EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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International and foreign language education have made significant strides in recent decades. The numbers of students participating in various modes education abroad have increased and we have also seen a diversification of the locations where students study. Along with the increase in overall numbers, a trend toward shorter program durations is also evident.

At the same time, international and foreign language educators, among others, continue to recognize that students who develop global competency acquire certain knowledge, skills and experience that are valuable to many sectors of our society and economy.   In addition to the private benefits that accrue to the individual student, it has been shown that education abroad has positive benefits and externalities to society at large.

As benefits accrue to both the individual and society, we also see that simply sending students abroad is no guarantee that the desired cultural or language learning outcomes will be achieved. Learning is a guided and participatory endeavor. International and foreign language educators can achieve optimal results through the thoughtful and creative combination of various modalities of learning abroad to create successful programs that intervene and compound the learning opportunities.

Organizational structures must also adapt to changing needs. Academic departments must have permeable members within the institution to work across disciplinary boundaries and the university administration must provide incentives for this collaboration to occur. International and foreign language educators must also stretch their institutional boundaries beyond the university to collaborate with the business sector, K-12 institutions, non-governmental organizations and service organizations who share similar goals but often work in relative isolation from each other.