

Report on Session

International and Foreign Language Education and Study Abroad: How Various Methodologies and Structures Can More Effectively Work Together to Instill Global Competence

Submitted by Brian Whalen, Session Chair and Rapporteur

There were seven main topical areas explored in this session's research paper and the panel presentations. Taken as a whole, these themes convey both the successes and challenges of advancing study abroad structures and methodologies to instill global competence. The themes are described below after which two major recommendations are offered.

Capacity and Access

Nationally study abroad continues to grow as more and more institutions offer an overseas experience to students. Numbers of students, range of academic majors, program locations and duration of programs have all expanded in recent years and are likely to continue to do so. However, there are areas of concern and challenge. For example, the study abroad student profile has not changed much and more needs to be done to diversify the types of students who study abroad, especially in terms of gender, race and socioeconomic status. Expanding access will be a key to the future of study abroad.

Within the Community College context there is also a problem (before the one of affordability) of students' self-image. The problem is that many minority or first-generation students do not perceive themselves as appropriate for a study abroad experience. Therefore, institutions need to start earlier in teaching the value of a global perspective (the skills, knowledge, attitudes that make an individual a better employee and citizen) and therefore encourage study abroad. This should be started at the Community College level, and not deferred until later or lost in the shuffle of transitioning to the university in the third year and thereby losing out on the opportunity completely.

There is not a clear sense about the existing capacity for accommodating increased numbers of students on study abroad. In many types of programs in certain areas of the world there is a great deal of capacity for growth. In other cases there is a lack of demand for study abroad as well as a lack of preparation. Goals for study abroad are sometimes misaligned. For example, the U.S. government is encouraging more students to study abroad in India and Brazil, but not enough universities offer the range and depth of language and content courses to prepare students sufficiently for study abroad in these countries. In other cases, funding cutbacks have meant that highly qualified students cannot participate on programs that are ready to accommodate them.

Student Outcomes

The panel revealed that there is a wide diversity of missions, goals and approaches to study abroad program design. This variety is necessary because institutions serve diverse constituents and students, and the demographics of the students whom institutions serve changes. Community colleges, liberal arts colleges and large research universities each have their reasons for developing study abroad as part of an overall internationalization strategy. What works at

one institution may not work at another. It is appropriate that institutions define goals for study abroad according to their distinctive missions and goals while at the same time appreciating the common definitions of global competence that have gained traction in higher education.

An opportunity that did emerge from the panel is to broaden and deepen how we think about the outcomes of study abroad to include the area of student development. This is sometimes referred to the “value added” dimension of study abroad, a label that does nothing to advance our goal to articulate the value of study abroad. A student’s personal growth in empathy, maturity, resourcefulness and other areas have traditionally been seen as “student life” concerns and not part of the responsibilities of the academic program side of the house, where study abroad operations are largely placed. How might institutions develop a broader understanding of the outcomes of study abroad to include these areas that students routinely report as an important part of their experience abroad? How do we assess and articulate this dimension and promote it as a value of study abroad?

Curriculum and Faculty

The major part of the panel addressed a wide range of innovative designs for incorporating and embedding study abroad into the curriculum in intentional ways and engaging faculty to advance study abroad quality and effectiveness. This has been a longstanding challenge for study abroad, which for many years was seen as a stand-alone activity set apart from the “regular” home campus academic program. Today there are recognized approaches that engage faculty and connect study abroad deeply into the curriculum, making it of higher quality and enhancing its sustainability. Many of these were presented during the panel and are outlined below.

However, the panel also revealed a serious problem regarding faculty and study abroad and language education: the “adjunctification” of international education. This is a particular problem in certain areas of language teaching where adjunct faculty are heavily relied upon. The concern is how can quality language programs be sustained if they are not taught by full-time professors who are responsible for the long-term sustainability of these programs?

Examples of study abroad designs that work include:

- Embedded courses. Linking a short-term study abroad experience to an on-campus course, with class meetings before and/or after the study abroad experience.
- Multi- and interdisciplinary approaches to program design, often involving multiple faculty from a range of disciplines to collaborate in program design and delivery.
- Issue-focused study abroad. Programs that explore a particular topic (climate change, poverty, human rights, global health, etc..) that takes advantage of the program locale to access information and resources (through field research, site visits, etc..) to advance learning.
- Research abroad. The study abroad as research model can be an effective way to engage students and faculty in a collaborative model of learning that advances both knowledge of a topic and research skills.
- Engaging faculty as guides. Training and developing faculty to be intercultural guides and mentors to students so that they intervene effectively in the student learning process.
- Study abroad for faculty. Incentivizing faculty is a challenge. Study abroad can be a way to develop faculty and provide opportunities for them to advance their development

as teachers and researchers. Finding ways to incentivize faculty for their involvement in study abroad is both a challenge and an opportunity.

- Certificate programs that require study abroad offer a way to validate and highlight study abroad as a part of an “international education credential.”
- Requiring study abroad for certain major degree programs is another way to embed study abroad into the curriculum.

The main conclusions that emerge from the above is that the future of education abroad depends on strong and sustained faculty involvement and ownership, embedding education abroad into the curriculum, and continuing to be innovative in program design.

