

Connecting the Dots: Study Abroad . . . High Impact Learning . . . Transformational Pedagogy The Role of the Home Institution and its Faculty

National security. Economic competitiveness. Disciplinary knowledge and language acquisition. Intercultural competence. Personal growth and maturation. Broadened horizons. Adventure. New friends. Each of represents a claim made by a particular stakeholder about the *purpose of study abroad*. The messages conflict and are confusing.

If there is no consensus on what study abroad should do, there also is no consensus on *what makes it work*. Some argue for immersion in foreign universities (Burn, 1990). Others argue for interventions during study abroad (Vande Berg, Connon-Linton, & Paige, 2009; Engle & Engle, 2004; Lou & Bosley, 2008), programs specifically designed for the American study abroad student (Vande Berg, 2007), and teaching intercultural competence (Savicki, 2008). Rather than focus on the study abroad program, some look at the role of faculty on the home campus (Green and Olsen, 2003; Stohl, 2008) and the integration of study abroad into the home campus curriculum (Brewer & Cunningham, 2010).

This presentation enters the discussion of maximizing study abroad's potential for learning from the vantage point of the sending institution and proposes that for study abroad to achieve high impact learning, colleges and universities must 1) clarify and communicate study abroad's purpose, 2) help students approach study abroad more intentionally by helping them create their own narratives, and 3) encourage students' agency in shaping their study abroad experiences.

Further, faculty should be enlisted to help make study abroad a successful learning experience, by 1) understanding how study abroad fits into the institutional mission, 2) becoming knowledgeable about the study abroad experience, 3) making connections to study abroad in their advising and teaching, and 4) developing and employing pedagogies that can help students be prepared for the particular challenges and opportunities for learning during study abroad, and provide opportunities for students to draw on study abroad experiences in their further studies and career preparation.

What follows are suggestions for how to realize the above. In keeping with the conference theme of Wit, Will, and Wallet, the suggestions pay attention to cost.

CLARIFYING AND COMMUNICATING STUDY ABROAD'S PURPOSE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

<p>“if we are unable to define what we want students to take from study abroad generally, then we lack clear objectives and are, consequently, unable to evaluate our – or students’ achievement.”</p>	<p>Richard Selby (2008)</p>
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Creating a narrative

Example: A conference at the start of the academic year engages faculty and staff in discussions about the purpose, nature, and delivery of international education on campus and through study abroad. *Outcomes:* better understanding of history of international education at the college and relationship of current practices to trends and debates nationally; understanding that responsibility for international education has to be shared. \$\$: small change (refreshments)

Example: The faculty/student Committee on International Education drafts learning goals for study abroad. *Outcomes:* The learning goals help create the narrative for Beloit College about the purpose of study abroad and set expectations for student learning. \$\$: none

Example:

Study abroad applicants are asked to identify their learning goals, how these build on their education, and what they will do to make their study abroad successful. *Outcomes:* Students develop an imagination for their study abroad. Emphasis shifts away from what a program will do for the student to what the student will need to do. Faculty have criteria with which to evaluate applications, and can provide feedback on what else students need to do to prepare. \$\$: none

“Now I understand how you prepare students to go to so many different countries. To write the application essays, I have to have thought about what and where I will be studying and to have done some research.” Study abroad advisee

Providing evidence

Example: Returned study abroad students present their research and intercultural learning in a symposium. *Outcomes:* Presenters have opportunity to reflect on their study abroad. Study abroad learning outcomes become visible to a campus-

wide audience. Faculty mentors working with presenters become connected to learning that otherwise might remain hidden to them. \$\$: printing costs

“Preparing my presentation helped me think about what I had learned when I studied abroad and how this helped pull my educational experiences at Beloit together.”
Symposium presenter

LINKING STUDY ABROAD TO TEACHING AND ADVISING

Study abroad “in and of itself will not deliver the learning, discovery, and engagement that we seek through internationalization. . . we need to discover how [faculty teaching, research, and service] encourage greater learning and discovery.”
Michael Stohl (2007)

Knowing study abroad options and partners

Example: Study abroad program lists sorted by major. *Outcomes:* faculty and students have tools with which to sort through the study abroad options. \$\$: printing for such purposes as study abroad fairs. Otherwise can be delivered electronically.

