rich and previously unfamiliar vein of knowledge and tutoring them to learn to bridge disciplines requires excellent pedagogical methodology executed in fine form" (p. 29).*

Another difference between these two educational traditions is the ability for students to, to a certain extent, customize their learning experience in choosing a certain number of courses, including but not limited to elective credits and/or courses which fulfill the general education requirement.

Below is an excerpt from a STINT report, which illustrates the implications of such an educational model on teachers:

> *"I was also not prepared that students "shop" for classes, this happens the first week of the semester. This means that the student signs up for more classes than they can take. They visit the class for one or two lessons and then decide if they are going to enroll. The whole enrolling system is connected to costs for the students, so the "shopping" is understandable from the perspective of paying for higher education".*

One Swedish teacher commented on this phenomenon, pointing out its limitations, by reporting:

> *"This thing of selling the course during this shopping period is not a good idea. We should optimize for student learning from the beginning of the course and not be afraid that it could scare students. I think it is a good thing that we do not have this activity in Sweden."*

Student-Teacher Relations

According to the OECD's Education at a Glance report, there are some interesting similarities between higher education participation in Sweden[8] and the USA[9]. In 2019, nearly half of all 25-34 year olds Sweden and the US had a tertiary degree (48% and 50% respectively) with similar gender distribution (56% women/41% men in Sweden and 55% women/46% men in the USA).

On the other hand, one major difference regarding student demographics between the two countries is the average age of a university student. In Sweden, the average age is around 25 years old, whereas it is 20 in the US. US higher education institutions are described by a previous CALIE report[10] as being:

> *"…charged with [the] responsibility for academic, civic and to some extent moral education. Universities view their new students as needing extensive handholding and coddling and offer extensive university-run services to help students bridge the gap between the family home and adult independence. Swedish universities do not take as many students directly from upper-secondary education (gap years, work and military service being relatively more common in Sweden prior to first university matriculation) (p. 26).*

The implications of this difference in age were mentioned by several Swedish teachers, who noted things like:

- differences in student maturity levels and its implication on students taking control of their education (in Sweden) versus more teacher involvement in guiding the learning process (in the US);
- a willingness for US students to do what they're told in order to complete the task and earn a grade versus being a part of the learning process (e.g., engaging with the learning material, thinking about the content beyond what is presented in the classroom and/or the required reading, etc.); and,
- the implications of more complex personal situations (e.g., students having their own families in Sweden versus teenagers/young adults living away from home for the first time) and the role this plays in students' attitude towards their education, learning autonomy, etc.

One concrete example of student autonomy in their learning process and the role of the teacher was clearly illustrated when one Swedish teacher described the use of the learning platform Canvas, a key digital tool used in both Sweden and USA. For the most part, Canvas appears to be used in similar ways in both countries—for class materials (e.g., presentations,

[8] Source for all statistics in this section: OECD (2020), "Sweden", in *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/a69c8a01-en.
[9] Source for all statistics in this section: OECD (2020), "United States", in *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1bf82b9d-en.
[10] Source: **CALIE Papers #3 |** Lessons from Liberal Arts Models: A General Survey - https://calieproject.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/calie-papers-3-lib-arts-final.pdf

assignments, class work, recordings of lectures, etc.). However, one Swedish teacher noted that, at the host institution in the USA, the Canvas platform:

> *"…was used for grading and for keeping record of attendance. As soon as a student was late, or absent, or late uploading an assignment, the red alert color on the Canvas site started blinking. I was several times approach by students excusing themselves for mishaps I was not aware of, but Canvas was. In this sense, Canvas also actively disciplines teachers into a role of authority. The [undergraduate program] has some traits that resemble a Swedish 'gymnasium'".*

The micromanagement of students' learning processes and the role of the teacher is not only seen in something as subtle as the choice of a learning management platform. It is also easily identifiable when looking at the grading and exam structures in the two countries.

In Sweden, grading and exams are strongly influenced by the Bologna process which, due to the adoption of harmonized student learning outcomes (and the need for cross-border recognition of learning/degrees), have created a more uniform and concrete model for assessment and evaluation. In the US, however, grading, assessment and exams vary greatly depending on the discipline and institution. Furthermore, there appears to be a stronger tradition of students challenging instructors on the grades they receive in the USA than in Sweden. Another major difference is that final grades in the USA are typically the result of several types of activities (e.g., attendance, class participation, homework, quizzes, mid-term exams, presentations, projects, etc.), which is not as common in Sweden. This becomes problematic when a student's grade includes points accumulated from things like their behavior and attendance, which gives US-based teachers another kind of power over students.

Another tangible example is the difference between in-class versus out-of-class workload for students. Students in the US take several classes simultaneously throughout the entire semester, which inevitably limits the amount of student work outside of class; whereas in Sweden, students take fewer courses and are expected to spend more time engaged in independent learning. The tangible implications of this on teaching staff are the requirement to create more engaging and varied classroom activities. These activities must, therefore, provide US students with the deep learning that Swedish students must accomplish independently.

