



Virtual Dual Immersion Program: Educators Collaborate across the Jesuit Network to Transform Student Learning

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Abstract

Virtual Dual Immersion (VDI) is a global collaborative program created, developed and promoted by educators from within the Jesuit university network. The program utilizes videoconferencing to connect students across borders through one to one virtual exchanges that enhance learners' linguistic, intercultural and communication growth. Grounded in shared Jesuit values, the Jesuit educational mission, and the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm, 37,457 students and 250 educators from 29 Jesuit universities across the Americas have participated during 29 semesters of study. The transformation of learners and educators through this high impact learning experience exemplifies the collaborative potential of the global Jesuit university network.

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Background

Virtual Dual Immersion (VDI) is a global collaborative program created, developed and promoted by educators from within the Jesuit university network. The program utilizes technological applications to connect students across borders through virtual collaborations, enhancing learners' linguistic, intercultural and communication growth. Grounded in shared Jesuit values, the Jesuit educational mission, and the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm, educators transform learners through this virtual intercultural and learning experience that exemplifies the collaborative potential of the global Jesuit university network.

Each educator from the Jesuit university network who has joined the program since its inception in 2006 has served a vital role in the program's evolution. To that end, the success of the program has been based on the good will contributions and collaborative interactions of all players from various universities and countries, including coordinators, professors and more than 37,457 students to date who have completed conversation exchange sessions to develop their linguistic and intercultural competence, building awareness of other realities, contexts and cultures. The VDI Program provides sustainable internationalization practices, permitting intercultural interaction that is open and available to all professors and without additional cost to students. The inclusive practices of the program offer access to intercultural and high impact learning experiences through virtual connections to students unable to study abroad due to academic, financial or other reasons.

VDI is an academic program involving student pairs or small group collaborations in real time via videoconferencing software to examine multiple perspectives on diverse themes, with the goal of improving communication, linguistic and intercultural competencies. Its similarities to experiential learning (Lewis & Williams, 1994; Moreno-López et al., 2017) are many, as the intercultural encounters follow a specific pedagogical design that encourages students to apply learning to real contexts beyond their traditional learning environment. The VDI program falls under the broader umbrella of what researchers and practitioners refer to as telecollaboration

(Belz, 2001; Warschauer, 1996), or virtual exchange (O’Dowd, 2018). Numerous models have developed since technology enabled virtual interactions, including discipline-based language learning models, shared syllabus models, and private business, fee-based models (Ceo-DiFrancesco, 2015; O’Dowd, 2018). Within the context of language learning, telecollaboration specifically denotes the use of technology to join groups of language students in distinct geographical locations and cultural contexts to develop linguistic and cultural competencies through collaborative tasks and projects (O’Dowd, 2011).

This international, technology enabled, collaborative, and academically based learning experience has been researched from the perspective of language and intercultural learning (Belz, 2003; Ceo-DiFrancesco, et al., 2016), pedagogy (Dooling & O’Dowd, 2018; Guth & Helm, 2010; Kern et al., 2004; Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008), literacy and identity (Cummins & Sayers, 1995; Lam, 2000), course module collaborations (Rubin, 2016), communication (García & Otherguy, 2020; Kern & Develotte, 2018) and teacher education (The Evaluate Group, 2019). However, unique to Jesuit universities and grounded in the principles of Ignatian pedagogy, the VDI Program promotes a methodological model entitled the AIR Model (Activation, Interaction and Reflection) to implement interactional learning sessions. Leveraging the shared Jesuit university mission, the VDI Program has developed accessible learning structures, applying the potential of telecollaboration, to facilitate encounters between students and educators within the network (Ceo-DiFrancesco et al., 2020). O’Dowd (2016), a leading researcher in the field of virtual exchange and telecollaboration, summarized the presentations at the Unicollaboration Conference on Telecollaboration in Dublin, Ireland, referring to the potential of the VDI Program as:

One of the most interesting of these was the Virtual Dual Immersion Program which is a telecollaboration project founded by the Jesuit universities in Latin America and the United States. The presenters Marturet de Paris and Coffey (2016) explained the project was grounded in the mission to bridge the social, linguistic, and intercultural gaps among students of English and Spanish in Jesuit universities in the United States and Latin America (p. 303).

Within the context of research on telecollaboration, the VDI Program is a unique entity, with its practitioners sharing a mission and the advantages of a strong collaborative network. The VDI Program demonstrates a clear example of the potential of Jesuit educational university collaborations.

Linkage to Jesuit Mission and Values

Increasingly superficial relationships and distorted realities displayed through social media have created alienation, loneliness and mental health issues for today's youth (Keles et al., 2020; Twenge et al., 2018; Panti, 2014). Furthermore, the challenges of globalization of superficiality first addressed by Adolfo Nicolás, S. J. (2010) continues to prompt students to reject difference and produces a lack of engagement with others whom they characterize as different. Jesuit Mission and Values emphasize an openness to others, particularly the most vulnerable in society (Traub, 2008). Additionally, Jesuit universities promote an openness to encounters with others that can move students toward greater solidarity, mutual respect and understanding (Mescher, 2020).

