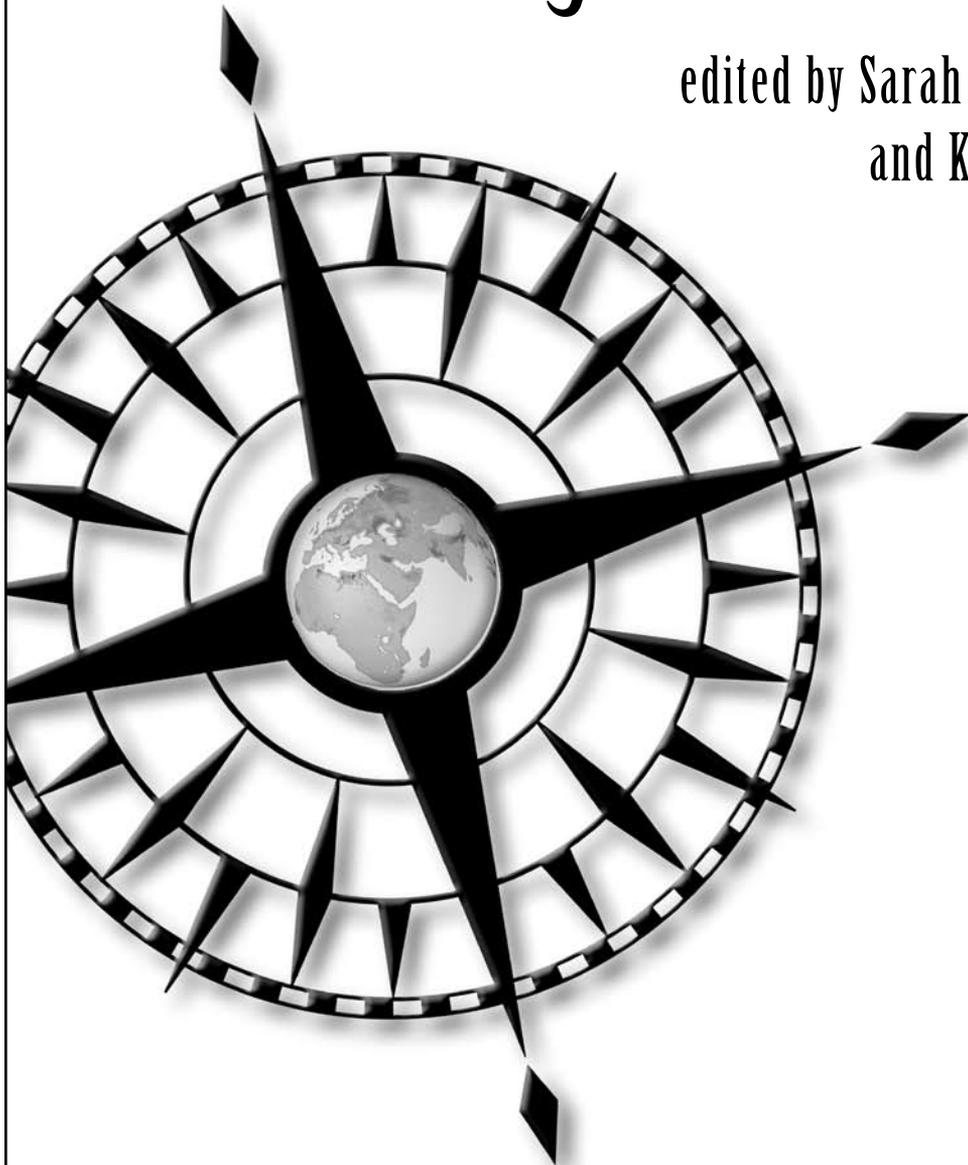


The Guide to Successful Short-Term Programs Abroad

edited by Sarah E. Spencer
and Kathy Tuma



NAFSA: Association of International Educators promotes the exchange of students and scholars to and from the United States. The Association sets and upholds standards of good practice and provides professional education and training that strengthen institutional programs and services related to international educational exchange. NAFSA provides a forum for discussion and awareness of and support for international education in higher education, in government, and in the community.

