

MASARYK DIPLOMATIC PROGRAM

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Proposal for Building Czech American Relations with the Next Generation of Leaders

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Proposal for Building Czech American Relations with the Next Generation of

Leaders

I am proposing creating a yearly European cultural festival that would be a collaboration of DC universities, embassies, and NGOs. This event would work to bring the community together and effectively connect with students. DC is a magnet for students who are interested in international relations, creating an excellent opportunity to connect with them and entice them to learn more specifically about the Czech Republic before they enter the professional workspace after graduating. Reaching out to clubs and departments at universities provides a means to reach students who would be interested in attending the event. Also, offering an international aspect to the event such as performances, food, and interactive activities is an excellent way to attract students to the event and make it a success. The event would utilize all of the senses and provide value to both the attendees and the organizers.

For the event, the focus will be on connecting with university students given the importance of attracting younger generations to develop ongoing interest in the Czech Republic and future commitments. While eventually the event would incorporate students from multiple universities such as Georgetown, American, George Washington and Howard universities, I would recommend initially focusing on either one or two universities and then expanding the outreach to students and organizations from other universities each consecutive year. Doing so will allow you to test the feasibility and effectiveness on a smaller scale before broadening the

event. As the event becomes a yearly event it will become easier to determine participant numbers, create a following, and increase awareness levels over time. I expect participation numbers to be smaller the first year but increase as the event is broadened. Having a smaller event, the first year is also beneficial as it allows for more experimentation in implementing different aspects that appeal to each organization. Pictures and social media from this event can also be used for promotion in following years which is important due to the power of visualization.

Collaborating with other embassies would widen the area of interest and appeal to students. To keep the focus of the event from becoming too broad I would suggest utilizing a limiting factor such as focusing on European embassies. Doing so will help narrow the focus and help the event convey a clearer message. Therefore, other potential partners such as NGOs should also have either a European focus and connection or be associated with international relations. All of which can contribute to planning, organizing, and executing the event.

The event will be open to people of all age groups. However, in this proposal, I will focus on how to attract more people ages 19-25 to come to the event. This is due to the need for expanding awareness about the Czech Republic to university students. The population of universities are of great interest since the students come from all over the United States. Consequently, the impact of the event will not just be isolated to the District of Columbia, but across the country.

Events such as these possess large levels of soft power which are important when trying to connect with people and develop the status of a country. This event can utilize soft power by being a starting point for getting people interested in the Czech Republic and informed about

its importance and relevance. Providing information about opportunities such as study abroad and grants would be of particular interest to university students. Other aspects to include at the event would be local groups performing traditional dances and songs due to the power of the arts in connecting with people and interactive activities.

Building an Attendee Baseline:

Creating an event that bring together people with similar interests is of value to them. It provides a means to network and learn more about international relations. To find and attract people interested in attending the event from universities I would start by reaching out to department heads. Depending on the specific activities to be offered at the event, at American University I would recommend contacting the head of the School of International Service, the head of the Language Department, and AU Department of Performing Arts (if including dances and singers). This is useful as each department sends out newsletters to students within their respective programs notifying them about various upcoming events. Contacting these departments would not only put you in contact with students but also professors.

In addition, it would be productive to reach out to clubs and organizations at American University such as AMIRS, Ask a Diplomat, and Alexander Hamilton Society. AMIRS consists of five different sections and is the largest student organization at American University with over 300 members. The club is designed for those that are interested in international relations and bringing the community together through it. The five branches are the Model UN team, AmeriMunc, WIRC, special events, and community programming. They offer programs covering

a wide range of topics and in the past have arranged panels, speaker series, exclusive embassy visits and so on. The Alexander Hamilton Society is a club for people interested in foreign policy and national security careers. They have hosted events with speakers about different issues of interest such as women In Afghanistan and US Policy towards cyber and space. I would also recommend reaching out to performing arts departments and associated groups as they would be interested in attending and possibly performing at the event.

Utilizing the Senses

In events it is important to utilize all of your senses to help form clearer, more concrete memories. One excellent way to utilize senses and attract people to the event is to offer food. In addition to tasting delicious college students love going to events that offer food. The olfactory system is often overlooked but is very important due to this sense being most closely linked with memory. I would suggest obtaining some of the food from Czech restaurants in DC such as Bistro Bohem, to ensure a Czech aspect is incorporated throughout the event. There should also be some more familiar options offered to accommodate any dietary restrictions. Coordination with university clubs can help offset food costs as they can request funding for food. These requests are typically fulfilled and aid navigating around any budget constraints, especially for larger expenses such as food.

It is important for the event to be aesthetically pleasing and I would recommend offering a photo booth or wall area. Offering props that people can use when taking their photos too is appealing as well. This is valuable because not only do people love taking photos,

but they can also use such images on their social media accounts, giving your event free advertising. Spreading interest and awareness of the event can increase attendance the following years. Other visuals can be incorporated into the space by having artwork on the wall that people can admire and read about whilst walking around.

Providing interactive activities are valuable by allowing people to touch, feel, and use specific things. For example, you can display a Kroj for people to look at. Additionally, you can incorporate an area where people can play Czech games such as Mariáš. This would be a fun interactive activity for people to take part in. Lastly you can combine hearing and sight through cultural performances. These showcase the culture and abilities of the groups while capturing the attention of the event attendees. At the end you could even offer the opportunity to learn a traditional dance and have people take part.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, while there are over 2 million people in the U.S. who report being of Czech or Slovak heritage, Czech heritage continues to be less acknowledged and understood. Hosting events such as the one I am proposing, would be beneficial in deepening Czech American relations by offering more information about the Czech Republic in a non-overwhelming manner and connecting with the next generation of diplomats. Culture is exceptional in its ability to connect with other people and facilitate dialogue and cooperation in less politically volatile settings. Building soft power and interest in another nation can take time but can have exponential rewards which is why it is important to engage with young people.

Events such as the one I propose is one way to start building connections with younger generations to help improve relations in years to come.