

Increasing Access to International Education through Virtual Exchange Projects in Foundational Courses at Community Colleges

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The Session Objectives

1

To establish reasons why community colleges and foundational courses are prime grounds for global virtual exchanges

2

To demonstrate through example how a virtual exchange project can be implemented

3

To discuss the planning, logistics, and technology used in an example virtual exchange

4

To consider adaptations for virtual exchange projects in other foundational course

The National Landscape of Community Colleges

- 2.6% increase since the spring of 2022
- Community colleges contribute 55.7% of the 2.5% increase in undergraduate enrollment in spring of 2024
- 32% are first-generation college students
- 66% attend part-time
- 60% are in a credit program vs. 40% in non-credit classes
- 13% are single parents
- 23% have disabilities



References:

[American Association of Community College Fact Sheet](#)

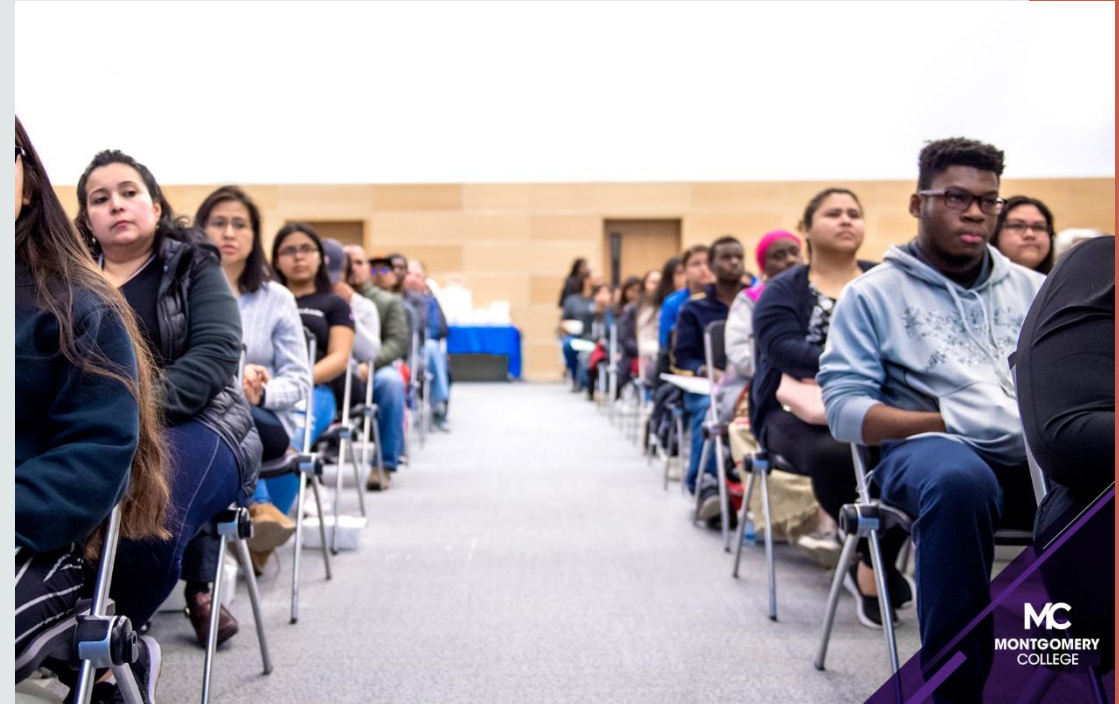
[National Student Clearinghouse Current Term Enrollment Estimates: Spring 2024](#)

Who are MC Students?

