Using a Role-Playing Simulation to Bridge Theory and Practice in Graduate Professional Education

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Abstract

In this paper Ryan and Matt explore the challenge of strengthening a professional Masters program in International Relations, one that offers a core curriculum in theory and methodology, but also practical skills for helping students to launch successful careers in governmental and non-governmental organizations. Dissatisfaction on the part of both faculty and students with a traditional capstone requirement, a 35-page Masters paper, led to a search for a more skills-oriented capstone experience, a role-playing simulation. The first simulation exercise was run in May 2007, after the students had completed their core curriculum. The simulation was designed to build bridges from course work in theory and methodology to career building skills, specifically, policy research that takes into account contextual factors; decision-making; small group interaction; negotiation and bargaining; oral and written advocacy; and self-reflection. Using text and pictures, Matt and Ryan describe the content and structure of the simulation, simulation outcomes, and reactions of the student participants. They conclude with a short discussion of the lessons learned, and improvements in the design and implementation of the exercise to provide a more satisfying integrative experience.
Introduction

In two previous papers, we reported on our efforts to encourage active learning in a sixteen-month professional MA in International Relations Program at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University.

The first paper in this series described an effort to promote graduate education teaching by using resources that capture the interactivity and de-centering properties of the Web. Specifically, we examined the effectiveness of combining Web-based text chat and hypertext authoring with videoconferencing to create “a new learning environment where students in the United States collaborate with their colleagues abroad to address current policy issues.” Although these efforts to apply digital technology to promote active learning were successful, many students did not take full advantage of the opportunities that were offered. The redesigned courses, workshops, and virtual conferences that were part of this effort did not empower students to take control of their education and “disrupt the traditional relationship between the active teacher and the passive learner.” “Our efforts were not transformative because they did not change the way students viewed their role, and they did not empower our students with respect to the subject matter…”

The second paper in this series described a further effort to move from a “teacher-oriented” to a “student-oriented” learning environment through the use of “collaborative hypertext.” For this exercise students were trained in the use of a Web-based environment for the organization, storage and retrieval of hypertext documents and images. Over the course of the semester students worked in teams to build underlying conceptual frameworks for their subject areas and to retrieve information to enrich these frameworks with descriptive materials. The results of questionnaire surveys of the students suggest that the exercise did help to create a more student-centered environment. Nevertheless, approximately one third of the students, especially those students who were uncomfortable with computer technology, did not benefit much from the exercise.

Professionalizing the International Relations Program


Why are we investing so much effort into “disrupting” and “transforming” the international relations classroom? The original impetus for our efforts was our dissatisfaction with traditional teaching and learning methods. This dissatisfaction went beyond the classroom and had much to do with the career aspirations of our students. The goal of our professional IR program is to train students as practitioners by providing them with the experiences and skills they need for their careers, in conjunction with relevant, substantive content. In the twenty-first century, they will have to negotiate and collaborate with people around the world who may or may not share their world views or values. Our graduates will not only engage in face-to-face negotiation, but they will also have to interact with people they have never met using digital and Web-based technologies.

**The Capstone Simulation**

Although a majority of our professional degree students benefited from our experiments with Web-based teaching and applications of collaborative hypertext, we decided that the program could be further strengthened by developing learning opportunities that were less focused on digital technology. In the fall of 2003, after a thorough evaluation of the professional MA-IR Program by Maxwell School faculty and staff, we decided to develop a one-credit integrative capstone experience as part of a new set of core requirements. The other new requirements for the Program included a course in the History of International Relations, two “signature courses,” Culture in World Affairs and Comparative Foreign Policy, and a course called Qualitative Skills for International Relations. These courses would be required in addition to existing courses in Microeconomics and Quantitative Skills in International Relations.

The previous capstone experience for the MA-IR Program was a thirty-page Masters Paper that was a holdover from the an earlier version of the program, a thirty credit Masters Degree offered to students who planned to pursue a Ph D. in the field. Although some students liked the idea of a “MA Thesis,” many of them had difficulty completing it in a timely fashion, and some faculty members found the end product did not meet their own academic expectations. Additionally, faculty members were not compensated for serving as MA paper readers, and many were not enthusiastic about the extra responsibilities.

