Cooperation & Bonding in Science Diplomacy Training

Based on successful features of Warsaw Science Diplomacy School 2020 and 2021

DESCRIPTION

Introduction

A strong science diplomacy training should foster a dynamic environment, conducive to long-term connections among participants (if not already acquainted). Based on survey responses and continued interaction among alumni, InsSciDE could conclude that this was achieved to great satisfaction in its online training, the Warsaw Science Diplomacy School (WSDS). InsSciDE has attributed it to a mix of features, comprising specific actions as well as elements to consider in the overall design of the training, discussed in this document.

The following features are detailed below, with extracts from the 'Participant Evaluation of Warsaw Science Diplomacy School 2020 and 2021'[1] to demonstrate the reception of the features in the WSDS pilot program.

- **Diverse cohorts and small group discussions**
- **Inter-level discussions (students learning from students)**
- **Disciplinary support groups**
- **Collaborative article series**
- **Social media**
- **Fun and movement breaks**

Objectives

The objectives of incorporating these features into a science diplomacy training may include to:

- Facilitate long-term and personal connections among trainees
- Build capacity to collaborate and communicate across disciplines and geographies
- Afford trainees a fun/relaxing activity

[1] Sean Hardy, Claire Mays, Ilonah Fagotin, Karolina Kyrzyzanowska, Natalia Czajkowska (2021) Participant Evaluation of InsSciDE Events: Warsaw Science Diplomacy School 2020 and 2021. Deliverable 1.5a for the H2020 InsSciDE project, submitted by European Academy of Diplomacy and Institut Symlog de France, August 2021.

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KEY FEATURES

Diverse Cohorts and Small Group Discussions

Diversity in teams and groups is generally considered to breed more creativity and dynamic engagements. This is particularly important in science diplomacy training due to the practice itself being characterized by frequent cross-professional and international interactions.

If the training is open to applications, the selection process should ensure that there is a good variety of academic and professional backgrounds and nationalities among selected candidates. Some fields to consider ensuring are represented include: STEM, Environmental sciences, Public health and medicine, Diplomacy, Government, International relations, Humanities, Social sciences, Science and Technology Studies (STS), Business, Social partners.

Further, the lecturers of the program should represent a diversity of perspectives. Consider inviting practitioners of science diplomacy from a variety of regions, as well as social sciences researchers specialized in science diplomacy (e.g. STS, international relations).

WSDS Pilot Experience

InsSciDE was proud to have convened broadly interdisciplinary and international groups of trainees for its two editions of WSDS, reflecting the diverse field of science diplomacy itself. This diversity was key to fostering a dynamic environment and thought-provoking discussions.

InsSciDE's participant evaluations of WSDS strongly indicated that the cohort composition in the training was very important for a quality learning experience.

> *"Many participants praised the time spent in breakout discussions and small group work. Dozens of comments highlighted the value of unstructured discussion time to delve into the case studies (with and without the guiding presence of the Case Study Author). The collaborative mindset was praised. The diversity of team compositions was largely appreciated, with participants' survey replies frequently highlighting the interdisciplinary and international nature of the WSDS cohorts."*

Social Media

Social media can serve as a powerful tool for fostering bonds in a science diplomacy training program, most potently in online training. Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn can each serve a role

in building a community feeling in the training cohort and afford participants a platform to easily interact.

Consider inviting admitted participants to share their social media information before the program, which could be compiled and shared with the cohort. In this way, participants can start interacting and getting to know each other early, facilitating engagement and cooperation once the program starts.

WSDS Pilot Experience

Due to the WSDS program being entirely online, social media became an integral means for participants to chat and bond 'outside the classroom'. Twitter successfully drummed up enthusiasm ahead of the training, during and after. A closed Facebook group for WSDS participants and alumni has been used to plan in-person meet ups at conferences, solicit professional advice and launch new joint projects. Many former trainees also connected with each other on LinkedIn.

A compilation of tweets from WSDS 2020 demonstrates the energy on social media before, during and after the training program.

Bonding through Support Groups

The support groups are a place to discuss more personal ambitions for the training program and in the field science diplomacy. Trainees should be grouped by something they have in common, such as academic background, professional position or the region that they are from, and given a few prompts to discuss.