- 18,835 credit students (+5.9%)
- 65.2% attend part-time
- Average age: 23.1
- 55.3% female and 44.5% male
- Largest race/ethnic groups: Hispanic (55.3%) and Black (24%)
- HSI and AANAPISI
- 2,435 dual enrollment students from MCPS
- 19.7% first-time-ever college students
- 5.7% non-citizen students
- 157 countries represented with Ethiopia, El Salvador, Cameroon, Peru, and Nigeria as top 5 countries

Reference:

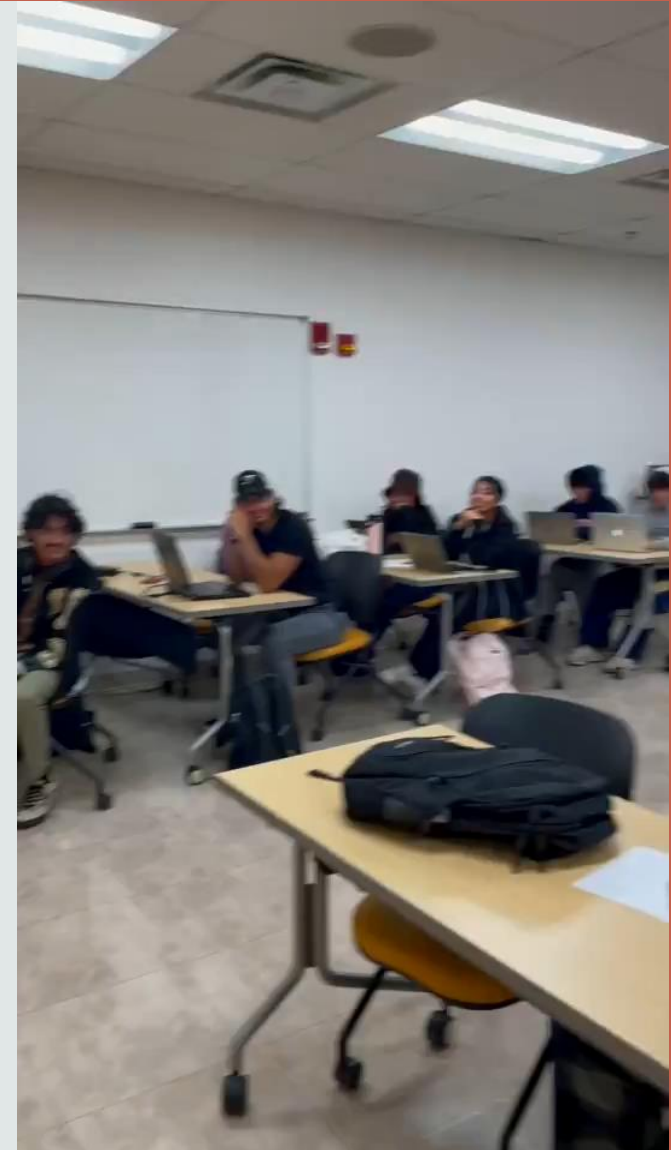
[Montgomery College Institutional Research and Effectiveness 2024 Fall Official Enrollment Overview](#)



Transforming Foundational Courses

Reasons for implementing the virtual exchange in my ENGL 101/011:

- To make a required class and its assignments more engaging and authentic
- To create a sense of global community
- To gain knowledge about the culture and traditions of people from another country
- To increase the comfort level of communicating and connecting with individuals from different backgrounds



Partnering University: ULACIT

Latin American University of Science and Technology: *La Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología*

- Located in San Jose, Costa Rica
- Has approximately 3,500 students
- Is the number one private university in Central America