The rationale for the new capstone was that it would provide an integrative experience that was more relevant for the career goals of professional degree students. In addition, faculty hoped that the experience “would build esprit among students and provide them with vital international leadership skills, coupled with the opportunity to put those skills into practice in a transnational simulation project. It would involve multiple Maxwell faculty members together with teams of students, and would naturally engender distinctive Maxwell approaches to skills, scholarship, issues, and practice.”
According to the original concept paper, the Capstone “would involve more multi-dimensional challenges of international leadership, including: intercultural communication, consensus building, conflict resolution, leadership and management, strategic planning and resourcing, evaluation, budgeting, and proposal writing…. During the morning of the first day and the afternoon of the last day of the simulation, students would have the opportunity to work with faculty on special topics. During the three remaining days, the students would participate in a simulation exercise that incorporates all that they learned throughout the year….The simulation would involve a variety of stakeholders and would revolve around a current transnational problem.”

The proposal for a capstone simulation was submitted to the various curriculum committees of the University and approved by the University Senate and the State of New York in mid-2005. The revised MA-IR Program was advertised in fall 2005 for the entering class of 2006, which would participate in the inaugural simulation exercise in May 2007.

The 2007 Simulation: “Primus Inter Pares?”

Learning Outcomes

The students who participated in the 2007 Simulation, “Primus Inter Pares?” were told the purpose of the exercise was “to think of potential developments before they happen, so that when they happen we are not totally caught off guard. As we know from recent history, the first mistake a policy-maker or analyst can make is to assume that something is never going to happen. The purpose of this simulation is for you to get into the shoes of a member of a team and together strategize and make tactical decisions in response to the changing situation.” For the participants this was an opportunity to work in a small group setting to plan a strategy for their team and work together to implement the strategy.

The learning outcomes for the Capstone were described in an assessment exercise for the International Relations Program, “Documenting the Assessment of Student Learning in Academic Programs” (June 2006). For the Capstone, five outcomes were identified as being relevant:

1. **Culture:** Familiarity with cultural dimensions of International Relations. The role of culture in international development, conflict management and dispute resolution, and organizations.
2. **Decision-Making:** The ability to identify relationships between policy options and interests with respect to problems in international affairs.
3. **Research and Analysis:** The ability to work individually and in groups under a deadline in order to digest, select, and organize policy-relevant material in international affairs.
4. **Consensus Building:** Basic skills in interactive and collaborative learning.
5. **Presentation**: Competence in individual and group presentation and discussion.

These learning outcomes will be used, along with other measures, to evaluate the efficacy of the 2007 Capstone (see below).

**The Scenario**

The simulation began with the discussion of an industrial espionage case within the European Union in which non-EU nationals were implicated. This narrative helped set the stage for the remainder of the simulation and served as a catalyst for escalating tensions across the various teams. These tensions took the form of questions of freedom vs. security, openness and equality vs. protection of borders, and respect for various nationalities, ethnic groups, and religions. At the same time, the European teams were tasked to enforce their ability to track non-citizens entering EU territory without alienating them and their national governments.

The key objective for the three EU teams was to work with the other teams to negotiate an agreement that would allow the EU to incorporate the Schengen Information System II (or SIS II), which would legally require foreign nationals entering the EU territory to divulge specific personal information, including one’s religious affiliation. This requirement raised considerable controversy and discussion among the simulation participants and, in the end, led to significant differences of opinions between the EU teams and the Arab League team in particular. At the same time, the other teams were involved in an attempt to reach a consensus that would satisfy everyone.

After prolonged debate, negotiations, and multiple reframing of the agreement proposal, participants achieved consensus, yielding that information on religious affiliation of non-nationals entering the EU not be required, but rather voluntary. It was a truly controversial issue, considering that the EU today is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious entity with increasing numbers of immigrants possessing diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. It is clear that families living within EU countries stay in touch with their families living in their countries of origin. It is also clear that the EU is built on the principles of human rights and freedoms in which one’s religious beliefs play a pivotal role. Thus, the larger question of common security vs. individual freedoms became apparent. Students experienced first-hand the difficulty of maneuvering between what could become inadequate security precautions on the one hand and potentially excessive intrusion into individuals’ private lives on the other. The overriding issue became the risk of imposing double standards in the treatment of people based on their religious preferences.
The simulation scenario was designed to invoke in its participants the sense that negotiating and attempting to institutionalize new security rules based on the collection of private information is a challenging and diplomatically complicated endeavor. It requires not only knowledge of “the other” and their culture, but also the ability to see foreign policy from an outside perspective. Participants were supposed to learn that successful policymakers should operate without any preconceived notions or embedded stereotypes.

The Teams

The forty five students that took part in the simulation were divided into ten teams, including: the European Union (EU) Parliament, EU Commission, EU Council, Group of Asian States, Arab League, Latin American States, North Atlantic Council, United Nations Security Council, Russia, and the United States. The simulation participants were assigned teams and roles, to the extent possible, based on their functional and regional interests. When assigning roles and teams, faculty took participants’ countries of origin into account. For example, a student from China with an expressed regional interest in East Asia might have been assigned the role of Foreign Minister of Japan, but would not have played a direct representative role for China. In this way, faculty designed the simulation to encourage students to step out of their individual comfort zones to see issues from an alternative cultural perspective.

