1. What is Virtual Exchange (VE)?

“Virtual Exchange (VE) is a practice, supported by research, that consists of sustained, technology-enabled, people-to-people education programs or activities in which constructive communication and interaction takes place between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds, with the support of educators or facilitators. Virtual Exchange combines the deep impact of intercultural dialogue and exchange with the broad reach of digital technology. The following terms are sometimes used as synonyms to VE and can overlap with it: Telecollaboration in the field of language learning; Globally-networked learning; Collaborative online international learning; Online intercultural exchange.” (Source: https://evolve-erasmus.eu/about-evolve/what-is-virtual-exchange/)

Key elements of Virtual Exchange:

- **Sustained**: unfolding over time with regular, intensive interaction.
- **Technology-enabled**: incorporating new media, digital, and/or mobile technologies.
- Preferably based on **regular synchronous or near-synchronous meetings**, using high social presence media.
- **People-to-people**: involving inclusive, intercultural collaboration and dialogue, that bridges differences and distances and inspires action with a long-term positive impact on relationships.
- **Learner-led**: following the philosophy of dialogue where participants are the main recipients and the main drivers of knowledge; learning through dialogue means that participants will seek mutual understanding and co-create knowledge, based on their own experiences.
· **Facilitated**: with the support of trained facilitators and/or educators.

· **Educational**: integrated into formal and/or non-formal educational programs and activities to develop measurable increases in skills, knowledge, and attitudes that foster positive social behaviors.

· **Structured to foster mutual understanding**: covering topics related to identity, empathy, perspective taking, critical reflection, intercultural understanding, and helping participants to engage in constructive conversations in the face of ontological and epistemological differences; a key tenet of VE is that intercultural understanding and awareness are not automatic outcomes of contact between different groups/cultures.

2. **What is COIL?**

COIL or Collaborative Online International Learning connects courses by linking the classrooms of two or more accredited higher education institutions, each located in a different country or cultural setting. The COIL model does not merely promote students from different countries sharing an online classroom. Rather, COIL creates equitable, team-taught learning environments where faculty from two cultures work together to develop a shared syllabus, emphasizing experiential and collaborative student learning. COIL is a registered service mark of The State University of New York (SUNY) that is used to describe collaborative online intercultural/international learning opportunities that adhere to certain criteria.

3. **COIL History**

In 2002, Jon Rubin, a SUNY Purchase Professor of Film and New Media, taught the first iteration of his Cross-Cultural Video course in collaboration with students and instructors at European Humanities University in Minsk, Belarus, where he had previously been posted on a Fulbright Fellowship. This course, in which SUNY students co-produced videos with students in Belarus by sending scenes back and forth over the Internet, was so inspiring to Rubin and his students, that it led Professor Rubin to campaign for a Center where online international exchange could be developed.

The SUNY COIL Center ([www.coil.suny.edu](http://www.coil.suny.edu)) was launched in 2006, with support from the State University of New York's Office of International Programs and its Office of Learning Environments, with additional support from SUNY Purchase College where the Center was initially housed. Jon Rubin was named Director and he immediately set out to define the COIL Center's mission, to disseminate its core concepts and activities, both to SUNY campuses and to interested universities abroad, and to raise funds.
4. COIL Consulting and COIL Connect

In 2017, Jon Rubin created COIL Consulting and in 2020 COIL Connect, to support universities developing COIL initiatives. Please note, these are not intended to directly facilitate partnering opportunities between individual academics. Instead, it enables COIL-ing institutions to create institutional partnerships which can then serve as a platform for instructor partnering.

- **COIL Consulting**
  
  “COIL Consulting supports the growth of Collaborative Online International Learning and Virtual Exchange at higher education institutions around the world. With fifteen years’ experience in this expanding field, COIL Consulting works with campus leadership to frame and implement new COIL initiatives. This company also undertakes planning studies, provides assessments of current programs, and develops workshops, seminars, and webinars, bringing together key campus stakeholders. COIL Consulting is particularly interested in working with higher education institutions over longer periods of time as they plan, develop and integrate COIL Virtual Exchange initiatives into their international education programs and curriculum” (Source: [http://www.coilconsult.com](http://www.coilconsult.com)).

- **COIL Connect**
  
  “COIL Connect is a project of the COIL Virtual Exchange Foundation, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation authorized in the State of New York. Their mission is to support the international growth of COIL Virtual Exchange at the institutional level. Membership in COIL Connect is free and is open to all, however this website is specifically designed to support higher education institutions that have developed, or are in the process of developing COIL VE programs, and which appoint a COIL coordinator/administrator to manage their program. There are more than 160-member institutions of COIL Connect” (Source: [https://coilconnect.org](https://coilconnect.org)).

