Education Abroad for Graduate Students

**EDUCATION ABROAD** has traditionally been done most often at the undergraduate level, but in recent years, graduate students have expressed more interest in studying abroad—and campuses are getting on board to offer them opportunities abroad.

“We believe that international research, fieldwork, and study are critical components of a twenty-first century graduate education,” says Zack Klim, director of academic initiatives and global programs at New York University’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development.

At some institutions, international internships and other global education programs at the graduate level have been going on for 30 years or more; at other institutions, the practice is relatively new. But everyone seems to agree that in today’s world, the value if not the necessity of experience abroad as an integral part of a graduate program is inarguable. Some graduate programs are even beginning to require it.

**Stepping Up Graduate Education Abroad**

“One thing that’s a little different with graduate programming, as opposed to undergraduate, at least at USD, is that graduate students are interested in more nontraditional markets,” says Denise Dimon, associate provost for international affairs at the University of San Diego (USD). “They are much more likely to go to developing countries and emerging markets—in South America, Asia, the Middle East. Ninety percent of our graduate programming is in these types of markets, as opposed to maybe 35 percent for undergraduates. Also, almost all of our graduate programs are experiential. So it’s much more hands-on. They also tend to be shorter, and more intensive than undergraduate programs.”

Rebecca Bellinger, director, Office of Global Initiatives at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at University of Maryland agrees. “In professional schools, there seems to be a shift, moving away from the tour-based, excursion-based opportunities of traditional study abroad, toward project-based learning, where students will work with a client or sponsor, or in some kind of group field project related to a real-life problem,” she says. “We’re seeing a move toward this kind of practical, applied learning. This not only provides a great resource for clients, or whomever you’re working with abroad, typically in the developing world, but it also allows students to build a portfolio of skills that they can bring into interviews.”

At American University in Washington, D.C., the School of International Service (SIS) recently revised its graduate degree programs in response to the needs of the market. “We launched a new capstone requirement: the graduate practicum, a program designed to give second-year master’s students real-world experience in project management and consulting, while preparing them for postgraduate careers,” says Leeanne Dunsmore, associate dean of program development and graduate admissions.

Students work in teams with clients that include U.S. and other government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to conduct policy and program analysis, drawing on their research to prepare final oral and written analysis and recommendations. Practica are led by faculty mentors who hold weekly class sessions: students also participate in hands-on workshops designed to enhance their project management, client relations, and oral and writing skills. And apparently it’s working well. “Within six months of graduation, 89 percent of SIS graduates have found full-time employment in their field of choice,” says Dunsmore.

Global programs for graduate students tend not to be operated out of centralized education abroad offices, but rather through the individual professional schools. At USD, according to Dimon, “Every single graduate school has some kind of international center, or program, centered and organized around the expertise and the programming that those schools want their graduate students to have. Our School of Leadership and Educational Sciences requires an international experience as part of their commitment to understanding multiple perspectives. The Business School requires three international experiences of MBA students who are doing an international track. Our MS Executive Leadership program also requires an international experience. It makes sense to not have it centralized at the graduate level. But they all offer something, and in some schools an international component is required.”
“Almost all of our graduate programs are experiential. So it’s much more hands-on. They also tend to be shorter, and more intensive than undergraduate programs.”

Designing Programs to Meet Student Needs and Expectations

At the University of Maryland-Baltimore (UMB), where more than 88 percent of the students are seeking graduate degrees in law, medicine, pharmacy, social work, dentistry, or nursing, programs are organized and operated out of the student affairs office in each of the professional schools, although two and a half years ago the institution did establish a Student Center for Global Education, in an attempt “to centralize some of the global activities of the university, get a handle on what’s happening, and better serve the students,” according to the Center’s director, Bonnie Bissonette.

One of the first things they did was to conduct a survey to determine what kinds of international experiences UMB students were interested in; what experiences they’d already had before they arrived there; and what they wanted to experience while they were there.

“What we found is that a statistically significant percentage of the students who took the survey had had international experience as undergrads,” says Bissonette. “And they wanted more. I think our faculty needed to see that.”

Based on the survey, Bissonette and her colleagues were able to show that the number-one reason students hadn’t done anything global was limited money and time, and in response to these results they developed a grant program to fund interprofessional research abroad for their students. The grant brings together at least three participants for each project: one faculty person and at least two students, who must be from different disciplines. One typical program took place in Hong Kong last summer, on the issue of palliative care in China. The supervising faculty member was from the nursing school, and the participating students were from the schools of social work, medicine, and nursing.

“It was really enlightening for the students to see how different cultures approach end-of-life issues differently,” says Bissonette. “Everyone came out of it saying it was really powerful, for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it’s global.”

Roger Auth, a medical student who participated in the program, stressed the value of working with an interdisciplinary research team, calling it “one of the most rewarding aspects” of the experience. “Prior to this project, I had very little interaction with nursing and social...
Because graduate students are constrained by both time and finances, we try to design programs that will be impactful professionally, so that students come out of the opportunity with a portfolio of work they’ve done on a program, or skills they can present to an employer.”

work students, nor did I have a firm understanding of their professional training,” says Auth. “I quickly realized that we all had different ways of approaching problems, and different strengths. As the field of medicine becomes more complicated, it is vital to work in an interdisciplinary fashion to improve patient care. This experience made me realize the importance of this approach.”

Lisa Felber, a student in the School of Social Work who also participated in the program, says, “It was extraordinary. I can’t say enough good things about it. It completely changed the way I think about Chinese culture and public health.”

At the Smith School of Business, “Because graduate students are constrained by both time and finances, we try to design programs that will be impactful professionally, so that students come out of the opportunity with a portfolio of work they’ve done on a program, or skills they can present to an employer,” says Bellinger. “One thing we have done is to offer consulting opportunities, where it’s not just a series of business visits in 10 days abroad. Students will first work with clients abroad virtually, developing skills and intercultural understanding with the client while they’re still here. Then they go abroad for 10 days or so, to do client discovery or research on the industry on site, or to give a client presentation, so they’re practicing their intercultural skills in person. Then typically they’ll come back and continue working with the client, again virtually, honing in on those virtual teaming skills, doing final touches on their presentation, or business plan, or other deliverable.” In this model, not only is the learning extended over a longer period of time, so that, as Bellinger points out, “Kolb’s experiential learning cycle of trying something, reflecting on what you did, understanding what you’ve learned, and then trying it again” is practiced. In addition, in these kinds of situations the client or partner will sometimes help by cost-sharing student expenses abroad that can’t be covered by financial aid, such as housing, travel, and meals.

At New York University’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, a recent objective has been to transition the portfolio of short-term faculty-led study abroad programs into a more organized global “track” that students can consider from the time they enter a program.

“Increasingly we’ve been planning with department chairs and faculty to identify required courses within a program of study that could translate well to an international context, and that would really become an integral part of the course of study,” says Klim. “What we’ve created is a new alternative, or optional course of study that fully integrates study abroad opportunities during January and the summer. In some cases it can help students accelerate their progress toward the degree, or to integrate some content area that they might not otherwise have considered. It’s an opportunity for us to get students to think creatively about the courses they’re taking, but also to normalize study abroad on the graduate level, so that when they look at the two-year plan for their academic degree, they can see exactly where those courses fit in.”