In addition to the country and institutional teams, three students were assigned the roles of journalists and were tasked with covering the unfolding events, following various meetings, and extracting as much information from participants in their roles as possible. The journalists were mainly students in our new Public Diplomacy Program, a joint venture between Syracuse University’s Maxwell School and the Newhouse School of Public Communications. Students in this dual master’s degree program earn an MA in International Relations and an MS in Public Relations.

The Setting: Day One, Day Two, and Day Three

The Capstone took place over the course of three and a half days. On day one, students assembled in a large lecture hall at the Maxwell School, and the faculty provided students with instruction manuals. The instructions contained information about students’ roles, countries, and/or institutions as well as input on historical perceptions and attitudes towards all the other teams. It is important to mention that the students had not been given any information whatsoever about their roles or the content of the simulation until this point. After students were given an opportunity to read their instructions, faculty briefed participants on the general design of the Capstone and the logistics of the course for the three days
to come. Immediately following the introduction, students were strategically split into two groups and asked to report to two separate classrooms. Each group watched a short newscast, prepared in advance, by the students acting as journalists in the simulation. Unbeknownst to the students in the two groups, the newscasts reported the same events from different perspectives, one “Western” and the other “non-Western”. At this point, team room assignments were announced, and the participants met with their teams to discuss their goals and strategy.

Four of the Capstone instructors maintained responsibility for supervising the teams and rotated in and out of team rooms listening to students’ deliberations and making sure that the simulation remained on track. These four instructors would also ultimately be responsible for grading students’ performance. Three additional instructors, including the Capstone designer, sequestered themselves into a room in another part of the building, where they served as the “headquarters”, or the brains of the operation. The journalists remained connected to headquarters via walkie-talkies. They walked from group to group and reported on teams’ activities. Headquarters then broadcast journalists’ reports, which may have been slanted with a “Western” or “non-Western” perspective, via e-mail to all the participants (all of which had laptops with wireless accessibility). Teams then began to send Headquarters press statements expressing their various positions that were then posted to everyone. Additionally, Headquarters continued to introduce new facts throughout the day, which served to increase conflict among the teams, thus maintaining participants’ high level of energy.

During the first day, technology became the engine that drove the simulation. Participants received all their information via e-mail, and if they had to research a particular topic, they had ready access to the Internet. With so many participants and teams and such a complex scenario, something was happening every minute, and students felt they needed to remain glued to their screens to make sure they were informed. In person meetings or press conferences were ad hoc, not pre-scheduled by headquarters. As a result, technology tended to replace face-to-face interaction. A couple of exceptions, however, can be seen below.
On Day Two, students reported to an off-site retreat center on one of the Finger Lakes about an hour from Syracuse. We were faced with a serious problem upon arrival, namely the promised wireless Internet access was inoperable. Headquarters quickly had to change its game plan in order to make the simulation work. To replace the technology, press statements and news clips were hand-delivered to the teams and posted on a bulletin board in the main meeting room. The pace became slower, and individuals began to interact in person (out of necessity). More press conferences and multi-group meetings were held, and participants were given ample opportunity to express their views in public. Headquarters continued to add new facts to the simulation, helping to escalate the situation and encourage a high level of intensity. Many of the groups worked well into the night, hammering out position statements and negotiating with other teams.
Day Three culminated, shortly after lunch, with a UN General Assembly meeting (called by Headquarters), which included all teams and participants. Agreement was finally reached, and the simulation successfully concluded.

**The De-Briefing**

The day after the simulation ended the faculty and staff held a two-hour debriefing session with the participants. The designers of the simulation revealed more information about the exercise, including the Western and Non-Western versions of the newscast. Each faculty member gave summaries of his or her impressions and the participants had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. After this discussion they completed a survey questionnaire that asked them, among other things, to evaluate the core courses that were required in the professional MA-IR Program, including the Capstone experience.

**Simulation or MA Paper as a Capstone?**
To help evaluate the 2007 Capstone Simulation, “Primus Inter Pares?” the participants were asked in the survey questionnaire whether they would “rather participate in a three-day simulation exercise like the one held this week or write a [35-page] MA Paper. A majority of the students (64.2%) preferred the simulation, as compared to the paper option (35.8%).