International Standard Book Number: 0-912207-86-8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The guide to successful short-term programs abroad/edited by Sarah E. Spencer and Kathy Tuma.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-912207-86-8

1. Foreign study—Administration—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. American students—Travel—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 3. College students—Travel—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 4. Faculty advisors—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 5. College administrators—Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Spencer, Sarah E. II. Tuma, Kathy. III. NAFSA: Association of International Educators (Washington, D.C.)

LB2376 .g75 2002

370.116—dc21

2002070126



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Introduction

Sarah E. Spencer and Kathy Tuma

For students who are older, of minority background, employed (46 percent of full-time students under age 25 are employed at least part-time), disabled, or have limited funds, study abroad is not perceived to be an option. The more typical study abroad models and structures mostly ignore the needs of such students.

1990 National Task Force on Undergraduate Education Abroad¹

Amazingly, a mere 12 years ago many students, especially those who could not take advantage of a semester or academic year overseas, did not study abroad. Today is a very different story. Short-term off-campus programs—credit-granting, volunteer, internship, international, domestic, summer, embedded in a semester—create opportunities for a far greater range of students to leave their homes to access another culture and educational opportunity.

Our goal in producing this volume is to enable anyone—education abroad professionals, teachers in secondary or higher education, volunteer or church group leaders—to learn how to develop and safely administer short-term off-campus programs. Whereas readers from international organizations can gain knowledge and use this book for their own programs, it has been written from the perspective of U.S. higher education.

Because short-term programs differ from one another in location, length, topic and goals, time of year, and audience, we hope you will use this book as a guide. We provide the tools to build successful short-term programs, but it is up to you to decide what is the best structure and fit for your participants and your organization.

Within higher education, the definition of short-term programs abroad has changed significantly over the last 50 years. First considered as year-long, and then as a semester, they are now considered one- to eight-week programs (less than a term), usually faculty-directed and sponsored by a home institution or a consortium. Short-term program models are in abundance, taking place during the January or May term, in the form of a 2-week study tour embedded in a regular term or semester-length class, or as a 6-week summer program. The programs can be based in one city, one country, or travel to multiple sites or countries. And, though they are not taught abroad, many short-term domestic programs face the same issues and challenges.

Although we assume the readers of this book will be primarily those working in higher education, the tools found in specific sections can be used by a variety of groups. All of the audiences noted below have two things in common beyond creating short-term programs: they need logistical and group support and they need to function in the cross-cultural context. This guide provides the information needed to succeed in both areas.

¹ *A National Mandate for Education Abroad: Getting on With the Task*. Report of the National Task Force on Undergraduate Education Abroad (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 331 340)[t], May 1990.

Service Learning/Volunteer: These programs may be academic or purely experiential. Focus on Parts III and IV, but do not miss Mike Klein’s advice on service learning programs in Part II, Chapter 6.

High School: These groups may also be credit-granting or experiential. Parts III and IV provide resources for program development and orientation, but also consider using Tips on Guiding Students to Cultural and Intellectual Mileposts found in Part II, Chapter 6.

College Alumni: Short-term programs catering to alumni groups are increasingly popular. Most are experiential, but may use a seasoned faculty director who has taught academic courses overseas. See Parts II, III, and IV and also Working with Graduate Students in Chapter 8, Logistics. There are similar issues for both groups.

Nonacademic Groups (e.g., musical organizations, sports groups, and religious groups): Depending on the program objectives, focus on Parts III and IV, because logistics, financial matters, and orientation are important for all group travel.

Higher Education (e.g., faculty, education abroad or international programs offices, senior administrators): Because this volume was inspired, developed, and authored by higher education professionals, each chapter addresses a need, issue, or solution in designing and administering short-term programs. We hope that faculty who do not have the support of an international office find this volume useful as well.

Positioning Short-Term Programs Abroad

Most of us would agree that the longer the encounter a student has with another country and culture, the better. But the reality is that fewer and fewer students are willing or able to spend a term, semester, or full year abroad. For these students, it is important to provide quality academic experiences of shorter duration. The reasons students seek short-term opportunities are numerous, and as participation and programs grow, so do the motivations. Examples of students seeking short-term programs abroad include the following:

- ♦ Nontraditional undergraduate students with home, job, and family responsibilities.
- ♦ Undergraduate students who are double or triple majors with very structured and tightly scheduled degree plans.
- ♦ Students who cannot afford the loss of income from an on- or off-campus job for a semester, but who can take 3 to 4 weeks off to participate in a short-term program.
- ♦ Working graduate students seeking study and professional opportunities who cannot be released from job and family responsibilities.
- ♦ Students who are simply not willing to take the leap to study abroad for a longer period of time without first having some exposure of a shorter duration.
- ♦ Semester or academic year returnees who convince themselves (and sometimes their parents) that they can go abroad (again) during their senior year.
- ♦ Students with increased curricular restrictions in their major/minor field and core areas.