**Employers Finding Value in Education Abroad**

Many education abroad professionals say that one reason education abroad might be more popular among today’s graduate students is that employers are recognizing the value of experience abroad more so than in the past.

“Employers are starting to recognize the importance of a global mindset, or what we call global business savvy,” says Bellinger. “So students who want to be well prepared to enter the job market will actually seek out the opportunities that will give them the skills to stand out as job applicants.”

Leeanne Dunsmore, associate dean of program development and graduate admissions in the School of International Service at American University advises: “Survey students and make sure the programs being developed align with the needs of the current graduate population, and build on the knowledge, competencies, and skills valued by employers hiring your graduates.”

**Implementing Opportunities Abroad for Graduate Students**

For colleges and universities considering offering new education abroad opportunities to graduate students, it’s important to realize that it is a little bit different than offering programs for undergraduates.

“It’s really important to think through what the goals of the program are,” says Erich Dietrich, assistant vice president for global programs at New York University. “At the graduate level it’s usually not so much about broadening students’ horizons as giving them opportunities to get
deeper into the study of an academic topic in a structured way. It’s important for the structure of the program to match the program objectives.”

It can be tempting to “jump on the bandwagon” and offer a program that another graduate program offers, but Bellinger cautions that a more careful approach is more likely to achieve results.

“Just because School X, your biggest competitor, has an exciting and innovative program for their students doesn’t mean that the same model or partner will work on your campus, or with your students,” says Bellinger. “Take the time to invest in needs assessment and program evaluations to know what your students want, what they’re capable of, and what the employers in your industry expect from them as future employees. Program design should start with defining the expected learning outcomes, and how it fits into the curriculum.”

Global Learning at Home and Abroad
For all its value, Bellinger points out, “Study abroad is not the be-all and end-all of global learning for graduate students. We do study abroad, absolutely—faculty-led programs, consulting opportunities, even semester exchanges. But we don’t stop there. We believe that global learning is most effective when supported by opportunities at home that either will spark a student’s interest in intercultural or international business, and/or allow them to continue learning once they’ve returned home. For this reason we also find ways to help students develop a global mindset without leaving campus—by including global cases and other materials in our core curriculum, presenting our annual Emerging Markets Forum and speakers’ series, even by providing opportunities for students to work with clients abroad while here on campus.” This is important, because even at a school like Smith, which has an impressive 50 percent rate of participation in study abroad, that is still only half of the students. “We’re not forgetting about the other half,” she says.

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Strategic Portfolios

Developing and managing a varied range of education abroad programs

**AS EDUCATION ABROAD CONTINUES TO GROW**, both as an integral component in the undergraduate curriculum and in the numbers of participating students, many educators are focusing on more than just building enrollment and new programs. Increasingly, they are also seeking to create a portfolio of programs that represents a coherent strategic approach toward education abroad, taking into account not only faculty and student interests and demands, but the need for international experiences to contribute meaningfully to students’ academic and career goals.

“For students, destination is usually the first item considered when choosing a study abroad program,” says Margaret Heisel, research associate at the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California-Berkeley. “But we’ve got to balance that interest in destination with the particular opportunities connected with the discipline in those destinations. Study abroad has to be seen as something that makes a unique and important contribution to a student’s undergraduate degree. Students are looking for and need to gain practical, out-in-the-field experiences. What does a program contribute toward their academic advancement, their possible employment? That’s the kind of environment in which folks are building the portfolios of programs they’re offering their students.”

“There’s not always a well-thought-out strategy about developing and managing portfolios of programs,” says Giselda Beaudin, director of international programs at Rollins College in Florida. “Sometimes it’s a bit random. This faculty member wants to do this program, and the program gets started. I think it’s important to be more forward-thinking, more strategic in making those decisions.”

At Minnesota State University-Mankato, many students are the first generation in their families to attend college, and approximately 80 percent are on financial aid. “So developing exchange opportunities has been a significant part of my work over the past 10 years,” says Caryn Lindsay, director of international programs. “In 2005 we had five business exchanges. We now have 17 active student exchange partnerships.” She adds, “The benefits of exchanges are much broader than just student participation. They offer faculty members opportunities for active engagement with an international partner and possible teaching and research opportunities. And the regular visits that occur to support exchanges give upper-level administrators the chance to engage with their counterparts abroad. This has proven to be important in raising the profile of education abroad in our institution.”

**Is the Focus Quantity, Quality, or Both?**

“Traditional ways of doing study abroad are under a lot of pressure,” says Heisel. “The issues of affordability and accountability—what are students getting for their investment, both of time and of money, is becoming increasingly important. In addition, the increasing importance of education abroad for the STEM disciplines and for professional schools—business, engineering, medical science—all of these disciplines are making increasing use of study abroad.”

In response to these changes, many institutions now offer a rich and wide variety of program types to their students.

“Starting in about 2000, we started to intentionally diversify our portfolio from what was a traditional immersion and direct enrollment model,” says Gordon Schaeffer, director of research at the University of California Education Abroad Program (UCEAP), which serves campuses...
across the statewide system. “We started offering more programs of our own construction: for example, more instruction in English for students who didn’t have the language skills to be in a language immersion program, but who wanted to go to that place to pursue other interests.” One relatively new model that has proven to be very successful, Schaeffer says, is the short-term multisite program. “We’re looking at not only the numbers of students going on these programs, but what types of students are going. And we’re finding that it’s a very different cohort of students than were going for the other models we offer. In fact, 85 percent of the students who go on these programs apply only to that type of program. That suggests to me that we’re reaching a new market. And that’s really what we’re trying to do.”

New program models being offered in other parts of the world also offer new opportunities to U.S. students. According to Linda York, UCEAP regional director, “in the past five years there’s been an explosion of summer school programs in Europe.”

At the University of Minnesota’s Learning Abroad Center, the programs offered fall into three general categories: “We have the programs that we’ve developed; we have a large suite of instructor-led programs led by faculty from around the university; and we have a whole array of affiliated partners,” says Martha Johnson, assistant dean for learning abroad. “We’ve found that by partnering with affiliates we can offer very specific opportunities that meet students’ precise curricular interests and needs in a way we couldn’t otherwise,” she adds. “Some of the models that have worked well for us are niche programs for very specific curricula, or smaller departments. For example, there may be an opportunity at a research station in Peru that is ideal for a student studying ecology. Through our affiliates we’re able to offer our students the opportunity to study in programs that we wouldn’t have the numbers to support.”

At small, private liberal arts colleges, language and humanities programs have traditionally dominated the education abroad portfolio. But Beaudin says that offering a diversity of options to students is important: “I’m a firm believer that you need different types of programs for the different types of students on your campus. I think it’s been hugely helpful for our students that in recent years we have increased the numbers of types of programs so that they have many more options in terms of where they can go, while still staying on track for graduation.”

Some institutions concentrate on a few types of program models. Brigham Young University has only three program models: faculty led; internships abroad; and direct enrollment. “These are the models that have traditionally worked for us, and frankly we haven’t seen the need to jump on the bandwagon with all the new types of models out there,” says Aaron Rose, international program coordinator for internships and study abroad. “However, we certainly are looking to provide our students with new kinds of international opportunities, particularly in the area of internships abroad. We work with third-
party providers to identify opportunities, and we rely on them to help us customize our own programs.”