Written Expression 3 Course

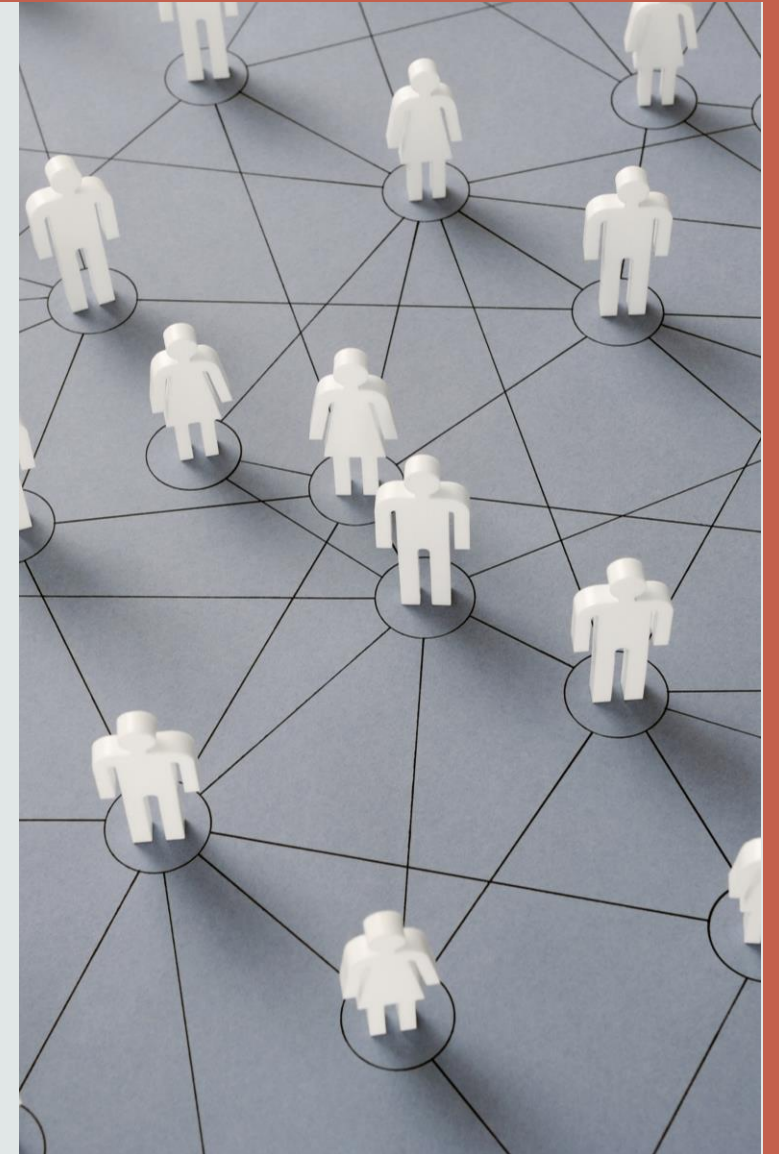
- Five students in the English Teaching bachelor's degree program (**An additional 17 students in the oral expression class attended the virtual exchange class*)
- Third of five writing courses in the program
- 13-week course that started in September



[Video introduction](#) by Professor Valeria Navarro Cespedes

What existing relationships does your institution have with international universities and education centers?

What personal connections do you have?



Virtual Exchange Activities

1. **Introductory activities:** pre-survey, country overview, readings on global education, and video introductions
2. **Hyflex Virtual Exchange Class:** interactive lecture, sharing of significant objects, and general Q&As
3. **Trading of Narrative Essays:** both classes shared significant object narratives
4. **Pen Pal Email Exchange:** MC students wrote ULACIT students to learn more about their lives



Timeline of Planning and Project Implementation

March	Instructor correspondence began via email and WhatsApp
April	Discussed ideas for a shared project and platforms to use like Flip
May	Shared my course units and essay assignments with Valeria and traded general country and institution information
June - July	Communicated about partner's course schedule
August	Solidified partnering course, discussed shared project in more depth, reviewed partner's course curriculum, and proposed dates for a live virtual exchange class
September	Confirmed date for live virtual exchange and booked Hyflex room MC and ULACIT courses started; introductions on Flip (Week 3) MC course began with unit defining terms related to global competence Country overview and pre-encounter survey completed
October	Tested Hyflex room with Valeria Live virtual exchange class with interactive discussion followed by more sharing on Flip
November-December	Trade completed narrative essays MC students write a compare and contrast essay Complete post-encounter survey

Technology Used

Flip Video Sharing (no longer available)

- Replacement Platforms:
 - Microsoft Stream
 - Padlet (free and gold version only allow 136MB uploads)