Whatever the reason, it is clear that the market for short-term programs has dramatically increased in the last decade, and there are no indications that it is or will be decreasing. Recent data from *Open Doors: Statistics on International Student Mobility* show that nearly 50 percent of all students studying abroad participated in short-term programs (<http://www.opendoorsweb.org>, March 2002).

Why a Book on Short-Term Programs?

A quick literature review will show comprehensive information on traditional study abroad issues, such as that found in *NAFSA's Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators, Second Edition*, but little has been published on short-term programs abroad. As you will discover in the opening chapters of this book, short-term programs differ from other traditional models.

For readers who work with college students, Part I: Working Within Higher Education will be an invaluable resource for identifying your allies, creating efficient administrative processes, and recruiting a community of colleagues.

Part II: Principles of Academic Course Design focuses on available models as well as design issues for academic courses, particularly for teaching on the road.

Logistics and financial management, the backbone of a short-term program, are explained in Part III: Program Development and Evaluation. Without experience or sufficient staff, how do you plan programs such as these? Whereas the final three chapters are again focused on higher education, marketing ideas, participant selection, and assessment are valuable for any program administrator.

We consider Part IV: Preparing to Travel to be a very useful guide in making a short-term program abroad successful. Intercultural and logistical preparation of the leadership team and the participants can make the difference between a been there, seen that attitude, and a truly cross-cultural experience.

The volume concludes with Part V: Reflections from the Field, written by a retired long-term faculty director.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to share the knowledge we have gained in our many years of administering short-term programs. We sincerely hope this guide proves useful to the many people directing and administering such programs.

Good luck and good planning!

Acknowledgments

For initial inspiration: Mickey Slind, Scott Lomas, Janis Perkins

For additional review and contribution: Nik Wilson, Adrienne Kaufmann, Anne King, Sommer Leonard, Ruth Mason, Sue Moro, Pam Nice, Ana Scofield, Catherine Spaeth, Susan Verdi Webster, Dawn White

For listening and ideas: Maynard Tuma, Nik Wilson, Martha Johnson, Mary McGuinness, George Dordoni

Our current workshop team: Peter Hovde, Allison Keith, Susan MacNally, Anders Uhrskov

Our past presenter colleagues, the countless participants at NAFSA national and regional conferences, and the faculty directors we have worked with.

For the support of our offices: International and Off-Campus Studies, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN (Pat Quade, Helen Stellmaker, Barbara Walters, Jane Weis, Synneva Zempel), and International Education, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN (Colleen Carey, Ann Gemmell, Eleni Hoffhines, Ann Hubbard, Sommer Leonard, Ruth Mason, Ana Scofield, Catherine Spaeth, Sarah Stevenson)

SECUSSA National Team, especially Susan Thompson, University of Nevada-Las Vegas

NAFSA's Education and Training Department, especially Wes Maekawa

NAFSA's Publication Department, especially Steve Pelletier and Jan Steiner

Chapter 1

Opening Doors: Alternative Pedagogies for Short-Term Programs Abroad

Peter Hovde

Goethe once said: “The only way to see Rome is through the keyhole of the Aventino.” Thousands of travelers heed his advice each year, lining up at the large, heavily painted green door blocking entrance to the former palace of the Knights Templar. Standing on their tiptoes, squinting through the keyhole of the ancient lockset, each traveler can see a walkway braced by a precisely trimmed hedge on either side. As the hedges converge at the end of the walkway, they form an arch, an arch that perfectly frames the dome of St. Peter’s basilica standing across the Tiber. So many travelers, in fact, that the heavy green paint around the keyhole is worn away, its brass brushed bright by the eyelashes of all those tourists following Goethe’s advice.