A Strategic Approach

“Strategic planning is a big part of managing a diverse portfolio,” says Schaeffer. “You have to make certain that it aligns with the institution’s needs as well as students’ needs.”

The UCEAP Program Portfolio Management Strategic Initiative Committee includes broad representation from stakeholders from across the university system, from campus advisers and UC faculty to representatives from the financial offices and research advisory committees. According to York, who chairs the committee, “Program development is a central element in our organization’s strategic planning.” She adds, “New program development is informed by market research: surveys of students, UC demographic and enrollment data, focus groups, etc. Opportunities that arise in the field also contribute to the selection of the programs we develop. Taking advantage of well-established programs can reduce the complexity of program approval, as well as the matter of managing programs once they are launched.

Heisel points out that some of the key stakeholders are beyond the walls of the institution. “If I were building a portfolio, I would make a circle that had all the important constituents that would be impacted by your programs—students, faculty, students’ parents, administrators, all around the circle. You’ve got to think about it from the perspective of each of those constituents, and also look really carefully at the mission of your institution. Are you a small liberal arts college? A big public institution? Are your students going on to graduate school? What kinds of jobs do they go on to? That kind of thing.”

Including Faculty in Program Development

A common theme in program development is the need to work closely with faculty. “Consultation with faculty and vetting of new program options during the development phase is critical,” says York. “This ensures broader stakeholder support and knowledge of the programs when they are launched.”

“I’ve been most effective when I have been able to get to know the faculty members and the departments. That allows me to be more strategic in presenting various options to them, so they can do the initial narrowing down, and then we can work together from there.”

Faculty and administrators are both involved with vetting new affiliate study abroad programs at some institutions, such as at the University of Minnesota. Possible new affiliate programs undergo a rigorous vetting process that includes review by an advisory committee that includes faculty and administrative leadership from around the university. A list of questions that must be answered for all affiliate programs is posted on the Learning Abroad Center’s website: this helps educate both university departments and external institutions interested in developing a partnership about all the issues that must be addressed in the review process.

The Costs of Developing New Affiliate Programs

Cost is always a concern when colleges develop partner programs. Many private institutions offer partner programs that are priced the same as if the students were on campus for the semester, which allows students to maintain all of their customary financial aid.

“This makes semester programs very affordable from the student perspective, but for the college it’s not so affordable,” says Beaudin. At Rollins College, an expansion of exchange programs is one way of addressing this situation. “We’re also building our short-term study abroad options,” she says.

Short-term programs offer the institution the opportunity for additional revenue, but can be challenging for students from a financial point of view. “We have various strategies for offsetting the cost of short-term programs with scholarship funding,” says Beaudin. “We have a couple of small endowed funds from donors, and we are also able to charge an embedded fee for our study abroad programs, which can be used to fund scholarships the following year.” Beaudin is also able to apply any budget overflow from her programs to funding scholarships. “We’ve been lucky that our administration has been supportive of our keeping the extra funds to help continue funding next year’s programs. But we’re also looking for new ways to increase funding for scholarships. We could do more with more funding.”
At the University of Minnesota, a public institution, students on all affiliated programs receive resident credit and pay their fees through the university. “One of the things that is part of our process is that wherever they go through a partner, the students are billed through the university. They’re registered through us and pay a program fee that includes administrative costs,” says Johnson. “By adding some revenue to our office we can support sending our students on programs that we’ve vetted. It’s a way of keeping some revenue, because when they go on other programs, it’s still work for our staff.”

Johnson says that despite the natural fear that helping students go on nonuniversity programs will negatively affect numbers, this approach has actually improved participation in education abroad overall, as well as the enrollment numbers in university-sponsored programs. “We’ve just ended up sending some students who probably wouldn’t have gone otherwise,” she says. “So more students are going abroad, and are talking about going abroad. It has in no way hurt the enrollments in our own programs.”

She adds: “You can’t make students go where you want them to go. Embracing the fact that there are certain locations and programs they are going to want to go to that we are not offering, and finding and vetting the highest quality options in that type of program or destination has worked really well for us.” While the financial concerns of public institutions that are trying to build capacity are understandable, Johnson says, “The good news is that the things they’re fearful of, the things we were fearful of, frankly, have not happened. If anything we’ve just grown our numbers. We have more options for students, and a faculty that is appreciative of the fact that we’ve added areas that are relevant for their students.”

**Institutional Culture Matters**

Keeping the unique culture and climate at each institution in mind is also important in planning an effective strategy to build a varied portfolio of education abroad programs. “At Rollins, there’s been a substantial push toward internationalization for a number of years, so study abroad is part of the culture,” Beaudin says. “That’s why filling curricular gaps and the changing conversations around cost are the things I’m working on. If you’re in an institution that is just trying to build study abroad, or has students for whom cost is going to be a huge factor, you’ll have different driving factors.” She adds, “It takes time to build a portfolio. Start with programs that have the broadest appeal or the clearest need, and expand later to programs that serve niche audiences.”

Schaeffer urges educators to not underestimate the power of satisfied students to help new programs grow and thrive. “What really seems to sell programs is word of mouth,” he says, adding, “Students ultimately depend on past participants and their peers for advice. We post student reviews of our programs on our website, and summary data of several years of program evaluations, focusing on key measures of student interest: academic quality, satisfaction with housing, with budget and financial advice, things that students care about when they’re trying to make a choice between programs. We look to our alumni to help support our outreach.”

And while all this is a lot of work, Lindsay reminds us why it matters. “I get students who don’t have passports, whose parents have never been abroad. It’s so rewarding to see them when they come back. They have gained so much self-confidence. They’ve seen that they can take charge of their lives.”

JANET HULSTRAND is a writer, editor, and teacher based in Silver Spring, Maryland. She has created and taught literature courses for Queens College, CUNY in France, Italy, Hawaii, and Cuba, as well as faculty development workshops for education abroad. Her most recent International Educator article was “Education Abroad for Graduate Students” in the January/February 2015 issue.
Best Practices for Short-Term, Faculty-Led Programs Abroad

IN THE PAST DECADE, the number of students interested in short-term education abroad programs has risen steadily. In the 2004–05 academic year, short-term programs accounted for 51.4 percent of all study abroad programs. The figure has risen about 9 percent since—today a whopping 60 percent of all U.S. students studying abroad now participate in short-term programs. Among these, faculty-led programs continue to grow in importance. And while there is a great deal of variation in the details of policies and procedures governing faculty-led short-term programs from institution to institution, there are some generally agreed upon best practices cited by education abroad experts to assist any institution in developing or managing such programs.

Ensure the Academic Integrity of Programs

Developing, nurturing, and maintaining academically sound programs, and ensuring that they are recognized as such is of crucial importance. “One of the most important things for credit-bearing courses is that they be unassailably academic. That’s the way to maintain credibility with campus constituents, students, and parents,” says Kathy Tuma, associate director of international and off-campus studies at St. Olaf College.