One of the Apostolic Preferences involves youth: "Journeying with youth and accompanying Young people in the creation of a hope-filled future" (Sosa, 2019). The VDI Program provides students with the opportunity for meaningful real-life discussions with their peers from all walks of life. Students discuss current and social justice issues related to politics, violence, discrimination, academics and culture with strangers who may not share their perspectives. Thus, they are challenged to remain open to different perspectives, to stretch their awareness of other cultures and to see the world through a different lens. Through the VDI Program, students invest in actual dialogue which leads to the development of communication and intercultural competencies that are required to live in an ever-changing world. They are exposed to others in a supportive environment, leading towards a transformation of their perspectives regarding the unknown other, and moving them from superficial judgements to greater solidarity. Finally, the VDI Program utilizes technology for the common good, with the goal of creating real human connections.

History of VDI

The VDI Program began in Fall, 2006, at which time Spanish instructor Colleen Coffey at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, United States of America, completed the first conversation between her Spanish course and a group of student volunteers at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Cali, Colombia. Further interest developed as two early practitioners, Coffey and Oscar Kennedy Mora at Javeriana, Cali, presented their project to the Executive Secretary of the Asociación de Universidades Confiadas a la Compañía de Jesús en América Latina (AUSJAL) in 2009 to promote it within the network of Jesuit universities. The coordinator of the AUSJAL/Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) Consortium of Distance Education, Carolina Marturet, was designated as the Global Coordinator of the VDI Program, supported by local coordinators Mora at Javeriana-Cali and Coffey at Marquette. This marked the beginning of AUSAL leadership to further develop the VDI Program, through the support of the Global Coordinator, the creation of a special interest group of representative practitioners, and the establishment of coordinators at each participating university.

The first in-person meeting, held in conjunction with the AJCU International Conference, in November, 2017 in Santiago, Chile, marked a significant moment in the history of the VDI Program. Coordinators from 14 universities attended, including 8 from AUSJAL and 6 from AJCU (See Table 1). In addition, AUSJAL was formally represented by Ernesto Cavassa, S.J., the then President of AUSJAL, and Susana Di Trolio, former Executive Secretary. Providing representation for AJCU, Michael Sheeran, S.J., then President of AJCU was accompanied by Dr. Gerardo Marín, member of the executive board of the AJCU International Education Conference Executive Board.

Table 1: Representation at the first VDIP in-person meeting/AJCU International Conference in Santiago, Chile, 2017

Participating Institutions AUSJAL	Participating Institutions AJCU
Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela	Loyola University, Maryland

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Ecuador	Xavier University, Cincinnati
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana-Cali, Colombia	Canisius College, Buffalo
Universidad Iberoamericana-Torreón, México	Creighton University, Omaha
Universidad Iberoamericana-Puebla, México	Boston College, Boston
Universidad Católica del Uruguay, Uruguay	University of San Francisco, San Francisco
Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile	
Universidad Rafael Landívar, Guatemala	

The 2017 in-person meeting marks the establishment of a formal VDI Program between AUSJAL and AJCU, including the creation of the program’s mission, vision, objectives and a series of action steps to strengthen further development (Virtual Dual Immersion Program, 2017). The VDI program presented the outcomes of its work at the AJCU International Conference, generating further interest from representatives of attending universities. Of particular significance is the recognition of virtual learning experiences as one of the key components for further investigation and development within the realm of international education, and the VDI Program was recognized as a component of this work within the Jesuit network.

Over a span of thirteen years, the VDI Program has grown from 2 universities to 29, and has expanded to include various models of implementation, a systematized pedagogical training, over 15 international conference presentations (See Appendix B), and research projects and publications.

Objectives

The mission statement of the VDI Program, formally created and approved during the in-person site coordinator meeting in Santiago, Chile in 2017, is as follows:

We are a learning network of educators which, based on Ignatian philosophy, promotes innovative education to develop university students’ intercultural and communicative

competencies necessary for 21st Century global citizenship, utilizing the AIR methodology and telecollaboration in a globally inclusive manner (Virtual Dual Immersion Program, 2017).

The vision of the VDI program is to develop and grow a global network of university institutions, guided by Jesuit values, and working collaboratively, to benefit language learning and to develop global citizenship by means of innovative technologies and pedagogies.

Specific objectives include the following:

Communicative Competence

1. Develop student communicative competence through telecollaboration within a multicultural and inclusive context.

Pedagogy

1. Formalize the guidelines of the VDI Program.
2. Integrate Ignatian pedagogy and Jesuit values into language learning.
3. Promote significant and transformative learning through a process of critical thinking and reflection, based on intercultural and interuniversity encounters.

Intercultural Competence

1. Develop intercultural competence in authentic spaces through the lens of global citizenship.

Program

1. Strengthen links between VDI and other programs.
2. Support a community of educators to create bridges between languages, cultures and continents, positions the instructor as an active facilitator, serving as a role model for our students. (Virtual Dual Immersion Meeting Agreements, 2017).

Organizational structure

Key Participants

The success of any telecollaborative project involves the collaboration of multiple partners, clear and common objectives, and a structured plan of execution. Figure 1 represents the overall operational organization.