The travelers squint through the keyhole, turn, and walk away. After our students have had their looks through the keyhole, the bolt of the lockset is heard to move aside, and the great green door swings open...

What Is to Be Gained?

If the goal of study abroad is restricted to student gains in factual and conceptual content assessed by measurements tapping the extent of cognitive learning alone, then study abroad might come up short in a cost/benefit analysis. Indeed, cognitive content gains in the near term may be better accomplished in the campus classroom. This is not to say that cognitive learning does not occur during study abroad experiences. It clearly does, and if decades of impressions are any evidence, that learning “sticks” better in students. More important, however, is that if more permanent gains in “higher-end” goals are considered important—the kinds of attributes our college catalogs claim are nurtured by the four years of matriculation—study abroad can be far more effective than the campus classroom in producing such outcomes. If critical thinking skills and value-reflective thinking are enhanced as the result of study abroad, not to mention increased interest in intellectual pursuits and enhanced motivation to learn, along with a decreased need for certitude and a greater tolerance of ambiguity, then sending students abroad is a very good idea. Or if increased world-mindedness, cosmopolitanism, and international-mindedness are worthy goals, as well as increased interest in world affairs, awareness of interdependence of nations, increased cross-cultural interest and decreased ethnocentrism, and greater empathy and concern for others, then study abroad is clearly worth doing. If students’ self-confidence (and possibly self-esteem) and their sense of well being is improved, if they sharpen their sense of interdependence and autonomy, if their flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances are enhanced, and if their vocational goals are clarified as they become aware of the far greater occupational opportunities the world has to offer, then students need study abroad experiences.¹

¹ For these research citations, see Chapter 2: Building Institutional Support, footnote 4.

But how long do students have to study abroad to make these gains? It was not all that long ago that the “junior year abroad” with the student immersed in the study of (or immersed in a course of study in) a second language was held to be the only legitimate study abroad experience. Indeed, there are those in the international language community today who still hold that position. However, for most of us, the spectrum of legitimate study abroad experiences is far broader, admitting of a far greater variety of approaches to study abroad.

A Departure from the Ideal?

The international education community has moved toward short-term programs abroad in a big way. As a community, international educators recognized that if the goal of giving vastly more students an overseas experience was to be realized, then short-term programs were the only vehicles that could accomplish that goal. The vast majority of U.S. students are simply not willing to spend a year (or even a semester) studying overseas. (Nor, for that matter, are most colleges and universities willing to send vast numbers of their students overseas in the face of the realities of tight budgets, empty dorm rooms, and lowering student/faculty ratios.) It began to dawn on the community as evidence—both anecdotal and quantitative—began pouring in, that short-term study abroad could be done in academically legitimate ways. The conclusion was that if done right, short-term study abroad can have an extraordinary impact on students, an impact beyond what they can derive from the campus classroom.

How Long Need the Program Be? How Short Can It Be?

The most common short-term programs are scheduled in January, May, or the summer months, and are usually 3 to 6 weeks in length. Increasingly, however, schools are experimenting with “embedded” or “nested” seminars abroad, experiences usually scheduled for mid-semester breaks, usually about a week in length.

The learning abroad is enhanced in these short-term programs if the experience is preceded by preparatory study. The preparatory study needs to include the logistics of travel, but far more importantly, it must include the academic content that gives focus to the course. Such study allows the students to “hit the ground running,” to have an intellectual context into which to fit what they learn abroad.

Some short-term programs abroad require prerequisite learning. This requisite learning can be gained by a set of on-campus courses (such courses as art appreciation and comparative religion to prepare for the study of religious artistic expression of the Mediterranean, for example) or a single campus course dedicated directly to that focus of learning abroad. Some weeklong programs are simply scheduled during mid-semester break, but many are embedded into a normal on-campus semester-length course. With the longer short-term programs, the preparatory courses enhance the subsequent learning abroad. With the shorter nested seminars, learning in the first half of the semester prepares the students for the experience abroad, whereas the experience abroad enhances the subsequent classroom learning. In both types of programs, the prior study enhances the legitimacy of the short time abroad. How many of those higher-end developmental goals can be served by the nested seminar remains to be seen (by future impact research), although its furtherance of classroom goals seems assured.

What Can We Study Abroad?