Having a thorough and well-defined process for reviewing course proposals is the first step. “There has to be a reason to teach the course abroad,” says Tuma. “We ask faculty to submit a tentative itinerary. We want to know, for example, how they will turn a tour of the Uffizi Gallery into an academic experience rather than just a touristic one. Will guest speakers address subjects that are pertinent to the course material? If it’s a political science class about world courts, will the students actually go to sessions of the various courts? We do a thorough review of proposed courses with that kind of thing in mind.”

At Elon University, proposals are reviewed by a standing committee that comes out of the general faculty council. “It’s a faculty committee that is kind of deputized by the overall curriculum committee to serve in that capacity for faculty-led programs abroad,” says Elon Dean of Global Studies Lee (“Woody”) Pelton. “Faculty have to explain why the destination is consistent with the academic goals for the class. Then the committee either approves it, or sends it back for revision.”

Most proposals reviewed by the committee are initially sent back for revision, a process that helps ensure that the programs will be of the highest academic quality. “It’s not about denying proposals, it’s about nurturing faculty,” says Rhonda Waller, director of study abroad. “Many of the members of the committee have had a course up for review and have had to go back and revise it. So faculty understand the spirit in which constructive criticism is offered.”

Pelton and Waller sit on the committee and lend their voices to the discussion during the review process, but they are not voting members. “We don’t speak to the bona fides of the course, and we don’t approve courses,” says Pelton. “But we know the business end of things. So, the faculty committee decides whether the course can run, but they don’t decide when it will run. We might keep a course on the books but say that we don’t think it’s a good idea for it to happen this year, for one reason or another.”

As the designated faculty fellow for Elon’s Global Education Center, Donna Van Bodegraven mentors faculty who are proposing new courses. “We have high expectations for academic rigor,” says Van Bodegraven. “We require all faculty to hold a one-credit preparatory seminar that their students take during the fall semester. Their course proposals must include the draft syllabi for both the course and the seminar.” The seminar, Pelton explains, “is really a beginning of the course. It includes practical information about visas and other logistical matters. But offering a credit-bearing seminar also gives professors the chance to get the students thinking about what they want them to think about...
in January, and to assign readings, etc., at a time when they have access to the library, assured access to the Internet, and so on. It also gives faculty and students the chance to get to know each other before leaving."

Creating well-designed, academically sound courses requires a great deal of advance planning. At most schools, the process begins about 15–18 months before the time the students will go abroad. Peter Rees has developed and taught courses abroad for the University of Delaware since 1972. "Our proposal deadline is 14 months from departure," he explains. "Once approved, budgets are initially developed nine months out, and finalized four months out. Meanwhile, students must be recruited and applicants individually interviewed. It has to be made very clear that this is an academic program. Everything that is structured needs to be related to the academic theme."

After students have returned to campus, they complete a survey and turn it in to the study abroad office. "We summarize this feedback and add a summary of the program’s level of organization and its financial footprint, and send it to the director, department chair, and college dean, thereby closing the loop from proposal stage to return," says Lisa Chieffo, associate director for study abroad at the university’s Institute for Global Studies. "Ultimately, the academic quality has to be overseen by the academic units, not by the study abroad office. However, we may point out problems we have been made aware of."

Helen Gaudette, director of the Office of Global Education Initiatives at Queens College of the City University of New York, is also a faculty member who has created and taught programs abroad since 2007. "As a historian I believe that students understand events, issues, and cultures better when they go to the places where things happened," she says. She assigns readings both before and during the course, includes research assignments, and actively engages students in the experience through debate and other pedagogical techniques. But she is also an administrator when she is not teaching abroad herself. In that role, she "works hard to prepare faculty leading the courses," she says. "Then, right after the course is over, we collect student evaluations. And we try to visit programs, especially the new ones, while they are in session abroad."

**A Leg Up on Policies and Procedures**

Education abroad professionals cite that developing and maintaining clear policies and procedures for establishing, operating, and monitoring short-term faculty-led programs abroad makes them run more efficiently.
“Centralized processes are probably the most student-friendly and also best for the study abroad office, even though faculty who have been doing things on their own for years might not like such a change,” says Chieffo.

Tuma agrees, and advises education abroad administrators to “push hard with your administration for a) sufficient staff and b) centralization. In order to run programs smoothly, effectively, and safely, you have to be sure that you have adequate staff to handle whatever kinds of situation may pop up.” She adds, “When you think of all the things that can go wrong in an off-campus program, and the liability that the institution might have if they don’t have the people to adequately cover an emergency—they’re far better off providing staff than they are handling liability cases.” Chieffo adds that sharing stories from the media with administrators that show some of the things that can—and have—gone wrong in study abroad programs can be an effective way to drive this point home.

“Sometimes using an education abroad provider is advisable, depending on the circumstances. “If you are trying to run programs with a limited staff, or if your staff does not have experience in such programs, working with a provider might be the right way to go, at least in the initial stages,” says Tuma. “However, even if you are working with providers, what happens when the one person in your one-person office is ill, or on vacation, and a crisis comes up that needs immediate attention? It’s important to think about these things, because things do happen, and the institution needs to have adequate resources available to respond when they do.”

Planning for the unexpected is also important when creating policies for short-term faculty-led programs. For instance, what happens if a lone faculty person is with a group abroad, and something happens to one of the students that requires his or her attention in such a way that he or she can no longer teach the class?

“We have a policy that every program must have a person who can step in in situations like this,” Tuma says. “It might be an accompanying faculty spouse, or a person from our staff, or sometimes it’s an on-site person. If we are sending someone with the group to cover this role from the U.S., we cover their airfare and accommodations.”

As part of creating policies for short-term faculty-led programs, incorporating health insurance—like any education abroad program—is recommended. According to Chieffo, “Situations like this [a student becoming ill or having an accident] are a good reason to include mandatory health insurance in the program fee, and the policy should include ‘bedside visit’ coverage to fly a family member out to be with the student, and also coverage for a health professional to accompany a student back to the U.S. Ideally, the faculty should have as little healthcare responsibility as possible, as this is not their role. It’s also not fair to other students on the program to have their director’s time fully occupied by such an emergency over an extended period of time.”

“There are best practices for student health and safety, and there are also best practices for program development,” says Daniela Ascarelli, assistant vice provost for international programs and director of study abroad at Drexel University. In terms of the latter, she adds, “It’s important for funding issues to be considered both from a student point of view and a departmental point of view. If faculty are released from teaching some of their regular course load in order to teach abroad during the break, then how will the department get the money to pay for the courses they’re not teaching? All of these things have to be worked out.”

Chieffo says that it’s important to have a process in place—“even with just a few programs.” She recommends that institutions have a standard proposal form, standardized application forms, and acceptance and payment procedures. “It’s also important to be clear about responsibilities,” she notes. “Whose job is it to recruit students, the fac-
Prevent Faculty for the Experience

Most institutions have incorporated required predeparture and on-site orientations for students, and this certainly is considered a fundamental best practice in the field. But ensuring that faculty are adequately prepared for the additional demands and expectations involved in teaching abroad is equally important. When asked what institutions need to do to be prepared to react effectively when problems arise, Tuma’s answer is almost reflexive: “The first thing is faculty training,” she says. “Faculty need to know exactly what is expected of them if they’re facing some kind of an emergency abroad. In our training, we use the line from the movie, ‘ET, phone home...’ It’s important to make it clear to faculty what their responsibility is in terms of reporting incidents to us. Then, depending on the situation, we’ve got a clear set of protocols to follow. Of course, you can never imagine what each situation might be, but as long as we have our procedures in place and our faculty trained in what to do, then you just work your way through each situation as best you can.”