Those who favored the simulation emphasized its practical aspects; for example, one participant wrote that “I appreciate the more pragmatic and professional approach of the Capstone simulation rather than the Masters Thesis, and find the exercise a useful devise in portraying the intricacies of international diplomacy.” Another participant thought that “…the simulation was a tremendous success and an experience far more practical and enjoyable than having to write a Masters thesis.” On the other hand, some thought that a Masters Paper might be more involving. One person said that “…I would have much rather written a thesis than did what I did this week….I think you should be more worried about getting everybody engaged and involved,” while another participant believed that the simulation did not offer much as a learning experience: “…in all honesty I do not think a three-day simulation can adequately replace the learning experience that writing a thesis is….it is impossible to incorporate all of our different interests and career tracks, and thus it makes no sense to have our final Masters project be something which is in no way related with what we are interested in doing or what we have been learning.”

Further analysis of the questionnaire data reveals that students who favored the simulation were much more likely to have a regional interest in Europe or the Middle East than Latin America, Africa, or Asia. Furthermore, students who preferred the simulation were more likely to have been undergraduate majors in Political Science or International Relations (53.9%) as compared to those who preferred the MA thesis (21.4%). They were also more likely to rank core courses in quantitative and qualitative skills higher, while the students who preferred the MA Paper were more inclined to rank core courses in the history of IR and economics higher. Some of these differences may be a reflection of the national origins of the students—those who preferred the simulation were more likely to be American students (61.5%) than those who preferred the MA Paper (42.9%).

Because the Capstone simulation is for the most part an exercise in verbal communication (the role-playing participants engaged in face-to-face negotiations and make presentations), the American students have a distinct advantage over the international students for whom English is not their first language. Furthermore, most MA programs offered outside of the United States require a MA Thesis rather than a simulation as a capstone or exit requirement.

Learning Outcomes and the Simulation
During the course of the 2007 Capstone simulation exercise, students were asked to keep a journal about the strategy of their team as well as their individual strategy in the simulation. They were also asked to write an “individual reflection” papers, which, for the most part, were about one page long (single-spaced). Most of the individual reflection papers contained an assessment of what they learned in the simulation as well as a critique of the exercise, itself. Because they were completely open-ended, we were not able to do a sophisticated statistical analysis of the comments and suggestions. Nevertheless, we did code for each student any references to learning outcomes that were similar to those described in the (June 2006) assessment document (see above).

Although nearly half of the participants were from abroad, there were very few references in the reflection papers to the role of culture in conflict management and dispute resolution (Outcome 1). Surprisingly, only 9% percent of the participants made observations about cultural factors. For example, one student said, “Personally, I benefitted most from hearing the perspectives of people from other countries.”

Many participants (28.8%) described some aspect of decision-making in their reflection papers, an activity that corresponds to Outcome 2, the “ability to identify relationships between policy options and interests with respect to problems in international affairs,” while 22% described a related activity, “leadership.”

Another learning outcome, policy analysis (Outcome 3), was mentioned by 15.5% of the participants. Many of them did complain that they had no time to do any research or analysis, and one participant said that he “discovered that much of diplomacy is not structured and often cannot be analyzed in advance; in fact, national objectives are pursued often through the most improvised of decisions.”

There were many references in the reflection papers to consensus building (Outcome 4), because most of the activity in the simulation consisted of building a common position and negotiating with other teams. 42.2% of the participants described consensus-building activities in their reflection papers and 37.7% mentioned negotiation. For example, one participant wrote that “I learned how difficult it is to reach an international consensus on issues.” Another one thought that “[the simulation] has taught me…how to negotiate to get your work done,” and someone else said that “negotiation skills [were] the biggest skill I learned from it.”

Very few participants made a reference in their reflection papers to competence in presentation, which is learning Outcome 5. Nevertheless, one person remarked that this type of exercise was “useful for improvement of argumentation and persuasion skills in private conversations or in groups (true, some briefings and discussions looked like the UK Parliamentary debates).”
While these data suggest that the simulation did help to promote some of the learning outcomes proposed in the assessment exercise, consensus building and negotiation and decision-making, it did not do a very good job of promoting three of them: an appreciation of culture in world affairs, skills in presentation, and policy research and analysis.

**Critiques of the Participants**

In their reflection papers participants provided us with a critique of the simulation, along with suggestions about how to improve it. The critiques covered a wide variety of topics, ranging from the choice of the focus of the exercise to the food and bedding at the camp. Nevertheless, there were a number of common themes (see Appendix for a list of critical comments from the reflection papers).