5. Professional Development Workshops

SUNY COIL Center offers professional development workshops that are designed to prepare and improve COIL practices. The following are workshops for professors and administrators available in 2021-2022 ([https://coil.suny.edu/professional-development/](https://coil.suny.edu/professional-development/)):

- **Administrator Workshop**. “The COIL Administrator Workshop is for any staff supporting COIL at an institution, such as Deans, Teaching and Learning staff, Instructional Designers, International Educators, Department Chairs, etc. COIL
Coordinators may also join this workshop, particularly if other administrators from their campus will be participating. This workshop explores the responsibilities of each role in supporting successful COIL collaborations, as well as reviewing considerations for scaling COIL at an institution. Topics include finding and supporting teaching partnerships for COIL collaborations, creating engaging COIL activities, technology tools for COIL, supporting intercultural learning online and orienting students for COIL success.”

- **COIL Coordinator Workshop.** “COIL Coordinators are the point people for COIL at their institution. This designation requires Coordinators to be very knowledgeable about COIL and to know what other resources are available to support professors at their university. The COIL Coordinator Workshop is designed to help Coordinators develop the tools they need to support COIL at their institution. Topics include determining institutional assets that support COIL, aligning institutional goals with COIL outcomes, working with administrators from across campus, cultivating and supporting professors, preparing students for their COIL experience, and helping if problems arise.”

- **COIL Foundations.** “Highly effective COIL collaborations require an active learning approach that supports students’ online professionalism, project management and development of intercultural skills. COIL Foundations provides tools that you can use to develop and facilitate a successful and rewarding COIL collaboration for you and your students. You will examine issues of culture, language, virtual team building, partnership, and the importance of reflection to develop skills. We will specifically address how to support students’ intercultural skills online, considerations for finding and maintaining a strong relationship with your COIL teaching partner, when and how to use reflection activities, options and approaches to bridging language differences, and how to approach team building and developing trust.”

- **COIL Elements.** “COIL opens a world of possibilities for active, applied, collaborative activities that interest and motivate students while invigorating your teaching practice. Making good design choices for your COIL Collaboration takes careful consideration and an open mind. Preparing students to work with peers in another country online can enrich the experience and help ensure its success. The COIL Elements workshop explores what makes a compelling COIL Collaboration, roles of students and professors, online behavior, creating active student teams, matching technology choices to activity design, preparing students for COIL, and developing your COIL resource bank.”

- **COIL Design.** “You’ve found your partner, you’ve considered your options, and now you’re ready to design your COIL Collaboration. The COIL Design workshop will walk you and your teaching partner through each part of the development process. At the end of the workshop you should have a blueprint of your COIL Collaboration, ready
for implementation. Topics will include COIL pedagogy and flow, developing common and course-specific goals, setting expectations for partners and students, logistical aspects, designing your COIL activities, assessment, and troubleshooting. This workshop will bring together topics from COIL Foundations and COIL Elements and apply them to your particular COIL Collaboration. Both teaching partners should take the COIL Design workshop at the same time.”

6. COIL-like experiences at the College of Charleston

The College of Charleston has recently developed COIL-like courses within the Global Leadership Institute (GLI). The GLI aims to be the global hub at the College of Charleston, designed to promote immersive and sustained international education. Its programming will promote (1) high linguistic aptitude, (2) cultural intelligence, and (3) skills needed to achieve/create international impact.

We have contacted several colleagues who have participated in the Global Education Initiative to gather the following information about their experience:

- Course name, number, and semester
- Name of partner institution and contact person
- Reasons for selecting that institution/program
- Explanation of project
- Technology needed and logistics
- Length of project/activity
- Recommendations for faculty wanting to embark on a globally-connected course
- Syllabus
- Anything else deemed important

The following colleagues participated in this inquiry: Lancie Affonso, Emily Beck, Stephen Della Lana, Giovana Deluca, Carmen Grace, Devon Hanahan, Margaret Keneman, Daniela Meireles, Antonio Pérez-Núñez and Silvia Rodríguez Sabater. The results can be found here:

[Colleagues' Globally Connected Courses](#) (You must be logged in with your CofC Google account)

These were individual initiatives that would need institutional support to make them sustainable.
“…While often quite successful, these courses were completely dependent on the inspired and dedicated teachers who carried the burden of bilateral management, course design and technological support. When either teacher moved on, the collaborative class usually ended. These early exemplar initiatives were identified in various ways: ‘globally networked learning’, ‘global connections’, ‘virtual mobility’ and ‘telecollaboration’ were amongst the first names given to such initiatives. ‘Collaborative online international learning’ (COIL) was coined in 2006 and more recently ‘virtual exchange’.