A good way to help prepare faculty to teach in short-term programs is to host an event for them. “I run a how-to workshop for faculty every semester, with a panel of veteran faculty who tell about their experiences, and I guide those present through the nuts and bolts of how things work,” says Chieffo. “On short-term programs there’s less room for error. A problem that might seem insignificant on a semester program can dominate a short-term program, so it’s even more important to stay ahead of the curve and anticipate problems.”

Wonderful as it can be, teaching short-term programs abroad is not for everyone. "At St. Olaf, it’s been a pretty self-selecting group,” Tuma says. “I’ve had faculty say to me, ‘I no more want to spend 24 hours a day with a group of students for a month than anything. You couldn’t get me to teach a class abroad.’” Rees agrees. “It’s necessary for faculty to be aware of and responsible for eventualities that may occur with student welfare,” he says. “If you’re not willing to accept this level of responsibility, you shouldn’t get involved in study abroad.”

Promote Productive, Respectful Collaboration With Faculty

A central goal of both faculty and administrators should be to not only avoid the potential pitfalls of creating and maintaining faculty-led programs, but to work together in ways that are truly collaborative and mutually respectful and supportive.

"Faculty teaching abroad need as much support as possible," says Rees. "They are in a foreign country with students. They can’t be hamstrung with too many rules and regulations dictated from home. They need flexibility and understanding in applying available funds, for example. My institution does a good job in this respect. But the budget is a heavy burden, and administrators need to understand what it is like to operate in a foreign environment.”

Chieffo says that viewing faculty “as partners” is important. “We need to offer the faculty the support they need to manage a group of students well while teaching their course. But on the flip side, we need to recognize when someone is simply not fit for the job, or when the level of support they need exceeds what is reasonable or feasible for us to provide.”

Gaudette’s experience as both an administrator and as a faculty member who has taught abroad is helpful in seeing both sides of the coin. “Faculty should tell administrators what they need,” she says. “Administrators are busy, don’t know the course material, and may overlook something important.” She adds, “Ultimately, faculty are in control of designing their courses, but they need to realize that they must stay within the budget. They should work with administrators to plan affordable activities and excursions, so more students can go.”

Tips from Faculty Who Have “Been There, Done That...”

“Prepare students academically, culturally, linguistically, and logistically. When preparing your budget, build in a contingency fund, and always overestimate. Plan the schedule to allow time for students to complete assignments. Be prepared, and be flexible. Anything that can go wrong may go wrong.”

Donna Van Bodegraven, associate professor of Spanish and faculty fellow, Elon University Global Education Center

“Assign readings but not too much reading. Find the right balance, and give a variety of assignments. Draw a firm line between your space and that of your students. Let students be independent, but be there for them if they need you. Don’t count on getting a lot of your own research done: you will—and should be—with them a lot.”

Helen Gaudette, lecturer, Department of History, Queens College, CUNY

“I would never undertake a study abroad program without either personal experience and knowledge of the location or travelling with a codirector who has had that experience. It is impossible to ‘learn along with the students.’ Too much advance planning is needed.”

Peter Rees, professor emeritus, Department of Geography, University of Delaware
Parents Weigh in on Value of Education Abroad

Seventy-seven percent of parents surveyed are open to the idea of sending their children abroad to study at the university level, with nearly one quarter of those parents willing to pay at least 50 percent more than they would for a domestic university, according to The Value of education, Learning for life, a new report by Ipsos MORI for financial services company HSBC.

The research study represents the views of 5,550 parents in 16 countries and territories (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, Taiwan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States).

Among its findings on the education abroad front is that parents believe there are important experiences to be gained by students who take advantage of the opportunity to study overseas. More than half of parents surveyed say they value the opportunity for their children to live abroad and to experience different cultures. Thirty-four percent of parents who would not consider sending their children to a university abroad say cost is a barrier.

Additional key findings include:
- 83 percent of parents surveyed have a specific occupation in mind for their child, with medicine (19 percent), engineering (11 percent) and computer science (8 percent) the most popular.
- 58 percent of parents would most like their child to study one of the following five degree subjects: medicine; business, management, and finance; engineering; computer and information sciences; or law.
- 79 percent of parents see an undergraduate degree or higher qualification as essential to their child achieving important goals in life, and 50 percent think a postgraduate degree is necessary.

The report is available on the HSBC website at www.hsbc.com.

Endnotes

Last but not least, one of the best things about short-term programs is the opportunity they offer students who might not otherwise have a chance to study abroad. “I can guarantee you that without these programs, many of our students would not be able to study abroad,” says Ascarelli. And short-term programs are beneficial for faculty too: “It gives faculty the chance to work with highly motivated students from a variety of disciplines, and to share their expertise with them in a way that is incredibly exciting for both students and teachers.”

Janet Hulstrand is a writer, editor, and teacher based in Silver Spring, Maryland. She has created and taught literature classes in Paris, Florence, Honolulu, and Havana. Her most recent article for IE was “Strategic Portfolios” about managing a varied range of education abroad programs in the March/April 2015 issue.
I WAS HAPPY AND EXCITED about my decision to start a career in education abroad. It was the only thing on my mind during a 22-hour flight back to the United States from Sydney, Australia. In college I studied abroad in Japan twice; first during a summer, then for my entire junior year. I moved there shortly after graduation and taught English for nearly 5 years through the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. I then moved to Australia, where I completed my master’s degree in international studies at the University of Wollongong. Needless to say, I felt confident about securing an entry-level position in a study abroad office at a university or college somewhere in the United States. The realities of the selection process for these kinds of positions, however, was something I did not anticipate.

**What Do You Mean “Overqualified”?**

On August 2, 2011, I arrived in the northern Virginia area after six consecutive years abroad. A week later, I applied to an entry-level, program associate position at an institution in Washington, D.C., that facilitates overseas educational exchanges. My first full-time job was in Japan, so applying for this role in the United States was special for me. A couple of days after I submitted my résumé and cover letter, I received an email stating I was overqualified and would not be considered.

I was shocked! My immediate response was to politely remind them I had never worked in the United States. After all, I just got back in the country a week ago. After speaking with a friend about what happened, she encouraged me to request an informational interview. This would be a good way to start networking and learn more about that particular organization. And if another position that I was more suited for was to open up, they would know the face behind my résumé and cover letter.

During the informational interview, I was told that given my education level, they were concerned about how quickly I would “professionally max out” and leave. I appreciated their honesty, thanked them for their time, and mentioned that if there should be an opportunity in the future, to please keep me in mind.
It would have been nice to start my career in Washington, D.C., but I was flexible and willing to relocate. I then started to look at job postings through NAFSA, higher-edujobs.com, and The Chronicle for Higher Education. In addition to these resources, I also explored the “career” link on the websites of numerous study abroad program providers. I did not have a particular deadline, which made things a lot easier for me. Nevertheless, I was eager to start the next chapter of my life as an education abroad professional.