The difference in classroom experience and activities also lends itself to a difference in expectations. Some STINT reports mention the higher demand on teachers' time as they were expected to be more available to students both during the workday, in the form of mandatory availability for office hours to the pressure to make oneself available outside of typical working hours, including weekends.

Classroom Diversity

Depending on the university and program, instructors may find very diverse classroom settings in both the US and Sweden. For example, both countries experience international diversity as international students make up 5% (USA) to 6% (Sweden) of foreign or international students (25% in the US if we look at the doctoral level). These students come from various educational systems and traditions which require new and innovative ways of teaching. This type of diversity poses similar challenges for teachers in both countries; however, there are other forms of diversity outside of this international dimension which can lead to additional challenges.

For example, when speaking of cognitive diversity, it is important to consider the primary focus of education—educating the whole person (US) versus educating for profession (Sweden). The priming for higher education begins well before students begin their chosen university program. In general, student cohorts beginning their undergraduate studies in Sweden have a more heterogeneous level of pre-knowledge than undergraduate cohorts enter US undergraduate programs. This is primarily due to the specialized curricula offered at upper secondary schools *(gymnasium)* in Sweden versus the more flexible and customizable curriculum which high school students themselves determine in the USA. Additionally, the adoption of the Bologna Process also created close links between employability and learning objectives, which further strengthened the Swedish education system's orientation towards vocational training versus the US model of educating the whole person.

Another example, which impacts fewer students, but still relevant to mention, is what one Swedish teacher mentioned as *"a strong focus on gifted students in the USA compared to a focus on students who are struggling in Sweden"*. In this teacher's experience, the US university allocated additional resources to these students, often visible in so-called 'honors programs' and other structures which highlight and reward advanced students. One Swedish teacher reported:

> *"…the college always paid when teachers were having coffee and donut or lunch together with students. The professors really had a chance to get to know their students, especially the gifted students that were most active during class…teachers focused on the gifted students and gave a lot of their time to them. In Sweden, we focus a lot on the students that are close to failing the course. We might need to revise our way of thinking regarding this in Sweden if we want to promote a strong academic development. Future development is more likely to arise from the most gifted students, so we should make sure that we don't fail to give them our attention during their education. Also, many students could benefit from a higher level of education, if they get inspired and led by the gifted students."*

A third challenge identified from observing a US classroom stems from the employment of the liberal arts education model where students from various disciplinary backgrounds may end up in the same classroom. This happens when students take elective courses outside of their major

in order to fulfill the general education degree requirements. Teaching to a set of students with different degrees of familiarity to a subject can make it difficult to design the curriculum.

Background 3. Swedish Gymnasium vs US High School

At upper secondary school, or "gymnasium" as it is referred to in Sweden, students follow a specialized curriculum for three years. The specializations either lead to university or vocational qualifications. Of the 18 national programs, six prepare students for higher education: Business Management and Economics Programme (ekonomiprogrammet), Arts Programme (estetiska programmet), Humanities Programme (humanistiska programmet), Natural Science Programme (naturvetenskapsprogrammet), Social Science Programme (samhällsvetenskapsprogrammet) and the Technology Programme (teknikprogrammet). These programs provide a more uniform educational experience for their students and ensure that all graduates of such programs are well prepared to begin their university studies, which start with courses in their chosen disciplines from day one.

In the US, on the other hand, high schools accept all students from their local area despite their vocational or university ambitions. Because each state has its own requirements and each school will provide the necessary courses which prepare students for national tests—subjects like Math, English, Science, Social Studies, etc.—but then may offer additional electives or courses based on local resources. This includes advanced/honors, college preparatory, AP (advanced placement) or IB (international Baccalaureate) classes. This means that, in theory, each high school graduate in the USA will graduate after having completed a unique curriculum, much of which has been determined by the students interests and/or future goals. This model is compatible with the liberal arts models of US universities in that students can enroll at a university without indicating which major (discipline) they would like to study. The student then has approximately two years to complete the general/liberal education requirements before beginning discipline-specific coursework.

A variation of this concept exists at UC Berkeley, where the Data8 program introduced the concept of computational literacy to groups of students within their disciplinary contexts. In other words, courses about computational literacy were customized for students enrolled in different non-technical disciplines. The need for such a course stems from the liberal arts model, which aims to broaden students' perspective outside of the chose disciplines.

Pedagogy and Student Learning

According to the reports submitted to STINT, several instructional strategies that were employed at each of the US universities where Swedish teachers conducted their sabbatical period were common in Sweden, like lecture style teaching; others were less common.

Workshop style teaching seemed to be a familiar concept, but in some cases, was reported as an underutilized strategy for Swedish teachers from certain disciplines. The advantage of this style of teaching is that students apply the new skills while also receiving feedback from the teacher.