Three types of study abroad courses can be defined by their academic focuses.

Topical

One focus is topical. The possibilities are nearly as numerous as a department's course offerings. Here, the content of disciplinary courses is enhanced by either adding material from other contexts or by comparing our practices and experiences with those of other cultures. For example, museum or site visits could add understanding of the Battle of the Somme to a course on international conflict. On the other hand, comparison of the social impacts of the Somme to those of the Vietnam War can enhance understanding of each nation's social experience, as well as the human impact of war.

Language Training and Cultural Learning

Another set of course focuses is language training and cultural learning. Although honing one's skills in a second language is justification enough for study abroad, such study should be designed to lead to intercultural understanding as well. Here the hoary but enduring framework of Robert Hanvey's "attainable global perspective" gives both vision and goals.² Students should minimally become aware of the "diversity of the ideas and practices found in societies around the world, of how these cultures compare, and of how our practices and behaviors might be viewed from the perspective of other cultures." The third of these three goals especially is a very tall order, for it requires empathy. As Hanvey notes, empathetic understanding is difficult enough to achieve within one's own culture, but it is a much tougher task when the target of one's understanding is the people of another culture. So much more difficult a task than empathy, in fact, that Hanvey gives it another name: "transpection," the capacity to imagine oneself in a role within another culture.

Immersion in another culture is the usual pedagogical vehicle for improving language skills and cultural understanding. Immersion requires time, as language learning takes time, though intensive language instruction has long ago proven its worth. Immersion in another culture (e.g., home stays) can and should be a very intense experience. Done right and with preparation, significant gains can be made in both language and cultural learning abroad in 3 to 4 weeks. Embedding a week abroad into on-campus language or cultural instruction at minimum should motivate students to further instruction and to longer-term study abroad by giving them a taste of the world's diversity.

Interdisciplinary Understanding

A third focus of study abroad is interdisciplinary understanding. Many such courses would deal with issues deemed global, issues such as ethnicity and global diversity, economic development, human ecological sustainability, and war and peace.³ Hanvey is again helpful here. Study of the "state of the planet" begins with the "analysis of global issues, awareness of those prevailing world conditions, and emergent trends." Step two is to gain awareness of "how the world works," with an "emphasis on theories that explain global change." Step three is awareness of the impact of human choice in creating and resolving these problems, and of the range of options available.

² Hanvey, Robert G. (1979). *An Attainable Global Perspective*. New York: Center for Global Perspectives. The essay is found in summary form in *Theory into Practice* 21 (1982), 162-167, and his (1979b). "Cross-Cultural Awareness" in *Toward Internationalism: Readings in Cross-Cultural Communication*, edited by Elise C. Smith and L. F. Luce. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

³ The typology is from Ann Kelleher and Laura Klein (1999) *Global Perspectives: A Handbook for Understanding Global Issues*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Study abroad of any length can immerse students in global problems. It is one thing to study global issues such as pollution in the classroom. It is quite another to see, feel, hear, and smell those pollutants in the real world. Further, the abstract nature of theories explaining the links of both cause and consequence can be made more real to students when heard from practitioners working in the field to determine the impacts of human interventions such as industrial pollution. Finally, experiencing the surreal reality of a wind farm can give students both awareness of alternative choices and a measure of hope that at least partial solutions can be found to these pressing problems.

Each of these points of academic focus—topical, language-culture, and interdisciplinary—provides subjects that can legitimately be studied abroad on a short-term basis. Indeed, study abroad can vastly enhance student learning about such themes.

However, one of these foci, cross-cultural understanding, deserves special emphasis. Knowledge of the world's diversity and the capacity for empathetic understanding should pervade all study abroad, be it disciplinary or interdisciplinary. This priority is based not on an ideological foundation, but on simple pedagogical pragmatism. Without cross-cultural understanding, the fruits of comparison of cultures or experiences will never ripen. The different ways of doing things abroad can look silly and inefficient to the uninformed Westerner. Without the ability to see problems from the perspective of another, attempts to resolve problems on a global scale will inevitably founder. Proposals by First World people to enhance the environment are seen by those in the Third World as attempts to limit economic development in their part of the world, for example.

