MEASURING THE IMPACT OF STUDY ABROAD

While much research is still needed in this area, some recent studies have begun to measure the learning outcomes and long-term impact of study abroad and other international learning experiences. The studies included below are large in scale and encompass multiple institutions. This comprises only a portion of studies of this nature currently being conducted. If you know of other similar studies that should be included on this list, please email govrel@nafsa.org

Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI) (2010)
http://glossari.uga.edu/
The GLOSSARI project was conducted by the University System of Georgia to measure the academic outcomes of study abroad. The study shows that students who study abroad tend to have higher grade point averages (GPAs) and better college completion rates than their peers, particularly among underrepresented minority and low-income students. The University System of Georgia was awarded a U.S. Department of Education Title VI International Research and Studies grant to conduct this study.

Beyond Immediate Impact: Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) (2009)
http://www.cehd.umn.edu/OLPD/SAGE/
The SAGE research project examines the long-term personal, professional, and global engagement outcomes associated with study abroad. The project defines global engagement as the contributions a person makes to the common good by means of civic engagement, knowledge production, social entrepreneurship, and philanthropy. The study surveyed more than 6,000 former study abroad participants from 22 U.S. colleges, universities, and education abroad providers nationwide. The SAGE research was conducted in collaboration with the Forum on Education Abroad and was funded by a U.S. Department of Education Title VI International Research and Studies grant.

College-Bound Students’ Interests in Study Abroad and Other International Learning Activities (2008)
http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/about/news_info/StudentPOLL.pdf
This study conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE), the Art & Science Group, and the College Board examines the interest in international education experiences by high school seniors. Questions asked in the survey also attempt to gauge students’ expectations for what types of international learning they expect to be made available to them during their post-secondary education. The study demonstrates that the interest of college-bound students in global learning opportunities is extraordinarily high, and their interest goes beyond study abroad opportunities to include internships, cultural immersion, and fluency in a foreign language.
The Benefits of Studying Abroad (2002)
http://www.iesabroad.org/study-abroad/why/career-benefits
This longitudinal and quantitative survey conducted by the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES Abroad) reveals the long-term impact of study abroad on individual careers, education and world views of students who studied abroad. More than 3,700 study abroad alumni who studied abroad between 1950 and 1999 were surveyed as part of this study. The survey findings indicate that study abroad experiences can have a long-lasting impact on participants, not only academically, but professionally and personally as well.

ONGOING RESEARCH

Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE) (2009)
http://www.liberalarts.wabash.edu/storage/Overview_of_Findings_from_the_First_Year_web_07_17_09.pdf
As a cooperative project with the participation of nearly 30 higher education institutions, this study being conducted by the Wabash College Center of Inquiry and the Teagle Assessment Scholars is more broadly focused on the overall impact of a liberal arts education. One component of the overall study examines the impact of study abroad. As part of this study, Mark Salisbury published this research paper on intercultural competence and study abroad. A partnership has also been forged with the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) http://nsse.iub.edu//?cid=191, which collects information from four-year higher education institutions about which activities are linked to highly-engaged learning and personal development. The NSSE will be used with the 2009 cohort of this study, broadening the reach of the overall study. The Wabash Study is a three year project, and is expected to be completed in 2013; however an overview of findings from the first year of the study is available.

The Study Abroad Learning and Cost Alliance
http://www.acm.edu/our_collaborations/Past_Projects/Liberal_Education_and_Study_Abroad.html
The Great Lakes Colleges Association, the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, and the Associated Colleges of the South have partnered to compile and analyze data that should yield valuable insights into the relationship between characteristics of study abroad programs at liberal arts institutions, the learning outcomes students attain, and the costs of various types of programs.

In 2008, these groups submitted an initial report entitled Liberal Education and Study Abroad: Assessing Program Outcomes to Improve Program Quality. The project is being funded through a grant from the Teagle Foundation.

California Community College Student Outcomes Abroad Research (CCC SOAR) Project
http://globaled.us/cccsoar/
A study being conducted by the Center for Global Education, the CCC SOAR Project aims to provide comprehensive research on international learning outcomes at the California community colleges. The overall goal of the project is to identify whether students in community colleges who participate in study abroad programs achieve higher learning outcomes than those who do not. The Center will create a Project website with survey information, data analysis and preliminary findings so the project can be replicated in the future and thus have ultimate outreach and impact. This project is funded by a grant from the International Research and Studies Program at the Department of Education.