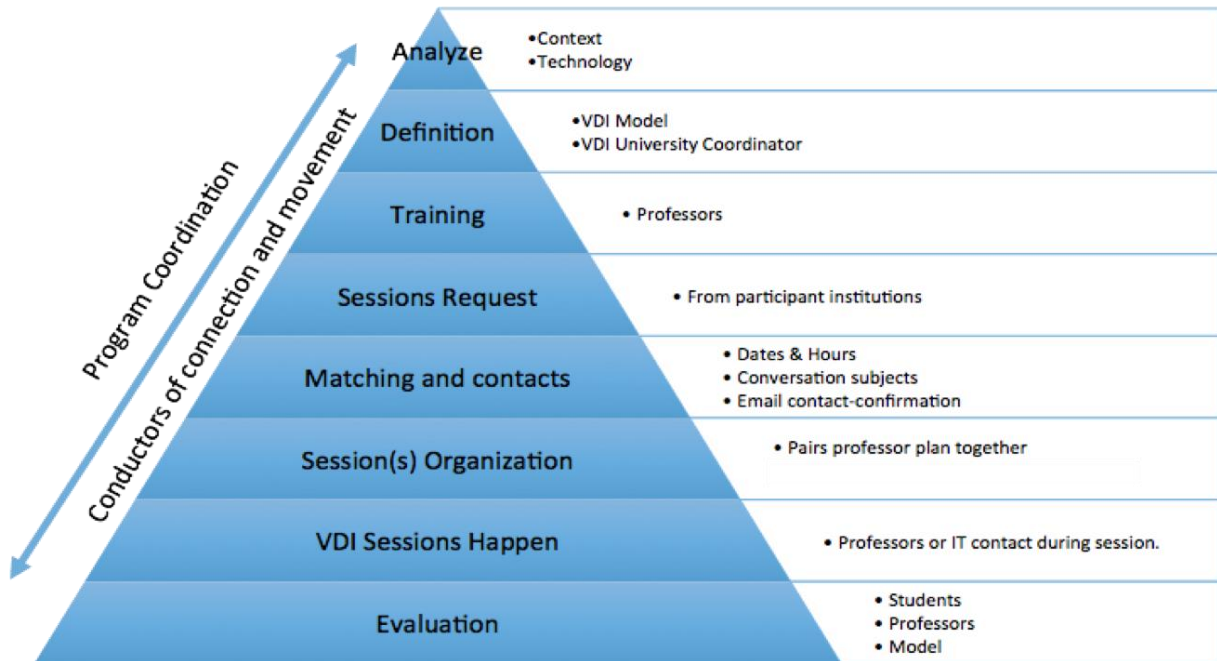


Figure 1: Operational Organization of the VDI Program

Key players have contributed to its functioning and sustainability, each of which is outlined below. The VDI program would not function well without the overall support of the administration and the offices of information and communication technology at each institution.

The Global Program Coordinator is the general coordinator of the program, possessing a panoramic view of all aspects of the program, including the facilitation of the relationships among all participants, in order to achieve solid connections which, support the results of the program. Responsibilities include the administration, planning and linking of groups for the virtual exchanges. Serving as a channel of communication and a mediator between participating institutions, this role includes the elaboration of program structures and operational protocols. Upon receipt of requests for participation, the coordinator initiates and solidifies the connections among participating universities and practitioners. Finally, the coordinator compiles statistics on the participation of each university per semester. Carolina Marturet of AUSJAL has held the position of the VDI Program Global Coordination since 2007.

A coordination team, consisting of regional representatives, one professor from AJCU and two from AUSJAL, work in conjunction with the Global Program Coordinator to conduct research and assessment, and discuss future directions of the program. The coordination team meets regularly to plan training and ongoing professional development for all participating educators within the program. The coordination team is comprised of Oscar Kennedy Mora, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Cali (2007-present), Diane Ceo-DiFrancesco, Xavier University (2012-present), and Xóchitl León, Universidad Iberoamericana, Torreón, (2017-present).

The local coordinators at each university represent their university and agree to the program objectives. They provide the linkage to their university, and administer the organization of the sessions, including the exchange of information, coordination of schedules, assignment of instructor pairs and guidance for the professors involved in the program. The professors and instructors at each university are the agents of the VDI program who implement the VDI methodology in their classes. They work together with their assigned partner to define exchange activities, taking in to account the objectives of each of their courses. Typically, this is done through pre-session communication and design of session format, themes, questions and materials that their students must prepare prior to the exchange encounter. (See Appendix E for a list of coordinators at each participating institution.)

Students participate collaboratively in the immersion, and offer their expertise as a native speaker of their language, with the objective of both learning from and assisting their partner during the virtual exchange. All university students are expected to participate with interest, curiosity and a collaborative spirit that contribute to providing an enriching learning experience for all involved.

Models of the VDI Program

As a result of the evolution of the VDI Program and in response to the academic needs and circumstances at the participating universities, five models have been created, involving telecollaboration within the network: (1) class to class, (2) out of class autonomous, (3) lab to class, (4) webinars, and (5) virtual lab. All involve a type of collaboration in which students utilize

technology to work together in real time toward the achievement of specific learning objectives. Students offer different perspectives that are fundamental to the completion of assigned tasks. Although a minimum of two students are necessary for VDI, larger numbers of student participants in the same group are possible, yet with increasing numbers, the complexity of the logistics increases as well. The four models are outlined below.

Class to Class

The virtual exchange sessions occur during the formal class meeting, either in the physical classroom or in a lab at the universities. The professors plan the sessions and their themes with their partner colleagues, integrating sessions into the semester syllabus for each course. Each instructor assigns contextualized preparation, such as photos, interviews or visits to specific places in the community, based on the theme/s identified for the session. The day of the session, students connect with students at the designated partner university, utilizing a videoconferencing tool, such as Zoom. Planning previously conducted by the course professors guides the interaction between students. Students may utilize a discussion guide with specific questions, key expressions, relevant vocabulary and space for note taking. Sessions last between 50-60 minutes, with the total time divided between the two languages, to offer immersion for half of the time in each language. The two professors serve as guides of the activity and indicate which language to use to initiate the session and when to switch to the other language.