Sadly, the instructional reality in topical and interdisciplinary courses often finds these cross-cultural imperatives ignored as more “important,” “pressing,” or “rigorous” contents elbow out intercultural issues. Intercultural understanding should pervade all courses abroad, and the only way ensure that is to make such learning a more explicit part of the course.

That said, the “be all and end all” of international education is not cross-cultural or intercultural education. (I'm sure a more heretical statement could not be penned, but I wrote it because it needs to be stated.) The primacy of cultural understanding is that it must be part of all learning abroad, but not that it is posited as the ultimate goal of international education.

What is the ultimate goal of international education? Going back to the ancient Greeks, the ultimate goal is gaining an understanding of ourselves and of our self. We see that happening to our returning students, the irony that they go abroad to study others and come back learning more about their own country and themselves. No ideological or pedagogical commitments of teachers and study abroad administrators can change that outcome. Study abroad is perhaps the best way to attain the injunction of the oracle to “know thyself.” For Hanvey, what is critical to know about ourselves is awareness that we have a perspective (or, more accurately, perspectives). This “perspective consciousness” is not so much a dimension of a global perspective as were the other four, but its foundational prerequisite. Without an awareness that we have a “view of the world that is not universally shared, and that others have views of the world that are profoundly different from our own,” attempts at gaining understandings of other cultures, of the state of the planet, of how the world works, and of the impact of human choice on the globe are doomed to be incomplete and superficial.

Alternative Pedagogical Approaches: Or, What's Behind the Green Door?

A wide variety of pedagogical approaches have been developed to assist student learning overseas. One basic consideration concerns the site of the program.

Consideration 1: Residential or Travel Experience?

Should a short-term study abroad experience be located at one site (the residential model) or involve extensive relocation (the travel model)? Single-site short-term study abroad is held by some as an inherently superior model.⁴ Clearly, if immersion in a culture is the primary goal of the experience, a single-site residential program may be the better way. On the other hand, a single-culture travel seminar (in which the travel itinerary is confined to a single country or cultural area) could be enriched by the many exposures to important sites (cultural breadth) at a modest cost to immersion (cultural depth).

As we have noted, however, exposure to other cultures is not the only legitimate reason to study abroad. Disciplinary or interdisciplinary foci can more than justify the traveling study abroad model. For example, a seminar abroad in theater or opera needs to go to where the action is, be it London, Paris, Vienna, or Prague. A course in environmental problems needs to visit both sites of environmental degradation and to organizations producing solutions to the problems. A seminar on conflict needs to hit the road, visiting historical sites (battlefields or museums) as well as organizations involved in conflict resolution (be they military organizations or peace nongovernmental organizations [NGOs]). Quite literally, Muhammad must go to the mountain.

What is the best design for short-term study abroad—residential or travel? It depends, and the answer clearly depends on the topic of the course, as well as its learning goals. In some instances, the residential and travel models may be productively combined. For example, learning about a former colony in depth clearly calls for a residential experience. However, passing up a comparatively brief visit to the former mother country in the name of pedagogical purity would seem a wasted opportunity for fuller understanding.

Consideration 2: Who Teaches—Us or Them?

In its purest form, the “transplanted” or “offshore” classroom finds the U.S. faculty director responsible for all instruction. The topic of instruction often is intimately related to the surrounding culture or historical place, but it need not be. Those of us more enamored of experiential education need not sneer at the off-shore model in pure form. For example, understanding of the novels of Kazansakis is enhanced when the reading and discussion is done in Crete, especially if local site visits complement the classroom learning.

Academic rigor and control of classroom content is clearly enhanced in the transplanted approach. The potential risk this model runs is its social isolation and the resulting insulation of students from the local culture.

There is one outcome that the transplanted model in its pure form will inevitably gain. Its exclusively U.S. instruction will be greeted with skepticism at best by local people, be they academics or ordinary citizens. For that reason alone, local instructional resources should be employed at least to some extent.

⁴ Such criticism of travel seminars derives from those who hold the junior year abroad experience as ideal, and that shorter-term study abroad models ought to imitate the junior year abroad experience as best they can.

There are a variety of means to offset the enclave proclivities of the offshore classroom, including living arrangements (locally managed flats or home stays), which can produce a measure of cultural immersion and conversation. Hiring local academics to give some of the lectures can introduce an alternative cultural view, a view the faculty director can exploit by comparison to produce cross-cultural understanding in students. Or, overseas universities or providers can supply the entire academic enterprise.