Another underutilized style observed in the US was the teacher versus student-led teaching style. This style of teaching encourages teacher and students to work through a set of problems together and allows the teacher to better support the different abilities of students throughout the duration of the course. Below is an adapted illustration of what one Swedish teacher observed in a flipped classroom environment:

> *For each lecture, the instructor develops a worksheet with tasks or discussion points, as well as a refresher with which the lecture starts. The instructor lectures for about 10 minutes and then directs the students to one of the tasks on the worksheet. The tasks are directly connected to what has just been presented. The students are given about 3 minutes to work on it. During a 50-minute lecture, there are about 4 cycles of lecturing and worksheet activities. The instructor does not write extensively on the board and discourages the students from taking notes. The main reason for this strategy is namely to avoid students using in-class note-taking as a substitution for reading and engaging with the course literature.*

Many Swedish teachers noted several other teaching interventions utilized in US classrooms including inviting practitioners into the classroom as guest lecturers *(see The Link between Research and Education for examples of this strategy)* and using various forms of technology to increase student engagement in large classes (e.g., lectures of over 100 students). For example, one teacher reported how iClicker was used to pose questions in large lectures. Another reported the success of asking students to discuss a certain topic with the person sitting next to them instead of calling on one person to respond in front of the whole class. This ensured that the learning experience would be more active than passive, as most large lectures tend to be.

Academic Staff Recruitment and Promotion

Today, both in Sweden and the US, the importance of competent, highly engaged staff, is key to meeting the high demands of students. But, depending on the institution, the way competence is developed, and staff are supported can look quite different. All universities world-wide, do their part to attract the best academics to join their staff. However, how

different universities recruit, promote and invest in their staff visualizes how highly they prioritize academic and research quality versus teaching excellence.

Several individuals noted the availability of teaching and learning-related workshops, and many praised the departmental culture of providing opportunities for *"mutual learning and skills development"* at the host institution. These could include lunch seminars, informal gatherings, or more structured programming. These opportunities were sometimes offered by a central university unit and other times by the department. An advantage of the department-specific offerings was *"…that the topics and examples covered in the course are of direct relevance to the actual courses that the graduate students will be teaching on"*. It was also noted that there was a possibility for staff to be *"…rewarded for pedagogical skills"*; but, as is true in most universities, time constraints and large workloads make it *"…difficult to take the step and go ahead and attend"*. Additionally, several individuals noted the importance placed on pedagogical and teaching merits and for promotion as well as salary increases.

The way in which course ownership was allocated and distributed among academic staff also differed, one Swedish teacher noted that at his home institution, teaching assignments were determined by calculating teaching hours (i.e., one's ability to fit the course into their current workload) versus choosing course instructors based on pedagogy and other related expertise, which was the observed strategy at UC Berkeley.

A CALIE delegation visit to UC Berkeley and Stanford supports these observations as the weight of student evaluations (of teachers) and teaching, in general, were clearly communicated to academic staff. It was clear that promotion, salary increases, and other elements were impacted if academics were not performing well as teachers.

The Link between Research and Education

Universities across the world feel a responsibility to graduate skillful practitioners and to contribute solutions to society's great challenges, which strengthens the necessity for strong ties between research and education.

Several promising tools and strategies at the US host institutions/departments for creating such a connection were mentioned in the STINT reports:

- allocating funds for educational initiatives which are aligned with larger research initiatives;
- requiring teaching as one criterion for promotion;
- having the best professors teach at the undergraduate level (to inspire the next generation);
- organizing seminars and workshops surrounding pedagogy to raise awareness of the existing knowledge and expertise already present within a department, and to inspire new ways of teaching and bringing research into the classroom; and
- providing opportunities for undergraduate and masters students to conduct research with PhDs and research groups.

A strategy for enhancing the link between research and education, currently used in both the US and Sweden, is bringing industry experts into the classroom. This not only keeps the connection alive between the university, alumni, and different sectors of society, but it is an excellent way to enhance the student learning experience. Another observed strategy for linking the university with industry is through university-run consultancy services. This interaction between researchers and society allows for teaching staff to bring their practical knowledge into the classroom, and gives students the opportunity to obtain exposure to real world problems and solutions.

Concluding Remarks

The overall reactions of participants of the STINT Teaching Sabbatical Program were positive and thought-provoking. It is clear that a longer period integrated in the teaching activities at a US higher education institution brings valuable input to the development of teaching and learning and that it differs substantially from the more common research sabbaticals. The similarities of higher education systems were not a huge surprise—in both countries teaching staff are balancing their time between teaching and research and struggling to manage diverse classroom settings whilst feeling a strong sense of responsibility in educating the future practitioners in their respective disciplines. What was noteworthy to many participants was not only the numerous pedagogical options related to different teaching interventions, but also the implications of a department's or university's culture and structure on the ability to enhance student learning. This report only scratches the surface of a comparison of teaching and learning in these two contexts, but serves as a good reminder that ongoing reflection, openness to new ideas and a willingness for change are all key ingredients to renewing higher education to prepare students for the challenges of tomorrow.