Collaborations

A clear message from the panel presentations is the need to collaborate in order to expand and to deliver quality study abroad programs in the future. Several examples of such collaborations were mentioned, including:

- Engaging with the local community when there are international education assets available. These may include heritage language speakers, diaspora and immigrant groups living in concentrated areas that might serve as resources and beneficiaries of international education efforts. Through these engagements, institutions might leverage successful experiences/programs that can in turn be linked to (1) other forms of international programming for all students linked to the community, (2) specific learning points in classes using their in-country experiences, and (3) international institutional linkages.
- Collaborating with industry and technical and professional fields through study abroad can not only serve key institutional constituents, but also open up possibilities for the development of enhanced learning experiences (such as internships and coops) abroad.
- In terms of workforce development, there needs to be a more clear connection, or help with the connecting, the expressed and unexpressed needs of employers’ (valuing the international) to the students’ programs of study , and the greater potential for employees with international experience/familiarity (thus importance of languages, experience abroad etc.) to the students’ programs of study.
- Beginning study abroad early in a student’s formation may reap greater dividends later on. Too often study abroad is thought of as a one-time, discrete event. However, collaborations between K-12 and higher education can lead to a better understanding of how study abroad can be developed as more of a lifetime learning experience that begins with early preparation. Examples of successful collaborations of this type should be showcased and serve as models.
- Institutional consortia and collaborations between universities and program provider organizations can be an effective way to share the responsibilities, risks and rewards of study abroad.

Structural Innovations

Panelists noted challenges and opportunities for organizing study abroad in new ways. Study abroad has to keep up with educational innovations and think of new ways to deliver education abroad. Some of the examples cited included:

- A “Global Option” is an example of a curricular enhancement wherein study abroad is part of an overall institutional strategy to advance global competence. The building blocks of this approach include a focus on global issues, diverse cultures and perspectives, effective communication, and an international dimension to a student’s field of study.
- A “self-regulatory” pathway for language and global learning. Might study abroad and global learning in general be developed so that the student user is in the driver’s seat, choosing from a range of curricular and co-curricular experiences that form a unique pathway toward global competence? And these opportunities need not be at the same educational level, but could be coordinated across levels. (Note here the development of Gap Year international experiences as a precursor to university study). Structures for global learning can perhaps be more flexible and nimble to appeal to a broader range of students while validating self-paced approaches and non-credit opportunities for learning.
- In the Community College context, we cannot dwell on semester- or year-long study abroad experiences; we need instead to focus on short-term experiences. How do we then pack these short-term experiences with effective activities and purposeful learning experiences to get the most out of them? Two ways are to use effective pre- and post-travel experiences, and by using technology to its best advantage.
- Incorporating technology into the learning process to enhance education abroad. Online learning is already being used in a myriad of ways to enhance the study abroad experience, and to help to engage students in global learning who do not study abroad. This is a challenge and an opportunity for study abroad, and will challenge the field to define and defend the value of the experiential dimension of study abroad.
- Institutions are increasingly designing programs involving student mobility from all sides by integrating internationalization into their institutional ethos, thinking about international and domestic student mobility together for the purpose of providing all students the knowledge, skills and dispositions that enhance both careers and global or intercultural competence. A number of institutions are connecting domestic off-campus study with study abroad programming. This approach may help to unify pedagogical approaches to experiential off-campus programs and provide ways for students to undertake comparative study and analysis.

Financial Models

An overlapping theme was the need to reevaluate financial models for study abroad. Practices to increase revenue were outlined, including a small study abroad fee paid by all students that is used to support scholarships for study abroad, and creating a restricted endowment fund by raising money through fundraising and development efforts. Changes on the expense side might also help to make study abroad more affordable, such as finding ways to embed study abroad within existing tuition and fees. Demonstrating the value of study abroad is part of the financial modeling, and institutions need to find ways to show the return on investment, for students,

faculty, the institution, the community and the nation. Demonstrating the value of study abroad will then help to sell the experience.

Quality Assurance

In order to sustain study abroad and advocate for it, institutions and organizations need to commit to upholding standards of good practice and maintaining quality. By adhering to the field's standards study abroad programs can help to ensure that students' experiences are meaningful, safe and worthwhile.

Recommendations

Note: "Education Abroad" refers to the many types of learning experiences abroad organized by colleges and universities: study abroad, internships, research, volunteering, service learning, etc.

1. Education abroad, especially when combined effectively with other modes of international and foreign language programming, contributes significantly to positive learning outcomes of undergraduate students. Research shows that education abroad, even of a short duration, can advance students' intercultural learning, trans-national understanding, target language acquisition, and personal growth and development.* For this reason, nationally we should seek to expand education abroad in order to instill global competence in our students.

Specifically, our shared goals should be to:

- Increase education abroad participation to include a broader diversity of students, a greater range of geographic destinations, and that involves all types of higher education institutions;
- Expand the reach of education abroad programs to include a wider variety of academic disciplines and professional fields;
- Collaborate with the professional sectors, such as business and engineering, on education/internships abroad programs.

2. Expansion of education abroad should be based on quality standards and accepted best practices in order to ensure the health and safety of students and to promote effective learning. Institutions should integrate education abroad into the fabric of their curricula, involve their faculty in oversight of programs, develop models of delivery based on collaborative partnerships, provide appropriate incentives for students, such as academic credit and portable financial aid, and sustain education abroad through adequate resourcing and effective leadership.

*For an annotated listing of important research, see: <http://www.forumea.org/research-outcomes-reviewsynopsis2011.cfm>