The class to class model recognizes the need to schedule sessions during class as a course activity. The physical space utilized depends on the context at each university, such as classrooms with laptops, or in a computer lab equipped with the necessary technology for the sessions. This model constitutes a structured activity during a class session.

Lab to Class

The Lab to Class model is a modification of the class to class model in which students attend a lab session with a lab instructor, independent of their regular class session at one of the partner universities, while at the other university, the session is integrated into the regular class session. Instructors collaborate to develop the schedule of the sessions and the conversation themes and

tasks. Students attending the lab sessions must reserve ahead of time to participate in a session, and are evaluated by their instructor through oral and written reports submitted following each session. This format responds to the need by professors and institutions who cannot meet during class sessions due to logistical scheduling issues. The model thus permits two groups to meet who could not otherwise participate, due to course syllabus or class meeting schedule conflicts. The lab option allows students from various courses to participate.

Outside of Class Autonomous Sessions

Sessions are conducted outside of class time, with each student responsible for arranging and coordinating the logistics of the connection. Prior to the sessions, coordinators and professors are in charge of organizing the student pairs, who then decide on their method of connection, such as via Skype WhatsApp, Facetime or Zoom. Students establish contact by email first, and agree upon the best day and time for their exchange. Professors provide details of the assignment, including a window of time for completion, the conversation topics and method of evaluation. Institutions and professors who would not otherwise be able to participate in the program due to logistical issues, technology issues or lack of lab space, can provide sessions for their students through this model.

Webinars

Webinars are video conferences presented by an invited professor expert, for a specific course or as a cultural event, with the aim of enriching students' cultural knowledge. The duration is typically one hour, consisting of a presentation, followed by a conversation or question and answer period between the expert and the students. This format serves as a linguistic immersion and develops intercultural awareness by offering students an intimate view of the realities of other countries and cultures.

Virtual Lab

An additional model developed during the COVID-19 pandemic represents the synthesis of earlier models. While prior to the pandemic many classes met on campus, during the quarantine and remote learning, the majority of the sessions occur via Zoom. This platform enables the two groups to meet together in a common space, allowing for both breakout room space for conversations in pairs, and a large group interaction at the opening and closing of each session. Professors thus converted two separate class sessions in two different countries into one large group of students in a virtual setting.

Protocol for Session Planning

The Global Coordinator, Regional Representatives and Site Coordinators have devised a protocol for the coordination and planning of each session. A consistent communication protocol of nine steps ensures close contact among all program participants and the successful implementation of each session. See Table 2 for specific details of each step.

Table 2: Nine Step Planning Process for VDI Sessions

Step 1	Requests	Notice for requests prior to beginning of semester sent by Global Coordinator.
Step 2	Search for matches	Search for matches by Global Coordinator, based on characteristics of requests: dates, class schedule, time zones, number of students, model of VDI.
Step 3	Confirmation	Email notification to confirm sessions sent by Global Coordinator to university coordinators. Confirmation includes dates, times, time zones, number of students, model of VDI and contact of professor pairs for direct communication and planning of each session.
Step 4	Notification	Site coordinators send formal notification of session confirmation to individual instructors, encouraging at least one videoconferencing session for planning purposes and methodological considerations.
Step 5	Planning	Session planning conducted by instructors of courses to determine session themes, protocol for sessions (order of languages, number of minutes per language, pairing of students), and creation of guides for students.
Step 6	Technical Test	For class to class and lab to class models, a technical test is recommended to confirm that connections support the collaborative session.

Step 7	Follow-up	Site Coordinators keep open communication with individual instructors to continue to provide support for sessions. Global Coordinator is copied on communications and additionally sends at least two messages per semester to site coordinators to guarantee smooth operations. Site Coordinators contact Global Coordinator in the case of abnormalities or other issues with programmed sessions.
Step 8	Reconfirmation	Site Coordinators or professors send reconfirmation of session at least one week prior. This communication is important to avoid cancelled sessions due to illness, and to allow for any last-minute scheduling adjustments.
Step 9	Evaluation and Collection of Data	Site Coordinators collect total attendance numbers and issues or irregularities.

Structure of Sessions

VDI Program promotes interactions that represent the merging of two distinct groups of students, complementing the curriculum of each course, yet VDI does not replace class sessions at each institution. The majority of the VDI sessions take place with pairs of students, one from each country. This ensures equitable distribution of participation, based on the minutes spent in each language. However, course enrollments are not always equal, and unforeseen illnesses may affect session numbers, necessitating occasional ratios of 2:1 or 2:2. During session planning, professor pairs determine the best manner in which to pair students, whether that be random, spontaneous or a pairing determined in advance of the session based on shared interests or differentiation.

Themes of sessions are varied and are determined by the collaborative work of the educators, however, a typology of session themes presents three overarching categories: general cultural themes, curricular themes, and social justice themes. The general cultural themes focus on cultural aspects of each country, such as typical celebrations, geographical characteristics, campus life and traditional dishes. Applied themes relate directly to course curriculum, such as Medical Spanish, Business Spanish, and Occupational Therapy. Examples of applied session themes include free trade agreements, medical visits, therapy equipment and medical insurance.

The final category of session themes pertains to global social justice issues, shared through the lens of the local context of each student. Students are exposed to a variety of perspectives on topics such as global migration, racial discrimination, human rights, climate change, and access to health care.

The recommended time frame for each VDI session is 50-60 minutes in duration, although some sessions range between 40 and 90 minutes in length. The ideal session includes at least a 20-minute interaction in each language, in addition to a 5-minute timeframe for initiating connections and 5 minutes for a session closure.