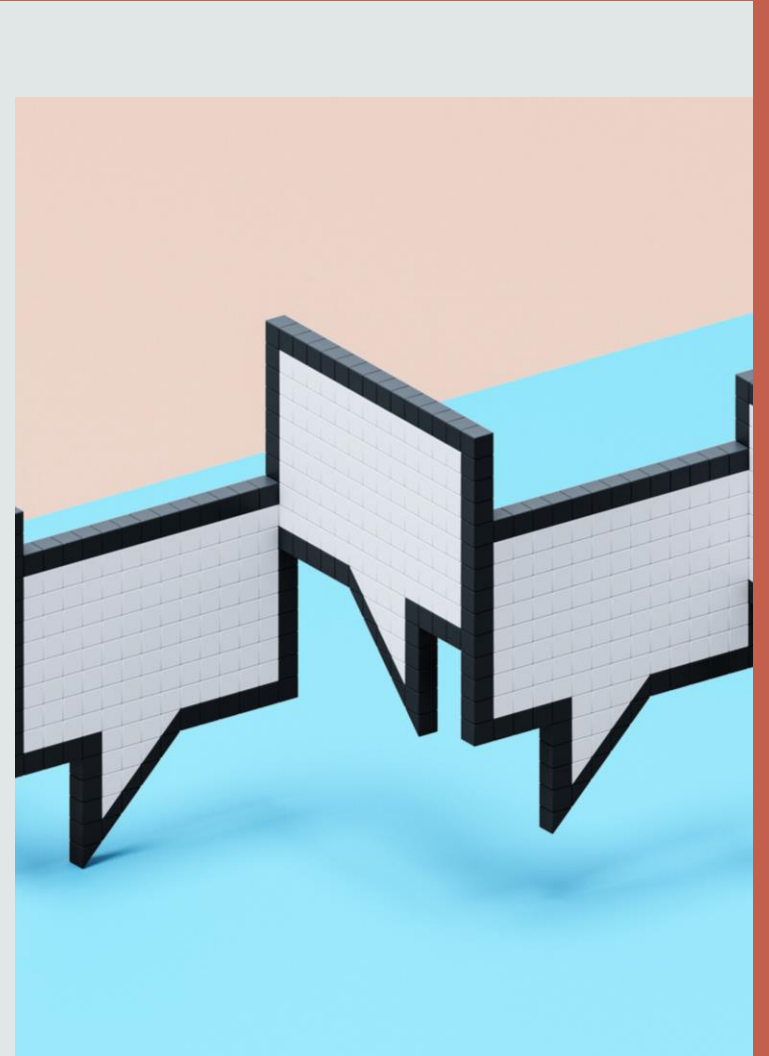
HyFlex Classroom:

- 2 screens and motion-tracking video cameras
- wall-mounted speakers and microphones for video-conferencing

Zoom: ULACIT students joined virtual class using this

Email: Student and instructor correspondence

WhatsApp: Instructor correspondence



Discussion Question:

What types of objects do you save and why?
What objects do you think of when you consider your country's culture and history?