The Site As a Stage

“All the world’s a stage,” said the Bard. Countless faculty directors have followed his advice, using important cultural or historical sites as backdrops for lectures. The seats of the Roman Colosseum or the walls of St. Paul’s Cathedral fairly ring with the echoes of lectures ranging from architecture to religion.

Faculty directors often farm out such responsibilities to their charges, assigning a student or team of students to research each site and proffer the fruits of their research to their colleagues on site. As with the offshore classroom, cross-cultural perspective can be gained by hiring local academics or local guides. Increasingly, such local assistance is required at sites (to protect the jobs of local guides in Greece or Italy, for example), and faculty or students providing their own lectures do so at some legal risk. Faculty directors can also expect the need for some postpresentation elaboration or corrective to the site reports of either their students or local guides.

Using the site as a stage is not without its inefficiencies, and these magnify as the group size gets larger. It is difficult for all students to catch the entire lecture, as the group gets strung out as some artifact diverts individuals’ attention or students become exhausted by the hot sun. Despite all the problems, however, the site as stage can produce an emotional moment that can “fix” the learning in students.

Being There

Something similar can happen when the stage alone is the instructor. Simply being at an historical site can have profound effects on students and faculty alike. The process of “historical immersion” is a bit of a mystery (at least to this writer), but something meaningful occurs in each of us when we stand in the exact spot where the Prince of Darkness stood across the Seine from the Eiffel Tower on his only visit to the City of Light. Or when we are moved as we gaze on the exact scene that moved Van Gogh to apply his tortured brush strokes to canvas. Or when we trod the exact cobblestones in an ancient Roman city that St. Augustine frolicked over as a youth. Or how the coals of our motivation to learn are fanned to flame when we visit the sites of the intellectual foundation of our civilization in Greece.

I do not know if we will ever fully understand how the mixture of cognition and emotion produce both the subjective understanding and the motive for further learning these memorable moments provide. I do know that they happen, both predictably and unexpectedly, in such frequency as to warrant visits to such sites just to be there. For the experience to be recognized for what it is, much less for it to be meaningful, some form of intellectual preparation is required. That preparation can occur any time prior to the experience, or even during the experience itself.

So, What Was Going on Behind That Green Door in Rome?

The Aventino these days is occupied by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, home of the fabled Knights of St. John Hospitallers (the “Knights of Malta” in common parlance). Tracing their organization’s roots all the way back to the crusades, these present-day aristocrats sally forth, delivering health care to those in need around the world. Our students spent a golden Roman afternoon learning not only of the order’s history and functions, but pondering the noblesse oblige that drives these privileged few to take at times extreme risks to serve the needs of the less fortunate of the world.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta is but one example of what resources the world has to offer short-term study abroad. The Knights of Malta represent all the variety and diversity of educational opportunities that await the request of leaders and administrators of such programs. Yet what role awaits faculty directors as teachers, if they mobilize the full spectrum of overseas educational resources for their students?

If All the World’s a Stage, What’s the Teacher Doing in the Pit?

How international education ought to be done depends absolutely on its goals and what the situation has to offer. Any particular pedagogy—be it classroom lecture or service learning—ought to be selected not because of some instructional or ideological commitment, but only because of its effectiveness in serving the goals of international education. Simply put, what is good is what works best in attaining the range of goals of study abroad. Usually that means a mix of pedagogies. Oftentimes that mix means that the teacher is not the star of the show, but rather its director. A director is seldom on stage. Rather, a director is gathering the needed resources for the performance, assembling the cast, interpreting the script, and coordinating the efforts of all toward a common end.

We academics are often loath to give up the limelight. In my formative years of teaching, a very wise man suggested that I spend my efforts thinking up ways to teach my students “more than I know.” More often than not, that meant stepping out of the instructional spotlight to bring reality into my campus classroom, or to bring my students into a reality overseas. Directing short-term programs abroad and later administering a program has given me a career’s worth of opportunities to think up a variety of ways to teach more than I know. These experiences have opened up many doors for me—to learn about other people and global problems, and about the processes of teaching and learning—than I would ever have otherwise.