The order of the languages to be used during the VDI session should be determined by the professor pairs during the planning phase, informing the students prior to the session to avoid confusion. Typically, the group of students with higher competency levels initiate the session. This allows the group with an overall greater level of confidence to begin the session and permits a period of adjustment for students at a lower proficiency level to develop a sense of comfort.

Methodology of Sessions

The evolution of a collaborative methodology is based on cooperative work among practitioners, tested practices through field research, and the ongoing response to the needs of participating universities. Lists of questions represented the original format for the interactive virtual exchanges, providing a semi-script for students. Moving beyond this, practitioners developed written guides to scaffold student learning and to facilitate the interaction. These guides consisted of the logistical aspects of initiating, interacting and ending an exchange session, along with specific tasks based on themes tied closely to the curriculum. The incorporation of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (Van Hise & Massey, 2010; JSEA, 1993) and social justice issues developed as educators sought ways to deepen the integration of Jesuit mission and values.

The Regional Coordinators and Global Coordinator formalized the VDI Program pedagogical model, first introduced by Marquette Spanish Instructor Colleen Coffey (Ceo-DiFrancesco, et al., 2020). The Activation, Interaction and Reflection (AIR) model is based on socio-constructivist,

experiential and transformative learning theories (Ortiz, 2015; Cranton, 2016; Kolb, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978) and the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (International Commission, 1986; JSEA, 1993) which provide the underlying structure for the planning of each VDI session, and for the creation of virtual exchange tasks and activities.

The AIR Model is composed of three stages. The activation stage is the preparation that the students must complete to orient them for a successful session. The activation consists of the session theme and preparation instructions, in which previous knowledge of the topic is activated, as well as further research required on the topic from the perspective of one's home culture. During the activation phase, students prepare audiovisual material, including photos, videos, as well as relevant information or statistics, descriptions of real-life contexts from their perspective, and questions to structure the conversation. This activation phase occurs prior to the interaction, and can also include a cooperative session in which the results of their preparation are shared during class with peers. The second phase of the model is the interaction itself, the online video-conferencing between two (or more) students, during which students exchange ideas and perspectives, and experience a unique view of another culture through the lens of their partners. This is defined as the moment of the virtual exchange and the transfer of knowledge, resulting in an application and extension of classroom learning. The final phase of the model is reflection, which takes place following the interaction. Students are prompted to analyze what they have learned from the interaction. They compare cultural similarities and differences of perspectives. Students also reflect on the interaction with their peer from another country and its significance. Reflection can take place in written form, oral form, individually or as a group. As the final phase of the model, reflection encourages students to consider future actions and to evaluate these in light of their virtual interactions. (See Appendix C for an example of the AIR Model)

Pedagogical Assessment

There are currently two aspects of evaluation for VDI sessions: academic and technical. Course assessments vary due to the specific learning outcomes established by each professor,

educational program and university. Examples include the evaluation of student performance in class discussions, written reports and reflections, and creative projects. The second form of evaluation is technical in nature, and involves a brief survey regarding the functionality of each session, including the quality of the connection, video, sound, time spent to initiate the connection, response time between educators, and the success of the pre-planning.

Results

Since the year 2006, the VDI Program has compiled a data base of participation that includes 37,457 students and over 250 educators. Over the previous year, 23 universities have participated in the program, and a total of 2,739 students. (See Appendix A for complete list of universities and number of participants.)

The VDI Program represents a global interuniversity telecollaborative network that is strengthened through dialogue, human connection and intellectual exchange among groups of participants. Its evolution has fortified ties among the members of the international Jesuit community of the Americas, extending the borders of institutional collaboration, while producing an academic activity involving collaboration (Marturet et al., 2013) As such, participation in VDI sessions offers benefits for students, professors and institutions.

At the institutional level, VDI creates links between universities. In a globalized world, the work within an interinstitutional network can positively affect the growth of internationalization on each campus. The 21st century global context increasingly emphasizes our interconnectedness, and the growing possibilities for connections have changed the ways in which we work, produce ideas and develop outcomes. The participation in telecollaboration offers benefits of academic value and impact, and the interdisciplinary and interinstitutional nature of the collaboration allows institutions to discover new tools, manners of thinking, working and forms of functioning in the world.

Professors benefit by working with colleagues at other institutions. Cooperative interaction to achieve the goals of each learning group. This cooperation consists of collaborative planning,

thematic analysis, the creation of learning objectives, the negotiation of schedules, and the sharing of cultural aspects that permit further dialogue and collaboration among students. These interactions enrich pedagogical perspectives, increase pedagogical strategies and allow professors to learn from each other. The VDI Program has created a community of professors that stretches beyond the physical campus and is supported by professional virtual relations.

Students are the largest group to demonstrate results from participating in the VDI Program. From the perspective of constructivist learning theory (Ortiz, 2015), the language experience represents significant learning that is accomplished through the interaction with peers mutually supporting and scaffolding learning across borders. This pedagogically designed model of telecollaboration permits students to develop ongoing intercultural communicative competence in a supportive and stimulating environment that is similar in nature to a natural encounter with a native speaker. The encounters result in significant and transformative learning experiences (Ceo-DiFrancesco et al., 2019), permitting the transfer of knowledge to new situations. (See Appendix D for a link to a video regarding the VDI Program.)