Why the Formality?
In late October 2011, I applied for an education abroad adviser position at a large public university in the Mid-Atlantic. I thought this place would be a good fit for me. The majority of the students at this institution are first-generation students and racial minorities. I also fit into these demographics and believed in my ability to relate, inform, and encourage diverse students to view overseas academic study as an attainable and important part of the undergraduate experience.

My first, 30-minute Skype interview with this university went well; afterward I was invited to an all-day, on-campus interview. I would meet everyone in the education abroad office and was required to make an hour-long PowerPoint presentation that focused on debunking myths about study abroad for students, faculty, and staff.

Finally, I thought my time had arrived. This was exactly what I needed to showcase myself and I started to work on my PowerPoint presentation. I sent the presentation to friends for feedback and constantly bounced ideas off of them. I also practiced five, sometimes ten, times a day in front of a mirror, in front of my roommates, and in front of my 86-year-old landlady and her two cats. I was incredibly focused.

My big day arrived. I took a deep breath, exhaled, double-checked my neck tie, and walked into the education abroad office. After an hour-long conversation with the director and assistant director, I was led to the room where I would present. It went well and the question-and-answer session allowed the audience to get to know me a little more. I was treated to a nice lunch and given a tour of the campus.

The amount of time that I had prepared for this on-campus interview, I thought, clearly had paid off because I felt good at the end. I went home thinking success is inevitable when preparation meets opportunity.

Ten days later, I received a rejection notice by email indicating that they had selected a more qualified candidate. I was devastated! I learned that the person I was overlooked for was an internal candidate. I immediately requested an event debrief. The director of study abroad replied and explained that the other candidate “had more office experience.” She also forwarded me several networking and volunteering opportunities to help get my “foot in the door.” This was nice of her because she did not even have to reply. I was grateful for the input and she is now a great contact with whom I continue to share study abroad resources.

In my current situation, I have been involved in the candidate selection process and now have a better understanding of why internal candidates are favored from the institution’s perspective.

Why Aren’t the Dots Connecting?
I was now getting frustrated and doubt was creeping in. My daily routine involved looking at NAFSA’s job registry. I checked it right after waking up and right before going to bed. In between these times, I worked retail to pay the bills. Before 2012 arrived, however, I applied to roughly five education abroad positions a week, made notes of when I submitted each application, and noted when I would follow up.

I could not believe my situation. I thought my educational and professional experiences overseas would make me really competitive for most entry-level study abroad adviser jobs. I was an overseas study participant, lived and worked in other countries for several years, earned a master’s degree, and acquired foreign language skills. The transition into an administrative role that facilitates study abroad for college students was going to be natural, I thought; so I wondered, why am I not getting offers? Is anyone even reading my cover letter and résumé and connecting it to the announced job description? Why are people missing the obvious? I never had these questions answered, but giving up was not an option.

Was It Worth It?
During an incredibly challenging nine months, I applied to roughly 65 jobs that focused on overseas educational exchanges, had three interviews a month, and was overlooked for nearly all of the positions.

During an incredibly challenging nine months, I applied to roughly 65 jobs that focused on overseas educational exchanges, had three interviews a month, and was overlooked for nearly all of the positions.
ing reverse culture shock after being abroad for so long. This period in my life, albeit frustrating, was also very informative.

I focused on what I could control and volunteered at numerous international education-related events held throughout the Washington, D.C., area, since I lived in the region. These were great networking opportunities and I acquired business cards from individuals who were involved in the international education field. Shortly after I got home, I connected with them on LinkedIn, read their profiles, followed up with “thank you” emails, and also requested informational interviews to learn more about their respective roles and employers. The majority of them were happy to speak with me, and although I initially requested 15–20 minutes of their time, our conversations usually took more than an hour. Toward the end of some of these meetings, I was encouraged to explore organizations I had never considered or was introduced to potential new contacts in the field. One encounter led to another, and I realized it is not always what you know, but who you know that can help in a job search.

I found building a network very helpful to me in keeping my head in the job search game and as a resource to find out about job openings, and to make connections I knew would serve me into the future after I finally found the “one” job I was after to start my career.

In March I received a call for an interview request, which was scheduled for mid-April. It was roughly 45 minutes on the phone with the study abroad coordinator, who is my current supervisor. A week later, Davidson indicated they’d like to schedule a six-hour Skype interview in early May. This was with all of the staff that worked in the Dean Rusk International Studies Program department, which included an hour-long session with recently returned study abroad students.

I prepared for both of these interviews by looking through Davidson’s study abroad website, learning more about their program models, options, eligibility requirements etc., and thinking about questions they might ask me based on the job description—preparing for this job was like studying for an exam. All of my preparation clearly worked out because I was offered the position one week later. My first day on the job as a study abroad counselor was on June 14, 2012; that day confirmed that my decision to get involved in the education abroad field was the best one for me.

I found building a network very helpful to me in keeping my head in the job search game and as a resource to find out about job openings, and to make connections I knew would serve me into the future after I finally found the “one” job I was after to start my career.

**Passing the Torch**

Today during my appointments with prospective study abroad participants on campus, I encourage them to make a modest investment in business cards with their name and school email address because it may be useful to them in the host country. It is never too early to start networking. Especially given advancements in communications technology, why limit your professional contacts to those solely within the United States? Even prior to arriving at your intended destination, a person who sits next to you on your flight, after exchanging business cards, could be a lead for any number of opportunities.

Another effective way for students to broaden their potential opportunities is to learn email etiquette for professional networking. I like to suggest that they reach out to education abroad program providers; have them introduce themselves and indicate their academic curriculum, tentative overseas study term, realistic goals, concerns, and other relevant information. This can serve as good practice for when students have to interact with potential employers or request an informational interview on their own.

In retrospect, my job search was intense—that is undeniable. But the people I met during that time, my personal maturation after returning to the United States, and my efforts to maintain healthy professional ties have strongly influenced my enthusiasm and confidence in interactions with diverse student populations in my current job.  

**NED KHATRICHEETRI** is a study abroad counselor at Davidson College.
Advancing Global Competence Through Faculty Collaboration

Increasingly, education abroad offices are trying to foster global competence among students who study abroad and collaborating with faculty can have a positive impact.

**EDUCATION ABROAD PROFESSIONALS** know that developing global competence should be one of the goals of study abroad. But improving students’ global competence is difficult—if not impossible—if it is done in a vacuum. Working with faculty as partners to improve students’ global competence through study abroad can make the goal easier to achieve.

It’s important to remember that global competence is not one-size-fits-all across higher education institutions. “Global competence can mean different things to different people,” says Nick Gozik, director of the Office of International Programs and of the McGillycuddy-Logue Center for Undergraduate Global Studies at Boston College. “I believe that the most important task is to define global competence for the context of one’s particular institution and purposes. Whatever definition is used, the idea of preparing students for an interconnected and diverse world could not be more important. It is crystal clear how necessary it is for our students to be competitive and adaptable in a global workforce.”

Collaborating with faculty in creative ways can help students become more globally competent after they study abroad.