Consider arranging a first support group meeting early in the program. Prompts might include:

> *What attracted you to a SD summer school? What is your personal position as you enter the school – are you a science diplomat, do you want to become one? How do you feel about what you learned so far? Were you surprised or were your thoughts confirmed? What do you hope to gain from the training program during this [week] and beyond?*

In the final support group meeting, prompts might include:

> *In the first meeting, you expressed what you were looking for in the school. Did you find it this week? What did you learn about [insert training program's]? What did you learn about using basic research to address strategic challenges? What did you learn from your fellow students? How will you stay in touch with your fellow students? How can you collaborate in the future with your fellow students? Will that be useful? What was particularly useful from the perspective of your field/discipline? What was missing?*

WSDS Pilot Experience

The diverse cohort of WSDS 2021 was divided into 'disciplinary groups', grouped by the disciplinary backgrounds of the trainees, which met on the first and last day of the program to discuss a series of prompts. One trainees gave the following representative quote in the evaluative survey:

"I really enjoyed being able to share my impressions of the week with the others from this [shared interest:"disciplinary"] group – you created an excellent group of people with similar desires/needs/perspectives, etc., that allowed us to really talk together."

Student Article Series

Collaborating on an article series allows trainees to take initiative outside the structured training program to define their own ideas about science diplomacy in conversation with fellow trainees.

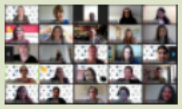
WSDS Pilot Experience

After the completion of WSDS, students were invited to submit co-authored articles for publication on InsSciDE's website. About half of all trainees followed up on this opportunity, yielding seven collaborative articles in the series across the two cohorts. The articles elaborated on the discussions held in small groups during the training, furthering both the discussions and connections established.

WSDS21 Student Takes: Space diplomacy then and (...)

WSDS21 Student Takes: ITER - SD success or failure?

WSDS20 Student Takes: Scramble for Africa



WSDS20 Student Takes: Articles by the alumni

WSDS21 Student Takes: SD against neocolonialism in (...)

WSDS20 Student Takes: Science Diplomacy and the Litter (...)

WSDS20 Student Takes: Towards a Joint Approach for EU (...)

Inter-level Discussions (students learning from students)

The process of learning from peers can be a highly enriching aspect in a science diplomacy training. Peer-to-peer exchange could be facilitated through teamwork exercises or by prompts that encourage trainees to draw from their own knowledge or experiences to dissect discussion materials. Having a diverse cohort of trainees enhances the benefits of such exchanges.

WSDS Pilot Experience

"In terms of learning from our fellow students, [it] has been a really great learning [experience] from all of us. It has been really interesting to see what everyone else thinks and what everyone is doing. What we have heard from a lot of people from different nations and different universities has been precious. Putting on our European hat [during the strategy development exercise] was a really revealing experience for all nonEuropean members of the group".

"When you put all these people together with very specialized knowledge and a common interest, that's when the magic happens. That was the best part of this course by far."

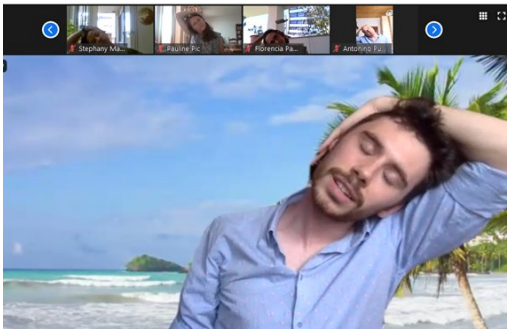
Fun and Movement Breaks

Fun and movement breaks may be incorporated into a program to create a relaxed and open atmosphere. They could include ice breakers such as 'Two truths and a lie' or 'Speed dating', or group activities such as a short guided stretching segment or breathing exercises.

WSDS Pilot Experience

WSDS incorporated fun and movement exercises in each day of the online program as a means to lighten the mood in the midst of otherwise serious topics, as well as to help trainees regain focus and ease tension during the long days in front of the computer. Exercises included: learning the choreography to the A majority of trainees ranked the segments with a 4 or 5 out of 5.

Sean Hardy leads WSDS 2020 in a relaxing stretching workshop.



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