A study conducted by VDI Program professor participants in 2016 reported an increase in students' oral proficiency development, as well as increased tolerance of other cultures, respect for others, and increased confidences in situations beyond their comfort zone (Ceo-DiFrancesco et al., 2016). In addition, the investigation determined increased growth in active listening skills and tendencies toward growth in intercultural competencies. Through the qualitative analysis of pre and post written reflections conducted in 2019, investigators reported evidence of growth in language fluency, an increase in vocabulary and confidence in speaking, as well as increased intercultural awareness. This research, conducted by VDI Program practitioners revealed student growth in cultural awareness and self-awareness, culturally specific information, respect for and openness to others, an increase in curiosity, flexibility, empathy, and a willingness to engage with peers and to examine new perspectives (Ceo-DiFrancesco et al., 2020).

Preliminary data analysis of qualitative data based on 16 individual interviews with participating professors revealed a number of key points regarding the VDI program. First, every student and

professor serve an integral part of the success of the program. Second, once students participate in one virtual session, they look forward to each subsequent session and continually request more frequent sessions during the semester. In addition, students recommend an expansion of virtual sessions to include a more programmatic integration at their respective universities. Professors report that the collaboration with educator peers at Jesuit institutions across borders enriches their professional and personal development. Professors report that the collaboration with educator peers at Jesuit institutions across borders enriches their professional and personal development. Finally, professors recognize the significant, authentic and impactful learning experiences that can only be offered to their students through the VDI Program.

New Initiatives

The VDI Program has expanded its coordination and articulation with the Academic and Interinstitutional Cooperative Academic Network of AUSJAL (CARI) to strengthen its offerings of activities related to internationalization at home, including other areas in addition to language exchange, and in particular, COIL. The needs and opportunities caused by the pandemic have presented challenges in design and the implementation of new strategies of interaction and telecollaboration so that more institutions within AUSJAL participate and benefit from VDI. The Coordination team of the VDI program and the CARI network, with the support of the Executive Secretary of AUSJAL, have decided to work together on initiatives to achieve this goal.

One such initiative is the addition of a fifth telecollaborative model within the VDI Program, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). COIL is an interdisciplinary methodology that focuses on interdisciplinary collaborations across borders and links universities, professors, courses, and students. COIL courses include a shared module that exists within two or more linked courses with common objectives. Students connect synchronously and asynchronously to complete learning tasks and projects while interacting in a virtual environment. COIL is a natural expansion of the VDI Program, leading to the inclusion of a broader array of disciplines and institutions. The VDI Program, with the Executive Secretary of AUSJAL, the Universidad Iberoamericana, Torreon, and Xavier University, offered its first COIL training workshop for 26

instructors from four universities within AUSJAL during the Fall 2020 semester. Plans are to continue to offer at least one COIL training workshop per semester for educators within the Jesuit University network.

The VDI Program has also served as preparation for both study abroad and immersion programs at Xavier University, Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, and the University of San Francisco. They have coordinated with each other and with Universidad Rafael Landívar and Universidad Iberoamericana, Puebla to provide virtual exchange conversations focusing on cultural and global social justice issues, to provide both linguistic and cultural preparation prior to international learning experiences. Student pairs participate through the autonomous model and subsequently meet in person during the in-country experience. This preparation has created more intimate ties to peers across borders, building confidence in students' courage to step out of their comfort zones during the in-country portion of their academic experience.

Lessons Learned

The sustainability of the VDI Program has resulted from establishing an effective training process, as well as the authentic commitment and collaboration of instructors and students across the Jesuit university network. The training process includes both workshops and a mentorship model to support the integration of instructors new to the VDI Program. The workshops include topics such program overview, the AIR pedagogical model, and best practices for both implementation and assessment. In addition, participating educators facilitate the development of the skills, attitudes and strategies for building intercultural awareness, empathy and solidarity among students, including active listening and technology and soft skills necessary to ensure that the virtual sessions are mutually beneficial.

The VDI Program has provided high impact learning experiences for students as well as for educators. Instructors and coordinators report advancements in linguistic and teaching competencies. As instructors meet virtually to plan sessions for their students, they are exposed to new pedagogical practices at partner institutions. This collaboration advances the pedagogical

approaches of all involved, and has also fostered research initiatives examining the impact of virtual exchange toward enhancing language learning and intercultural awareness.

Opportunities for improvement

Several projects are underway to conduct program assessment and improvement. Currently, program coordinators are conducting a qualitative study on the impact of pedagogical practices of participating educators. A second project involves the development of a standardized system of assessment for all students and professors participating in the program following each session, in addition to the current assessment tool at the end of each semester. By utilizing more sophisticated survey software, program coordinators will have access to updated information on processes and ongoing measures of effectiveness.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Peter Hans Kolvenbach (2000), called for networking among Jesuit institutions, urging to go beyond borders and find a way to work together. Six years later, and in response to Kolvenbach's call to action, the VDI Program began utilizing technology to connect educators and students. With a strong sense of purpose based on Jesuit mission and Ignatian values, an increasing number of educators and students continue to commit to connect in solidarity, at a time when interacting with others across borders is more important than ever. The VDI Program integrates technology in a way that redefines the role of students and educators, transforming them into more engaged, global citizens, serving for and with others.