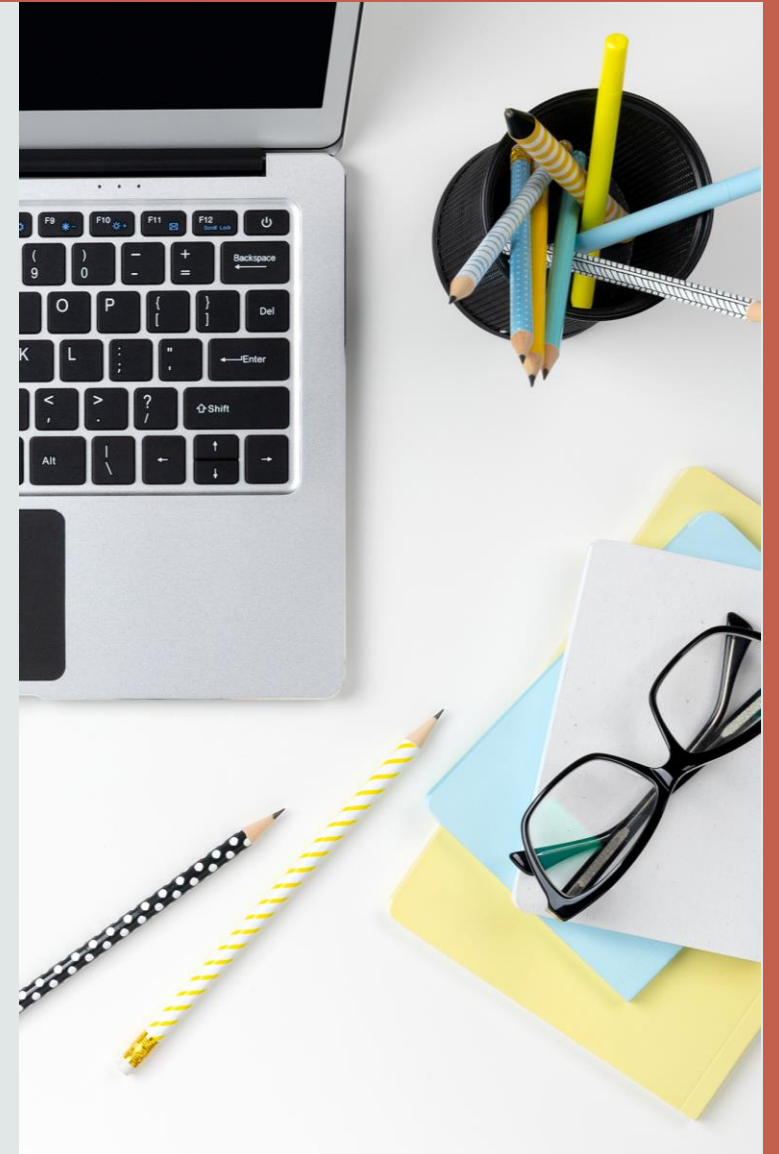


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What technology is available to you at your institution?

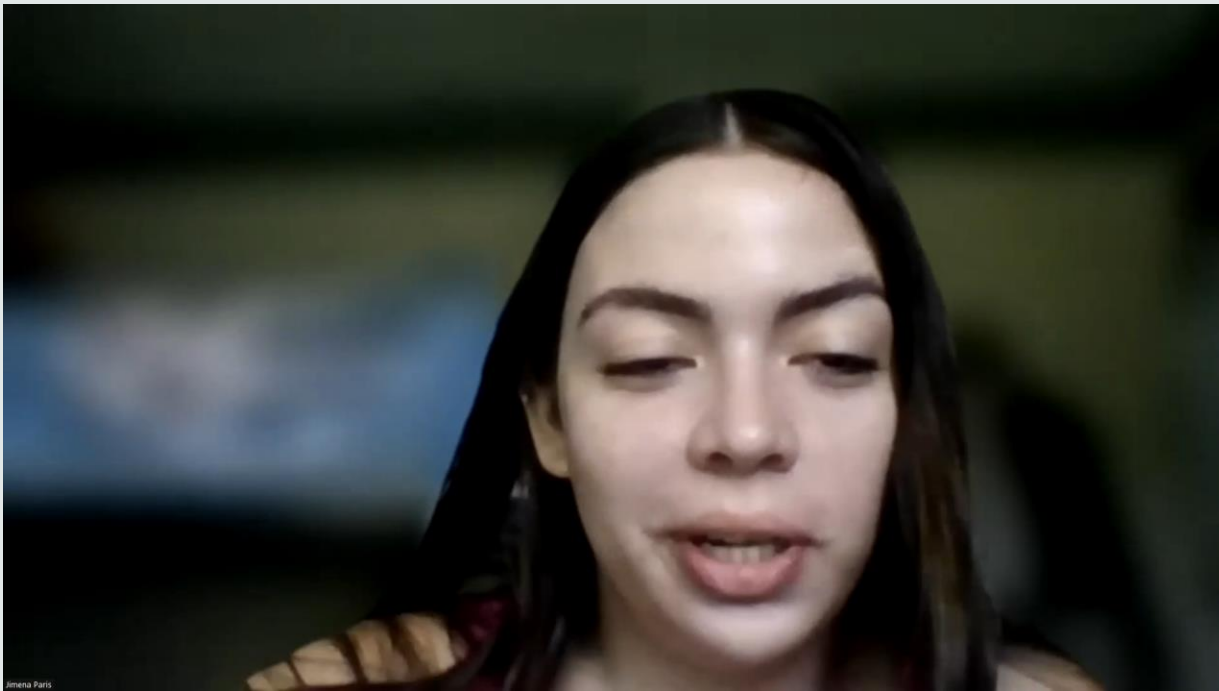
What technology may you need to acquire or learn to use to implement a virtual exchange?