Most of the participants thought that the simulation was Europe-centric. A few participants felt that this was beneficial; for example, one student said, “Strategically speaking, the entire simulation was very Europe-oriented; therefore it was manageable to deal with the assigned tasks.” Most, however, even those whose regional specialization was Europe, thought it was too Euro-centric: “I felt like the simulation was too Europe-centered, so that it catered to the interests of only a select group of IR students.” As a consequence, of the European focus, some of the students, who were playing roles of non-European countries, felt marginalized. One participant remarked that “…the simulation was very imbalanced…Many of the other regions and students were marginalized and struggled to become involved.”

Some students observed a number of consequences of marginalization: uneven participation, frustration, and unrealistic role play. One person observed that “other groups and individuals went about much of the simulation creating their own background music.” Another one “felt left out and with very little to do.” Colleagues wanted “desperately to be included while European and Arab countries had a lot to discuss and talk about.” They were frustrated because the exercise was their Capstone, but the topic severely limited their ability to participate fully. In other words, they felt “cheated.”

Another frustration was the lack of Internet service at the lake-side camp on Days Two and Three. Our students indicated in the survey questionnaire that one of the strong points of the International Relations Program at the Maxwell School program was the emphasis on policy research and analysis. Because they were not informed about the topic of the simulation until it started, and they had no Internet service at the camp, they were not able to demonstrate one of their strengths—their ability to do research and analysis on current topics. One student observed that “I would have liked to have more time to prepare for my role—maybe a weekend to do research on China’s mission to the UN might have made me a more effective participant.” Another one was disappointed by the
lack of technology: “The technology issue was definitely mostly to blame...” Another person observed, “At the Casowasco retreat, however, technology was prevented from playing its role due to infrastructure issues. This not only slowed down the communication process, which reduced team efficiency as it also prevented participants from gathering official information about the institution’s procedural matters...” Some however, seemed to be relieved to not have the Internet: “I wish I had been able to do additional research as the simulation progressed, but I also saw the downsides of being too dependent on technology.”

Participants were divided in their opinions about the suitability of the camp at Lake Casowasco. Some of them enjoyed getting away from the University. “Staying in a camp area for a night was very beneficial and even accelerated the simulation—even though there were problems with technology.” “Being at an external, neutral location helped in negotiations and meeting people, and the openness of the camp helped in communication.” Others, however, were less enthusiastic: “…the trip to Cosawasco Bible camp was utterly pointless. The lack of proper amenities greatly complicated the simulation and prevented the students...from entertaining themselves.”

A number of participants made observations about the role of the faculty in the simulation. Some of them thought that the “presence of the professors was very valuable. We were lucky enough to use their knowledge a couple of times.” On the other hand, most participants who made comments about the faculty were disappointed that the faculty did not provide more feedback: “It would have been better for us, if the professors could have given us more active and direct instructions and feedback, as well as monitoring our decision-making process and leadership.” “I feel the professors should give feedback and suggestions to individual students and to the team at the end of the day.”

**Applying the Lessons Learned**

Although students were critical of aspects of the simulation design and implementation, they were willing to "cut us some slack." A number of them said that they were confident that in subsequent years we would continue to improve the Capstone. In order to meet their expectations, we must draw lessons from last year’s Capstone and apply them to the design of subsequent simulation exercises. Here are the five most important lessons that emerged from our analysis:

1. Because this exercise is offered as a Capstone for the Masters Program, all students must be given an opportunity to become involved to the best of their abilities. Unlike last year, the topic and rules of the simulation should not set up artificial constraints on participation. Hence, we have chosen for the May 2008 simulation a topic that should be involving for everyone: We are going to run a simulation of the United Nations Climate
Change Conference which will be held in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008. Students will play the roles of negotiators from the major countries involved in the actual negotiations.

2. Because this course is offered as a Capstone, the simulation must be integrated better with core requirements for the Program. One of the problems with the 2007 simulation was the “disconnect” between the required core courses and the simulation, which was supposed to provide an opportunity for students to show how much they had learned. Hence, for the 2008 simulation students in two of the core courses, Qualitative Skills in International Relations and Comparative Foreign Policy, will conduct research and prepare position papers for regional groupings and countries in their areas of interest.

3. Students complained last year that they did not have enough time to do research on the topic, EU immigration, because they were not given any assignments in advance and the unavailability of the Internet on Days Two and Three. In contrast, the participants in the 2008 simulation will have at least two months to prepare, and they will have access to the Internet for further research throughout the exercise.

4. In the 2007 simulation the faculty played a passive role. Prior to the simulation they did not meet with the participants to guide their research and analysis, nor did they do much beyond observation when the exercise was underway. In 2008 a subset of faculty will be working with the students prior to the beginning of the simulation, and they will meet with each team periodically to answer questions and offer advice, once the simulation is underway.