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Appendix A

Table 1 VDIP Student participation by semester between Spring 2012 and Fall 2020¹

Semester	Participating Universities	Total Number of Students
Fall 2012	18	2791
Spring 2013	17	2758
Fall 2013	18	2127
Spring 2014	18	2836
Fall 2014	14	1987
Spring 2015	16	1875
Fall 2015	11	1375
Spring 2016	12	1285
Fall 2016	13	1361
Spring 2017	14	1257
Fall 2017	13	1729
Spring 2018	13	1565
Fall 2018	12	1903
Spring 2019	12	1730
Fall 2019	13	1299
Spring 2020	13	1027
Fall 2020	19	1712

¹Total student participation between Fall 2006 and Spring 2012 was 6840. Participation between these years was tabulated by year and reported to global coordinator by VDI coordinators at each participating university. Due to program growth, in 2012, global coordinator began to collect data by semester.

Table 2 VDI Program Participation for AUSJAL and AJCU Universities¹

AUSJAL			
	Institution	Terms of participation	Student Participation ²
1	Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Argentina	Fall 2020	32
2	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana-Cali, Colombia	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	5798
3	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana-Bogotá, Colombia	Fall 2012	19
4	Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, Peru	Spring 2020	6
5	Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile	Fall 2020	41
6	Pontificia Universidad del Ecuador (PUCE)	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	3553
7	Pontificia Universidad del Ecuador-Ibarra (PUCESI)	Fall 2020	22
8	Universidad Rafael Landivar, Guatemala	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	559
9	Universidad Iberoamericana-México City	Fall 2019; Fall 2020	61
10	Universidad Iberoamericana-Torreón, México	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	1737
11	Universidad Iberoamericana-León, México	Fall 2012-Spring 2014	1089

12	Universidad Iberoamericana-Puebla, México	Fall 2012-Fall 2016 Fall 2019; Fall 2020	881
13	Inst. Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores (ITESO), Guadalajara, México	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	5934
15	Universidad Centro Americana-Managua, Nicaragua (UCA)	Fall 2012-Spring 2016 Fall 2019; Fall 2020	404
16	Universidad Católica del Uruguay (UCU)	Fall 2012; Fall 2016; Fall 2017	80
17	Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela (UCAB)	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	195
AJCU			
	Institution		
1	Boston College (BC) Boston, Massachusetts	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	1971
2	Canisius College, Buffalo, NY	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	230
3	Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	1009
4	College of Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	251
5	Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington	Fall 2017-Fall 2020	858
6	John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio	Spring 2013-Spring 2014. Spring 2017	82
7	Loyola Maryland University, Baltimore, Maryland	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	2460
8	Loyola Chicago University, Chicago, Illinois	Fall 2020	138
9	Loyola New Orleans University, New Orleans, Louisiana	Fall 2019 Fall 2020	32
10	Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Fall 2012-Fall 2015	1606
11	University of Mercy Detroit, Michigan	Fall 2020	26
12	San Francisco University (USF), San Francisco, California	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	625
13	Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio	Fall 2012-Fall 2020	918
<p>¹The following institutions beyond the Jesuit network have participated in the VDI Program: University of Birmingham, Alabama; University of Miami, University of Minnesota and University of Padova, Italy.</p> <p>²Each university possesses unique circumstances, yet all contribute as an integral part of the VDI Program, regardless of the number of student participants.</p>			

Appendix B: Example of Air Model

Topic: Health Care in your country and nutrition during the pandemic

Pre-Session Task

1. Investigate and prepare a description of health care in your country. Some interesting topics to compare with your partner include:
 - a. Health care in distinct regions: rural vs. urban settings
 - b. Cost of services and equity of access
 - c. Personal challenges during the quarantine:
 - i. Nutrition (healthy food choices)
 - ii. Exercise (maintaining good physical condition)
 - iii. Stress (how to control stress and anxiety)
2. Search for photos or visuals to support your description of the topics;
3. Reflect on this theme in your society and life, and be ready to compare information with your partner. Prepare power point slides with visuals, as well as questions for your partner.

Interaction

We will utilize Zoom for the session. Begin in Spanish. Do not use English during this part of the exchange session. Present your slides. If you cannot remember a word, you can describe the concept without asking for a translation. Your partner will help you with suggestions regarding vocabulary and pronunciation.

During the second half of the session, you will converse in English. Try to keep this session only in English, and do not flip back and forth between Spanish and English. Support your partner with suggestions of vocabulary and pronunciation. Be curious, show interest and ask follow-up questions. Apply the active listening skills that we have discussed in class.

Post Session Reflection

On the discussion board, post a 300-word reflection regarding your session, including answers to the following questions:

1. What did you learn about health care in your partner's country?
2. What caught your attention about this topic?
3. How did you help your partner with communication in the language of study?
4. What did you learn about yourself by participating in this virtual interaction?
5. How has your perception of the culture of your partner changed as a result of this interaction?

After posting your reflection, read the reflections of your classmates. Write comments or questions for at least three classmates. Be sure to check back to respond to your classmates' questions and comments.

Appendix C: VDI Program Presentations and Publications

Presentations Listed Consecutively by Year

Coffey, C., Marturet, C. & Mora, O. (2013). Model for virtual immersion MACRO project: Collaborating across the Americas. *Eurocall Conference*, Evora, Portugal.

Coffey, C., Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Marturet, C., & Mora, O. (2014). Virtual Dual Immersion Program: AUSAJL and AJCU Leveraging Connections. *AJCU International Education Conference*, Chicago.

Coffey, C., Marturet, C. & Mora, O. (2014). Virtual Dual Immersion Program: AUSAJL and AJCU Leveraging Connections. *Unicollaboration INTENT Conference*, León, Spain.

Coffey, C., Marturet, C. & Mora, O. (2014). Model for virtual immersion MACRO project: Collaborating across the Americas. *INFLIT Conference*, University of Miami.