ULACIT Students Videos

Introduction from [Alexander Angulo Carballo](#)

[Jimena Paris Garita's Significant Object](#)



Family Heirlooms (ULACIT)

Excerpt from
[Essay by
Jimena Paris
Garita](#)

My great-grandmother's legacy

When I was in high school, I always saw that my classmates had inherited things, and I remember being so eager to have one myself. Unfortunately, when I got mine, I was feeling everything but eagerness. My "Mamita", that's what we called my great-grandmother, was loved by everybody. She always had some hidden chocolates to give to her grandchildren inside her closet, and a lot of crosses on the back of the bed, so every time we visited her, she gave us the blessing.

That small toy motorcycle represented much more than a simple plastic toy and wheels. It was an object that reflected his father's love, which whom he was very happy during his childhood. It was a symbol of fatherly love that brought back many special memories when Alex looked at it. Beyond being just a toy, it became a treasure full of happiness, with which the little boy felt extremely happy. Every time he looked at it, the little boy remembered a lot of special moments of shared joy.

Excerpt from [Essay by
Alexander Angulo
Carballo](#)

Family Heirloom (Montgomery College)

The Recipe for Russian Christmas Cookies

Often, the most unassuming things house the greatest stories and history. For me, one such item is a family cookbook. This comically oversized green binder houses hundreds of recipes encased in plastic sheet protectors. Due to the effects of time and constant usage, the plastic sleeve on the front and many of the plastic pages are worn and distorted. However, the binder is not the oldest or most significant thing about this cookbook. Instead, the pages and recipes tell a history: my history. When flipping through the pages of this book, recipes that act as timestamps from my family's past are riddled throughout. These recipes range from recently printed cupcake recipes to my great-great-grandmother's handwritten recipes for Christmas cookies. These handwritten recipes from generations of women in my family are the most significant aspect of this book, for each tells a different story from the past and evokes memories of specific occasions, family members, and cultural traditions. Therefore, despite being a humble binder, the pages within hold a whole history: a history of war, refugees, a new life, culture, and tradition. One such recipe in this book is my great-great-grandma's Christmas cookies. This recipe is more than a set of handwritten instructions; it holds the memory of her life and her story of resilience, hope, and survival.

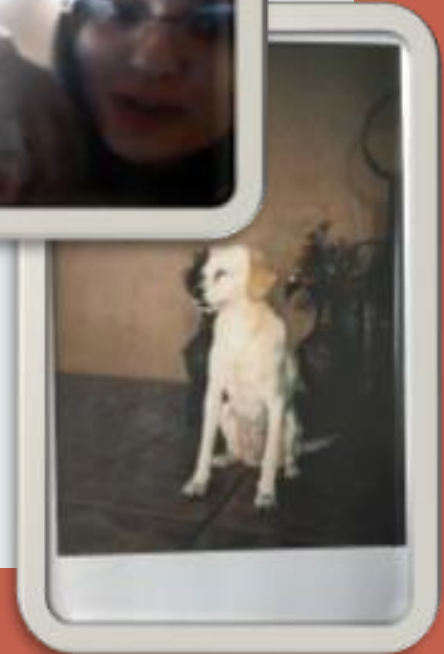
Introduction paragraph from [essay by Sophia Kalinyak](#)