**Enable Faculty to Improve Their Own Global Competence**

One way to approach this matter is to provide faculty with opportunities to increase their own global competence, says Joe Hoff, interim dean of international education.
at the University of Richmond. “We provide funds for research abroad, and we host faculty workshops where we discuss the needs of international students, and ways to integrate the knowledge gained by students returning from study abroad into the classroom,” Hoff says.

Since 1989, the University of Richmond has also offered faculty seminars abroad. “We usually propose the locations, and the faculty have to write proposals to be accepted,” Hoff says. “They have to explain how they will use what they learn to internationalize their curriculum, and/or to learn about our partner institutions in the places they’ll be going, how they can establish relationships with the faculty there, or do collaborative research—things like that. Also, we want them to learn about how study abroad works. If we have a partner in the country we’re going to, we want our faculty to meet with them while they’re there, and learn about how the exchange operates.” A fringe benefit is facilitation of interdisciplinary communication. “One of our institutional goals is to offer more interdisciplinary courses, through first-year seminars or special topics courses,” says Hoff. “And one of the outcomes of these seminars is that faculty who normally probably wouldn’t talk to each other do, after having the experience of traveling together.”

Providing faculty with training aimed at helping them better understand their own cultural values and biases can also be productive. At the University of Minnesota, the use of assessment tools is an integral part of this process. “We have given many of our faculty-led program leaders the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), and we’ve discussed intercultural frameworks such as the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) with them,” says Christine Anderson, assistant director of curriculum and program development in the University’s Learning Abroad Center. “We work with them on their facilitation skills, on how to debrief critical incidents, how to guide students in understanding their own value systems in order to better understand host country locals, and how to develop programs that will enhance students’ opportunities for interacting with people in the host country.”

In addition to home institution-based programs, there are other resources designed to help faculty develop and improve their intercultural communication skills, as well as learn how to instill and encourage the development of these skills in their students. “The Intercultural Communication Institute in Portland offers a series of summer workshops,” says Kris Hemming Lou, director of international education at Willamette University and one of the editors of *Student Learning Abroad: What Our Students Are Learning, What They’re Not, and What We Can Do About It*. He adds, “There is also the Workshop on Intercultural Skills Enhancement (WISE) Conference at Wake Forest University.” WISE was developed by a steering committee led by Steven Duke, executive director.
of global student/faculty development, research, and risk management at Wake Forest, and author of Preparing to Study Abroad: Learning to Cross Cultures. “In 2008 as we began developing cross-cultural engagement courses for our students, a group of faculty came forward and said, ‘We’d like something for ourselves.’ So we developed a workshop, and three years ago we turned it into a conference,” says Duke. According to Duke, the conference is experiencing robust growth.

Each year Winston-Salem State University sends several faculty members to WISE. “They learn how classroom teaching is different from teaching abroad, and how global competence can be integrated into their curriculum,” says Joti Sekhan, director of international programs and professor of sociology at Winston-Salem. “Through WISE they obtain a broader perspective on their role as educators.” She adds, “As we prepare students to be actively engaged and successful in a global environment, teaching cannot be limited to texts, assignments, and in-class activities. WISE gives faculty the chance to interact with faculty, staff, and administrators from around the country, and to engage with transformative teaching and learning practices.”

The Center for Global Programs and Studies at Wake Forest has also worked with its campus Teaching and Learning Center to offer faculty learning communities and discussion groups on study abroad.

“We offered them to the whole campus, and advertised them to faculty going abroad in the next two years, as a way to help them develop greater awareness of the deep learning that can come with guided reflection,” says Duke.

The group met four times in the fall and four times in the spring, an hour and a half each time. Discussions were based on readings from Student Learning Abroad and Documenting Learning with eportfolios. “A faculty learning community is an excellent resource for bringing people up to speed on what research has shown, and where best practices are around the country in regards to cross-cultural learning,” Duke says, and adds, “The faculty really loved it. They reported that it was a very worthwhile experience. And those who had returned from teaching abroad after participating in the discussions said that they’d gotten to know their students a lot better in applying the things they’d learned.”

Wake Forest has also funded faculty to participate in CIEE (Council on International Educational Exchange) and the Institute for the International Education of Students (commonly known as IES Abroad, based in Chicago) faculty development seminars. “They do an intensive academic seminar abroad, and then they come back and reflect on what they’ve learned, but also how they can incorporate what they’ve learned into their classes,” says Duke.

In January 2014 Woodrow Hood, director of film studies at Wake Forest, participated in a CIEE seminar called “The Business of Bollywood,” held in Mumbai. “I was hoping to get deeper insight into film production in India,” Hood says. “Having never been to India before, or studied Hindi film, I never felt I could incorporate teaching Indian films in my courses. I had no direct cultural experience to draw from, or any real instruction from experts in the area. I hoped the seminar would give me enough expertise that I could start incorporating new material into my classes and introduce a more well-rounded global perspective in my Intro to Film course.”

During the seminar, Hood had the opportunity to participate in one-on-one discussions with top Indian filmmakers and attend lectures. He also made a short film. “The mix of theoretical and practical learning was brilliant, and far exceeded my expectations,” says Hood. “But it’s not just the seminar. Being in Mumbai, experiencing the wealth and poverty and cleanliness and filth, the super-contemporary and almost medieval, gave me a much bigger picture, a glimpse of the story of humanity as it manifests itself in that culture.” The seminar exposed Hood to “all sorts of nuances…and that’s what I’ve brought back to my teaching. Not just better understanding of the modes of film production, but a way of seeing Indian film that is richer, deeper, and more meaningful.”

Boston College has also been looking for ways to better train faculty for teaching abroad, says Gozik. “We run lunchtime sessions for faculty leading programs abroad. It’s almost impossible to find a time when everyone can attend. So we haven’t gotten large numbers of people, but the faculty who’ve come have a strong interest.” They’ve held sessions on health and safety, intercultural competence, marketing, and other topics. The health and safety session is required for all faculty going abroad; the others are optional.

“We’ve been trying to get a sense of what kinds of needs are out there, and what kind of interest there is among faculty. So we let them talk about some of the concerns they’ve had, and let other people who have been running programs for a while talk about what they’ve done,” Gozik says.
“As faculty, many of us have a tendency to focus too narrowly. By prompting us to think more broadly, these sessions have provided us with fresh insights about what might be important from a student’s point of view.”

Richard Powers, a senior lecturer in the Business Law Department of Boston Colleges Carroll School of Management, has participated in the sessions and says they are invaluable. “As faculty, many of us have a tendency to focus too narrowly,” he says. “By prompting us to think more broadly, these sessions have provided us with fresh insights about what might be important from a student’s point of view. We also have the opportunity to learn from each other about what’s worked, and what hasn’t.”

Plans are underway for planning a workshop based on the WISE model, for Boston College faculty as well as those from nearby campuses.

Create Credit-Bearing Courses for Before, During, and After Study Abroad

Some schools offer credit-bearing classes specifically designed to prepare students for study abroad; support and guide them while abroad; and help them process what they’ve learned on return. At Willamette, all students going on study abroad for a semester or more are required to take a one-credit course, “Maximizing the Study Abroad Experience.”