Understanding the experience

Example: The director of a study abroad program visits campus, meets with faculty members, and gives a lecture. *Outcomes:* Faculty gain a better understanding of the program, which students will benefit from it, and current and historical issues in the country. \$\$: none

Example: Faculty participate in a seminar on human rights and make a week-long trip to Cape Town. *Outcomes:* Faculty share disciplinary perspectives, better understand study abroad options, and gain first-hand experience in South Africa, which they draw on for their advising and teaching. \$\$: Funding to support airfare, accommodation, etc. This seminar was funded by a grant. Some study abroad providers also offer seminars as well as opportunities for site visits.

“Sometimes students struggle with whether they should study abroad. Now I have a more vivid sense of what makes the experience so profoundly educational.”
Seminar participant

Providing space for preparation and integration

Example: Students currently abroad serve as investigative reporters for a political science course. *Outcomes:* The study abroad students gain greater expertise about their host countries as well as the topics. Students on the home campus learn from the study abroad students and begin to develop a sense of what they might do as study abroad students \$\$: access to communication technologies. This course used Skype, blogging, and a course management system.

Example: Students in the international relations senior seminar bring their study abroad experiences into their capstone work. *Outcomes:* Students are able to reflect on their experiences abroad and connect these to the literature in their field. \$\$: none

“Writing a thesis on a topic ‘discovered’ abroad is one of the most important ways in which the international relations major encourages students to continue to think about their experience abroad and plan for a career.”

Seminar instructor

USING STUDY ABROAD TO RETHINK TEACHING

“If faculty play such a critical role in international education, then shouldn’t we be talking more about study abroad opportunities for those who teach? Otherwise, if we do succeed in getting greater numbers of our students to study abroad, might we end up with faculty members who are less worldly than their students?”
Peterson (2000)

Example: Faculty participate in a workshop to identify how their courses might better prepare students for study abroad and/or help them build on their experiences. Several months later, they reconvene to discuss the curriculum development work they have done. *Outcomes:* Several courses augmented with content to help students better understand the culture/country where they will study. Several new courses are developed, including a writing seminar is introduced specifically intended to help returned study abroad students reflect on their experiences and link these to their disciplinary studies. \$\$: small change for refreshments

Example: A critical thinking workshop is held. *Outcomes:* One participant develops a course for returned study abroad students around the question, “Why don’t men study abroad?” \$\$: stipend for workshop facilitator.

“Interviewing men who did not study abroad reinforced for me the reasons study abroad was so important to my education. Besides, I also got to contribute to a body of knowledge.” *Course participant*

Example: Faculty participate in a week-long workshop on the home campus. They use various locations in the local community to explore how urban spaces can be used to better engage students in their learning, both in the U.S. and in study abroad. *Outcomes:* Faculty introduce new pedagogies into their classes, such as mapping, observation, and interviewing. Based on the success of some of assignments created for students studying abroad who are enrolled in a distance learning course taught from the college, the college plans a pilot project to incorporate some of the teaching/learning strategies into the first year program courses. \$\$: small change for refreshments, although pending budget, small stipends can be paid to participants

“Study abroad has the potential to enable students to observe carefully, bring in varied perspectives, and see the issues of the future in a broad, multidisciplinary context. Our challenge is to develop courses and activities to enable students to accomplish these goals.” *Workshop participant*

“It was extremely useful to experiment with various assignments at sites here in Beloit; I think they will help me develop assignments for my courses to teach skills that will be useful to students when they study abroad.” *Workshop participant*

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