5. The de-briefing, which we view as an essential element of the learning process, will be organized by the faculty to provide an opportunity to let “let off steam” and compare notes in a general session, but it will also allow participants to meet with their faculty advisors in small groups for more detailed discussions of the relevance of their course work and the lessons learned that may be useful in their careers.

Appendix: Critiques of the Simulation from the Self-Reflection Papers

Europe-Centric Focus of the Simulation

“Strategically speaking, the entire simulation was very Europe-oriented, therefore was manageable to deal with the assigned tasks.” (EU)

“I thought the simulation was a good exercise in working on a number of issues, prioritizing, and working with a plethora of diverse personalities. Yet, it was also too Eurocentric, with those of us in non-European roles waiting unrealistically to react to European actions, and there did not seem to be adequate controls from preventing people from taking outlandish or self-defeating courses of action. (ME)
“My main concern with the simulation was its overpowering focus on Europe. There seemed to be a simulation involving how the EU and NATO operates and cooperates…” (ME)

“…the EU/NATO-centric simulation became frustrating and extremely tedious for much of the second day.” (RU)

“I was disappointed that the capstone was extremely Eurocentric in nature.” (LA)

“It was too Europe-centric for my liking.” (RU)

“I felt like the simulation was too Europe-centered, so that it catered to the interests of only a select group of IR students.” (USA)

“The idea of the simulation was very much Euro-centric and HQ did not realize (or intentionally ignored) that as long as European institutions were discussing new immigration policy other organizations were constrained in their developments.” (RU)

“…there was a kind of consensus among some members and groups that the EU alone was running the show and everybody else felt marginalized by that fact.” (ME)

“The biggest problem with the simulation was its largely Euro-centric nature. This is no surprise, as the Institute was responsible for creating it.” (NATO)

“Despite the benefits of the complex simulation including everyone, I felt that perhaps a less Euro-centric (I realize the Institute’s European program created and probably funded the simulation which is why it to the form it did) simulation would allow for a more fulfilling experience for all participants.” (ASIA)

“…the simulation was very imbalanced. It was heavily Europe centric. Many of the other regions/students were marginalized and struggled to become involved.” (AFRICA)

Marginalization and Resulting Lack of Involvement

“Because our IR Program has unique diversity in its concentrations from global markets to development, and has enough students who have studied and had substantial knowledge on those issues, if we had such systems and stages so as to bring those issues, the simulation would be more beneficial not only for those students but for the IR Program.” (Asia)

“The roles of some countries like Iran and organizations like Latin America and the Arab League were marginalized.” (RU)

Consequences of uneven involvement: “Other groups and individuals went about much of the simulation creating their own background music, which at best created temporary chaos or confusion…” (LA)

“…in the utopia of simulations they [marginalized groups] should at a minimum be mitigated to afford a rewarding experience for each participant.” (LA)

“I suggest that the next time more subjects could run in parallel in order that all the groups could have the same load of work…” (LA)

“…there seemed to be a lot of tension seeping out from groups that were overworking themselves…” (LA)
“Throughout the first two days of the simulation, it appeared as though Russia and the Latin American states were left in the periphery of negotiations. Therefore, my role as the Russian Ambassador to Brazil provided little to occupy my time.” (RU)

“This made for a discouraging capstone experience, NOT because I did not understand my role, but because I wasn’t as involved as some of the other groups. Had I been given a hint as to how I should respond…perhaps I would not have felt as marginalized.” (NATO)

“…while some actors were directly implicated in the simulation, others were not.” (RU)

“There were many points during the simulation where I felt left out and with very little to do. I understand that this was part of the simulation design and was meant to teach a lesson in patience.” (RU)

“Overall, I found the simulation to be an interesting and enlightening, if not incredibly frustrating experience. It needs to be fixed up a bit, with a fairer division of labor.” (ME)

“While I thoroughly enjoyed my role in the simulation, I could tell that some other participants felt they had an insignificant and unimportant role.” (ASIA)

“…some individuals who had nothing much to contribute were, in my view, marginalized.” (ME)

“Despite the good intentions of the simulation, many countries were marginalized” (ME)

“Cons: Individual breaking their role due to their lack of interest.” (ASIA)

“Some groups felt marginalized and demanded that the Security Council include them in the talks even if they weren’t directly involved. It was difficult not to marginalize these groups while remaining focused on substantive issues….Issues were created if roles were not inherently active” (UN)