In almost every case, these early international online collaborations moved forward without any direct support or even acknowledgment by the campus internationalisation office and were not integrated into the university internationalisation plan. Indeed, because student mobility was synonymous with physical travel, and as most university internationalisation offices had little experience with technology, many Senior International Officers were not enthusiastic about the concept of computer-mediated online international engagement. Even now, this modality may remain outside their comfort zone.” (Rubin, 2017)

7. HISP OE Committee Recommendations for COIL’s Sustainable Implementation

After careful research and consideration of the materials reviewed, the HISP OE Committee recommends the following actions for the implementation of a COIL model at the College of Charleston, keeping in mind the permanent implementation and sustainability of the model as a key component.

**Sustainable Structure:**
Courses need to be supported by the college’s infrastructure in order to grow and be sustainable.

- Full-time director and administrative team within College of Charleston
  - Designated departmental coordinators
  - Stable partnerships and collaboration with COIL international institutions
  - Professional development
    - Internal training for faculty and staff
    - External workshops, development opportunities, etc.
- Allocation of funds
  - Director position and staff
  - Institutional membership fees for COIL Network
  - Stipends for new courses
  - Budget for professional development
  - International travel expenses
- TLT Involvement and Support
  - Providing sound online tools throughout implementation
o Assistance with course design
o Support facilitating international online interaction

“For smaller initiatives or those with rich international roots these connections may largely be left to professors. But to scale the enterprise, the institution must carry much of the load and may well lead the way.” (Rubin, 2017, p. 43).

Best practices
Fundamental considerations:
- Integration and dialogue between institutions
- Team-taught courses with shared syllabi
- Academic calendars
- Teaching styles
- Time zones
- Aligning class schedules
- Intercultural communication
- The collaboration can last an entire semester, but often lasts only 5-6 weeks.
  - Experiential or collaborative learning projects and/or activities
  - Lectures and conferences between the institutions
  - Peer-editing activities
  - Have students meet in person after the COIL course

Proposed Training
- Join the COIL network.
- Professional development workshops/training with the following elements:
  - Introduction to intercultural sensitivity (working in a diverse team)
  - Connecting with your partner and setting up a COIL module
  - Internationalizing learning outcomes and assessing a virtual collaboration
  - Coaching virtual teams
  - Tips & tricks for collaboration tools
  - Assessing & grading with an international partner
- Stipends for development between $500-$3,500
- Involvement from TLT
Summary of Lessons Learned from DePauw University’s COIL Implementation Experience ([http://www.coilconsult.com/coiling-.html](http://www.coilconsult.com/coiling-.html))

The first steps taken were conversations with the director of our Faculty Instructional Technology Services (FITS) and the Assistant Vice President for Global Engagement to test the initiative’s feasibility.

The FITS director identified two instructional designers as the leads for the project and were sent to the 2013 SUNY COIL conference. After that, they cemented the main ideas of the initiative, branded as Global Learning Experience (GLE):

- a structured faculty development program, with financial incentives to expose faculty to both the technological and pedagogical aspects of COIL;
- individualized instructional design support for participating faculty;
- formal involvement of a committee of faculty with representation of all the 10 colleges and schools, which was tasked with reviewing formal proposals for COIL courses;
- a flexible approach to course design, leaving faculty free to structure COIL activities for a portion of a term, not necessarily for the entire duration of the class.

The curriculum, duration and format has evolved organically and is now based on a team of three staff members: the Director of Faculty Development within FITS who oversees the program and the curriculum (25% time); a senior instructional technology consultant (ITC) who is the main program facilitator (70% time); and the Assistant Director for Global Engagement and Online Learning who facilitates access to our network of partners, coordinates the assessment and scheduling of COIL courses, and maintains communication with all faculty engaged in COIL activities (30% time).

Funded proposals received $3,500 as reimbursement for travel and expenses.

8. Resources

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354398053_Blended_Learning_and_the_Global_South_Virtual_Exchanges_in_Higher_Education_Virtual_Exchanges_in_Higher_Education](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354398053_Blended_Learning_and_the_Global_South_Virtual_Exchanges_in_Higher_Education_Virtual_Exchanges_in_Higher_Education)
The SUNY COIL Center [www.coil.suny.edu](http://www.coil.suny.edu)

COIL Connect [https://coilconnect.org](https://coilconnect.org)

COIL Consulting [http://www.coilconsult.com](http://www.coilconsult.com)


Journal of Virtual Exchange. [https://journal.unicollaboration.org/index](https://journal.unicollaboration.org/index)

International Virtual Exchange Conference. [https://iveconference.org](https://iveconference.org)


UniCollaboration. [https://www.unicollaboration.org](https://www.unicollaboration.org)