Concluding paragraph from
an [essay by Ramiro Carrizo](#)

Cherished Pets

Life after Lucky had passed was a big change for everyone in our household and him not being there made the house feel empty. I was thinking about him everyday for the first week and sometimes I would forget he wasn't there anymore. It felt weird not hearing his raspy bark once I was near the front door and not having him greet me once I arrived home. Even when I did not want to think about him he would somehow enter my mind and when my sister got a new car and they passed her car down to me I found a polaroid picture of Lucky. I kept the polaroid on the dashboard with the thought of it being my "Lucky" charm. Everytime I take a look at the picture I think about our great memories and how much he impacted my life. He shaped who I am today and helped me become caring and loving towards others



Other Shared Themes

- **Love for food:** notebook of traditional Mexican recipes, coffee cup; Ethiopian jebena
- **Religion:** mother's rosary; grandfather's cross
- **Special Occasions:** graduation teddy bear and graduation photo
- **Objects from Loved Ones:** handwritten post-it notes from loved ones; box of photos and letters; cow stuffy from grandma; motorcycle figurine from father; books from loved ones
- **Cultural and Historical artifacts:** Costa Rican silver coin from 1924 transformed into a spoon; Civil War era penny; Nigerian ceremonial mask
- **Sports and Recovery from Injuries:** homerun baseball from first away tournament; special soccer balls; American football helmet
- **Hobbies:** self-built PC; digital and professional cameras



Post-Survey Comments from MC Students

"My knowledge has increased tenfold. The reason I believe that my knowledge has gotten better is because we spoke about Costa Rica before our meeting, then we spoke to our partners from ULACIT. Another reason for my increase of knowledge is I became interested and did my own research on Costa Rica. I also increased my knowledge by reading the papers of our counterparts from ULACIT."
- Jamison M.

"I really think it's a beautiful country, and that it has lots to offer. I think we can all try and incorporate 'pura vida' into our lives " - Sarah D.

"From this interaction with ULACIT, I had a great impression of them and Costa Rica as a whole. I learned that the nation is full of beautiful geography, and amazing friendly people." - Marie J.

"Through our exchange, I learned the importance of seeking out understanding of different cultures' similarities and differences to have successful cross culture communication. Through understanding one's similarities with another culture, it is far easier to find common ground to build understanding." - Sophia K.

Reflections on the Virtual Exchange from ULACIT

It made me feel as I was part of something bigger; something that transcends borders... please keep on going with these exchanges. In my own experience, it really helped me to put myself out there. Now that I got a job, I have to deal with a lot of people from the US, and it has felt very natural since the beginning thanks to opportunities like this virtual exchange.

- **Daniel Mira Rimolo**

"The global exchange project was an incredibly enriching experience for both my students and myself... My students particularly enjoyed creating their individual videos and the class video, which not only **showcased their creativity but also pushed them to produce higher-quality written work**. This experience significantly improved their writing skills and opened their eyes to the possibility of studying abroad. The virtual class with students from both the US and Costa Rica was a truly unique and exciting opportunity. It **provided a real-world context for our course material and created a positive learning environment** that encouraged students to engage with the content on a deeper level. The exchange also fostered a greater understanding of different cultures and perspectives... It **made the course more engaging and appealing for students**, especially in a written expression class. The opportunity to work and share in a global community was invaluable and has had a lasting impact on both my students' academic growth and their personal development."

-**Professor Valeria Navarro Cespedes**

Ideation Questions

1. What concept, unit topic, or assignment would work well for a collaborative assignment in your course?
2. What topics should instructors discuss in the planning and implementation phases to ensure mutual benefits for all participating institutions?
3. What challenges might students and instructors experience with the shared assignment?
4. What challenges in accessibility such as the physical space, technology, or linguistic limitations might interfere with an equitable learning environment and effective global learning project?
5. What are some materials instructors should exchange and conversations instructors should have to ensure that learning outcomes are met for participating institutions?