“It was frustrating to see other countries such as Russia, the US, and Latin American countries, be pretty much left out of every problem we got, and have colleagues wanting desperately to be included while European and Arab countries had a lot to discuss and talk about. Although some people were able to somehow get involved, other ideas from other countries were shut down because they were ‘tangential’” (UN)

**Lack of Internet Limits Ability to Do Research**

“…without the Internet, the experience becomes severely impacted. Had we been given some time to prepare for our roles, we may not have had to rely so much on electronic resources for background information. That is part of the problem of being a country you are not as familiar with.” (NATO)

“I thought it was hilarious that the Internet didn’t work while at camp. I think it was great to operate within a crisis, lacking perfect information and resources. I know it led to a lot of frustration and stress, but I think that is real life. Not all variables can be controlled, this simulation definitely contributed to a better understanding of that” (EU)

“On Monday, the general tendency was to remain behind closed doors.” (USA)

“…no Internet connection. Though we had a good Plan B, our research was limited. (RU)
“I liked the way the simulation was organized, although the lack of an Internet connection was an issue…” (ME)

“I had mixed feelings about the role of the Internet; losing it in the middle of the simulation showed both its pros and cons. I wish I had been able to do additional research as the simulation progressed, but I also saw the downsides of being dependent on technology.” (ME)

“I will grant that the lack of technological capabilities was a positive and a negative….Monday was the opposite from Tuesday with no Internet connection, which made it difficult and slowed down communication almost too much.” (NATO)

“I found it challenging to follow closely what was happening with and between the different actors at all times. The Internet helped with this. Things were complicated somewhat at the retreat center when we had no Internet access—but I still feel we were able to get things done fairly well with out it. It was an interesting test for students who are highly reliant on technology to go without it.” (Asia)

“The inconvenience of the Internet and cell phone access in most cases hijacked our progress to a certain degree.” (ME)

“I preferred the system without the Internet and could focus on the smaller number of issues and think this should be the case for next year.” (UN)

“On the first day having instant messaging made it easy to work because we had instant communication with each other that was non-intrusive. On days two and three having to run back and forth every time we needed to make a decision as China, made the process much more difficult. Communications between country team members is obviously VERY important for crafting a unified strategy in a constantly changing environment.” (ASIA)

“The second day in Casowasco was radically different. Without the Internet, communications were extremely hard. Press releases took forever and we never knew if they were actually from the press, from HQ, or some other group.” (UN)

“The technology issue was definitely mostly to blame…”

“...it [the retreat center] is not habilitated for an activity that had been designed around the premise and requirement that we all had laptops with wireless capability and where all the communications took place through e-mail.” (UN)

“At the Casowasco retreat, however, technology was prevented from playing its role due to infrastructure issues. This not only slowed down communication processes which reduced team efficiency as it also prevented participants from gathering official information about institution's procedural matters in the WWW.” (EU)

**No Time Was Provided for Research on Topic and Roles**

“Written information at the beginning of simulation was limited. More information on issues under discussion and states’ positions concerning these particular issues would have been helpful.” (RU)

“My European Commission group started off strong trying to combat the situation, but we lacked a lot of background information that frustrated our process. Our information packet included some information about what we needed to accomplish, but didn’t provide us with Standard Operating Procedures, which would have been helpful. It was unclear how much we could just
fabricate, due to our information deficit, or how much we had to rely on HQ or the Internet to get accurate information.” (EU)

“...we should have been given time to do some research about our country...in order to increase our negotiation power.” (LA)

“...we needed some time to research about our country or organization.” (LA)

'"...I wish that we had been informed of our roles prior to the simulation....I would have been much more effective if I had known more about American relations with other countries, NATO, and the EU." (USA)

“...it would have added to the effective management of the simulation, if there was a prior information session or lecture to provide basic background information.” (USA)

“...had I received my appointment prior to the simulation, I would have better understood my economic and political arrangements between Russia and Brazil.” (RU)

“...no prior information on the specifics of the simulation.” (RU)

"Another glaring problem was a lack of understanding in regards to the procedural working of some groups, specifically in regards to the EU. Much of the first day ended up being wasted because the EU Commission, Council, and Parliament did not understand their powers and the order in which the EU body was to legislate.” (NATO)

“...the students could have more time with research so that the negotiations will meet real-life criteria. Some of the students had to represent countries that they were not very familiar with....” (NATO)

“On Monday I gathered a substantial amount of information from the Internet; however, information on the UN, EU, and NATO’s decision-making procedures and other security policies was not shared or instructed during the simulation. Receiving more adequate information and instruction would have led our experience to be more successful and valuable.” (NATO)

“Some students didn’t seem to have much information on the country they were representing. So I feel that students should be given prior information on the country they are representing.” (ASIA)