Zulaica, P., Marturet, C. & Valencia, T. (2015) AUSAJL, Network of Networks: IMMERSION DUAL EDUTIC. *CITM Conference*, Loyola Maryland University.

Snyder, K., Marturet, C. & Ceo-DiFrancesco. (2015). Collaborating Across Borders: The Mission of Internationalization. *AJCU International Education Conference*, Managua, Nicaragua.

Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Coffey, C., Marturet, C. & Mora, O. (2015). Across the Americas: Collaboration produces global communicative competence through AUSAJL/AJCU Virtual Dual Language Immersion Program. *American Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Conference*, San Diego, CA.

- Marturet, C., Snyder, K., Ceo-DiFrancesco, D. & Mora, O. (2016). AJCU/AUSJAL Dual Immersion Project. *AJCU International Education Conference*, San Francisco.
- Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Mora, O., Serna Collazos, A. (2016). Developing intercultural communicative competence across the Americans. *Telecollaboration in Higher Education Conference*, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Mora, O., Coffey, C., & Marturet, C. (2016). Collective Impact: Best practice method for scaling and enhancing learner experience in telecollaboration. *Telecollaboration in Higher Education Conference*, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Snyder, K., Robinson, D., Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Marturet, C., Mora, O. & León, X. (2017). Using telecollaboration to develop language and intercultural competence across the Americas. *AJCU International Education Conference*, Santiago, Chile.
- Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Bohlke, O., Marturet, C., Mena, M., Mora, O., & León, X. (2018). Leveraging our Jesuit network to promote a culture of encounter, dialogue and solidarity through telecollaboration. *AJCU International Education Conference*, Omaha.
- Marturet, C., Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., & Mora, O. (2018). AUSJAL-AJCU Virtual Dual Immersion Program: Building a network for transformative learning through telecollaboration. *INFLIT Conference*, University of Miami.
- Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Marturet, C. & Mora, O. (2018). Significant and transformative learning through telecollaboration. *International Conference on Intercultural Competence*, University of Arizona.
- León, X., Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Marturet, C. & Mora, O. (2019). Virtual Dual Immersion: Leveraging telecollaboration to enhance study abroad programs. *AJCU International Education Conference*, Puebla, Mexico.
- Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Marturet, C., & Mora, O. (2019). The Transformative growth and professional development of educators through virtual exchange. *The EVALUATE Conference*, León, Spain.
- Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Marturet, C., Mora, O., & León, X. (2020). Leveraging our Jesuit network during the global pandemic: Virtual Dual Immersion Program supports institutional internationalization. *AJCU International Education Conference*, Virtual.
- Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Marturet, C., & Mora, O. (2020). Expanding and supporting global Learning during COVID-19: Virtual encounters, connections and exchanges. *American Association of Colleges and Universities Global Learning Conference*, Virtual.

Publications

Ceo-DiFrancesco, D., Mora, O. K. & Serna Collazos, A. (2016). [Developing intercultural communicative competence across the Americas](#). In S. Jager, G. Kurek & B. O'Rourke (Eds.), *New directions in telecollaborative research and practice*. Research-publishing.net.

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Appendix D: Web link to AUSJAL video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZScAkg8JQ>

Appendix E: List of VDI Program Coordinators

AUSJAL	
Institution	Local VDI Program Coordinator
Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Argentina	Prof. Milton Escobar
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana-Cali, Colombia	Prof. Oscar Mora
Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile	Prof. Mary Jane Abrahams Prof. Maria Ester Lopez
Pontificia Universidad del Ecuador, Quito, Ecuador	Prof. Christian Geovanny Gavilanes
Pontificia Universidad del Ecuador, Ibarra, Ecuador	Prof. María Fernanda Ibadango T.
Universidad Rafael Landivar, Guatemala	Prof. Guisela Maldonado
Universidad Iberoamericana-Ciudad de México,MX	Lic. Maria Jose Colín

Universidad Iberoamericana-Torreón, México	Prof. Xóchitl León Prof. Ana Torres
Universidad Iberoamericana-León, México	Prof. Alicia Torales Prof. Cecilia Sotelo
ITESO Universidad Jesuita de Guadalajara, México	Prof. Paula Zulaica Prof. Lilia Córdoba
Universidad Centroamericana-Managua, Nicaragua	Prof. Kenia Obando
Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela	Prof. Valeska Villaruel Prof. Carolina Lira
AJCU	
Institution	Local VDIP Coordinator & Contact
Boston College (BC) Boston, Massachusetts	Cynthia Bravo, MA
Canisius College, Buffalo, NY	Margaret Stefanski, PhD Prof. Richard D. Reitsma, PhD
Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska	María Mena, MA Olaf Bohlke, PhD
College of Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts	Elizabeth Inman, M.A
Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington	Rebecca M. Stephanis, PhD
Loyola Maryland University, Baltimore, Maryland	Magdalena Olivares, PhD Sarah Tyler, MA Nicolino Applauso, PhD
Loyola Chicago University, Chicago, Illinois	Bryan Conover, MEd Fraser S. Turner, MPP, M.Ed. Fr. Hendrickson Scott, SJ, DPhil
Loyola New Orleans University, New Orleans, Louisiana	Nathan C Henne, Ph.D Angela Ramirez, MBA, LLM
University of Mercy Detroit, Michigan	Bryan Core, MA
San Francisco University (USF), San Francisco, California	Rahkel Villamil-Acera, PhD
Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio	Diane Ceo-DiFrancesco, PhD