“Recommendations: Provide role information a week to 48 hours ahead of time. Also this way the actor can prepare and get into the mind set of the role. This will resolve some technical issues.” (ASIA)

“I would have liked to have had more time to prepare for my role—maybe a weekend to do research on China’s mission to the UN might have made me a more effective participant.” (ASIA)

The Simulation Needed More Structure and a Greater Faculty Role

"I do not feel I learned very much from the experience. I do not think the simulation had enough structure. Individuals and teams should have had more information on what they were supposed to do. (LA)

“Most of our instructions on the individual level and on the group level, as well, were vague and broadly defined and rather general.” (ME)
“…explanation of basic rules, how organizations work would be helpful.” (RU)

“…I strongly recommend this simulation exercise to be designed in a more collaborative approach with the inclusion of power checkpoint mechanisms that more effectively mimic an international working environment” (EU)

“Perhaps in the future it would also be helpful to clarify rules over actions” (AFRICA)

“…in the first day, the students could receive a little lecture about the subjects that would be the focus of the capstone…” (LA)

“The instructors could have given more overall guidelines and assessment between the days, so all participants could learn and digest what they had learned in that day by stages.” (USA)

“…the lack of continued guidance from either Professors or Administrators on the specific roles that participants should follow and act on.” (RU)

“It would have been better for us, if the professors could have given us more active and direct instructions and feedback, as well as monitoring our decision-making process and leadership.” (NATO)

“Presence of professors was very valuable. We were lucky enough to use their knowledge a couple of times.” (NATO)

“I feel the professors should give feedback and suggestions to individual students and to the team at the end of the day.” (ASIA)

“I think that it would have been interesting that at some points professors could freeze the simulation for awhile just to give some guidance or feedback about our performance.” (LA)

“Cons: Lack of feedback during the simulation” (ASIA)

**Physical arrangements Affected the Play of the Simulation**

“I enjoyed spending time at Casowasco. I being at an external, neutral location helped in negotiations and meeting people and the openness of the camp helped in communication.”

“Casowasco Lake was a great location to house such an event. It afforded the big student body the ability to spread out to plan in groups, find secret locations for contacts and large spaces for big conferences. Although the Internet didn’t work, Casowasco succeeded.” (NATO)

“…the trip to Cosawasco Bible camp was utterly pointless. The lack of proper amenities greatly complicated the simulation and prevented the students who were done from entertaining themselves.” (NATO)

“Staying in a camp area for a night was very beneficial and even accelerated the simulation—even though there were problems with technology.” (NATO)

Con: “Noise at the camp, since we weren’t able to be in separate rooms. It was hard to hear each other and have private group meetings.” (ASIA)

“…the retreat center was not a conducive place for this kind of activity….The center did not have tables or even enough chairs and space to meet or electrical outlets to plug our laptops. It was too hard to find people you needed in such a big place. I think it definitely slowed down the process.” (UN)
“Although the beds in the Casowasco lodges were not comfortable, I believe that it was a good decision to hold the meetings here. This facilitated the interaction and communication between the groups at all times, without specifying an ending time for the simulation.” (EU)

**Simulation as Compared to MA Thesis**

“...I would have much rather written a thesis than did what I did this week....I think you should be more worried about getting everybody engaged and involved.” (LA)

“Ultimately, I appreciate the more pragmatic and professional approach of the Capstone simulation rather than the Masters Thesis, and find the exercise a useful devise in portraying the intricacies of international diplomacy.” (RU)

“In the end I believe that the Capstone should be scrapped as a single event—simplified and expanded in frequency to a series of mini-Capstones throughout the school year, with a final thesis still due at the end.” (NATO)

“A thesis from the IR learning aspect would have thus still been the better learning event, when compared side by side.” (NATO)

“...the simulation was a tremendous success and an experience for more practical and enjoyable than having to write a Masters thesis. I also do not doubt that as this simulation continues and occurs at the end of every spring semester, it will continue to improve and get better as a practical exercise for IR students.” (NATO)

“For the first undertaking of the simulation, I think that things went fairly well and that was valuable. At the same time, I see value in a thesis paper—somehow integrating both into future classes could be a good idea.” (ASIA)

“...in all honesty I do not think a three-day simulation can adequately replace the learning experience that writing a thesis is....it is impossible to incorporate all of our different interests and career tracks, and thus makes no sense to have our final Masters project be something which is in no way related with what we are interested in doing or what we have been learning.” (UN)

“Interesting and very useful experience, and I would keep the Capstone instead of writing the Masters project, or I would offer the opportunity to the newcomers to choose between the two.” (EU)