“Research has shown that studying abroad alone is not enough for students to develop their intercultural skills,” says Lou. “We need to combine the experience with facilitated, guided reflection. The course is based on the principle that it’s important to intervene in the experiential process to help stimulate and guide reflection.” Students going on short-term programs are not required to take the course, but they are required to take the preparatory seminar that is a part of it; there is also a four-credit version that students are not required, but are encouraged, to take.

Since 2007 Wake Forest has also offered credit-bearing courses for students to develop their intercultural skills. The courses have been optional to date, but the faculty steering committee has discussed the possibility of making them required. There are three discrete courses: the predeparture course is offered for 7 weeks, 2 hours a week for 50 minutes. Given the limited number of contact hours, says Duke, “The actual amount they can learn about Italy or Spain or China in that amount of time isn’t that much in the global scheme of things. But compared with zero…” And at Boston College, an online course Gozik developed with the help of an academic innovation grant will be offered as a pilot for the first time this fall.

Help Faculty Infuse Global Learning into the Campus Curriculum

Gozik has also worked with faculty on the nitty-gritty of incorporating a more global perspective into the curriculum. He recently led a workshop in Boston College’s Lynch School of Education for faculty interested in finding ways to internationalize their courses. “We spent most of the time analyzing syllabi that they brought, discussing what kind of readings were being given, how course assignments were constructed, and how class discussions are handled,” he says.

At the University of Richmond, programs such as the Culture and Languages Across the Curriculum program (CLAC) allow students to use their foreign language skills to discuss topics in their discipline. The credits are awarded in the various departments: for example, one popular course is a CLAC biology course offered in Spanish. Others give students the opportunity to discuss accounting practices in Korean or Japanese.

“It’s not a language class, and we specifically tell the faculty ‘No: we’re not focusing on grammar here, we’re focusing on fluency,” says Hoff. “The goal is to help students become fluent in the terminology of their discipline. They’re using their language skills to talk about something that most likely they’ll have to do in their future careers.”

When possible, the classes are taught by departmental faculty fluent in the target language; when there is no such faculty available, international students may be hired to help teach the class.

“This is another wonderful aspect, because we’re utilizing the skills and expertise of our international students, and further integrating them into the academic community,” Hoff says. The benefits for students returning home from study abroad are clear. “It’s not geared just for them, but it’s especially helpful for them. They’ve studied similar things abroad in the language they’ve been working on. Now they can come back and do the same thing with their professors here.”

Develop Events for Faculty and Students to Share Education Abroad Experiences With the Entire Campus

A full-day symposium offered at the University of Richmond for the first time in the fall of 2014 gave students returning from study abroad, as well as faculty involved in education abroad and international students, the opportunity to share what they’ve learned with the campus community. It not only
promoted the value of study abroad to students and faculty not already involved with it, but to students returning from study abroad as well. “It was excellent as a reentry tool,” Hoff says. “We had students come up to us and say ‘I’m so glad I came. Listening to my friends talk made me appreciate all that I had learned as well.’”

Kathleen Bailey, an adjunct associate professor in the Department of Political Science and associate director of the Islamic Civilization and Societies Program at Boston College, takes students to Kuwait on a regular basis.

“Students who are exposed to different cultures learn to appreciate different ways of looking at things, different views and solutions to common issues,” says Bailey. “It stretches their minds and makes them think more creatively. I see this process every time I teach my course in Kuwait. At first students are puzzled by unfamiliar customs, and social and political practices. But, if exposed long enough and encouraged to keep an open mind, they soon develop an understanding and appreciation for a perspective different than their own. It makes them more flexible. They’re able to communicate more effectively, build new relationships, and have a positive effect on the people with whom they are interacting.”

She stresses the importance and value of intercultural learning for faculty as well. “We should be mindful of the extraordinary opportunities presented in teaching abroad. Faculty should be encouraged to engage with local people, rather than concentrate solely on the academic part of the course. This might be the most impactful part of the experience, and cannot be replicated at the home institution.” She adds, “We all need to get out of our comfort zones.”

IE JANET HULSTRAND is a writer, editor, and teacher based in Silver Spring, Maryland. She has created and taught literature classes for the City University of New York in Paris, Florence, Honolulu, and Havana, as well as faculty development workshops for education abroad. Her most recent IE article was “Best Practices for Short-Term, Faculty-Led Programs Abroad” in May/June 2015 issue.

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A Little Can Go A Long Way

Colleges and universities can leverage grants and financial gifts to give students more opportunity to study abroad and make education abroad a greater priority for the entire campus.

BY CHRISTOPHER CONNELL

IN THE FOLK TALE “STONE SOUP,” A HUNGRY TRAVELER convinces villagers who are hoarding food in a famine to share what they have to add to the “delicious” soup he is making from a magic stone. An onion here, a carrot there, and a bit of beef soon produces a hearty soup that feeds them all. In modern parlance what it boiled down to was a sort of matching grant strategy. That’s essentially how international educators are leveraging gifts and grants they receive to grow endowments and expand access to study abroad.

International educators know how difficult it can be to fund education abroad programs. To increase awareness of education abroad opportunities, as well as the number of students going abroad, it usually takes more funds. Many institutions find that they can receive small grants for study abroad. The challenge is, though, that most of the time, grants for study abroad have a specific use and when the funds are used up, the education abroad office is back to square one. However, some institutions have used innovative ways to leverage their study abroad funds to increase funding over a longer time period to make funds last or to raise awareness of study abroad across the campus to make it a higher priority among campus leaders.

Only 289,408 U.S. students study abroad compared with nearly three times that many international students at U.S. campuses (886,052), according the International Institute of Education’s Open Doors 2014 report. Slowly but steadily, challenge grants from governments, foundations, and private donors are helping colleges and universities make headway in redressing this huge imbalance. What grantmakers and donors look for are institutions seeking funds not merely for a one-time infusion of cash in their study abroad scholarship pots, but to position their international education programs for sustained growth. There is no one recipe for success when it comes to taking a dollar and turning it into more that eventually goes back into more funding for education abroad, but many colleges and universities have found that with some innovative thinking, they can take a gift for study abroad and make it keep on giving.
Grants Help to Establish Community College Consortia

Madison Area Technical College (MATC) in Wisconsin has been a pacesetter in getting community colleges to pull together to create new opportunities to study abroad. It won a $360,000 Capacity Building for Study Abroad grant from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs in 2010 to build a network of two-year colleges interested in engaging faculty and students in sustainable development projects in Central America and elsewhere. Madison has previously won National Science Foundation grants to share its renewable energy expertise.

Madison enlisted 23 colleges for the Community College Sustainable Development Network, held workshops in Madison on how to create new study abroad classes, and also brought small cohorts of faculty to rural Costa Rica to observe and participate in its renewable energy service-learning program.

Geoff Bradshaw, Madison’s director of international education, said most of the network members “had limited or no previous study abroad experience.” Several went on to create similar study abroad programs built around renewable energy work in Belize, South Africa, and other countries.

For instance, teachers from Madison, Lakeshore Technical College in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and Heartland Community College in Normal, Illinois, took students to Belize in 2013 to install solar panels at a rainforest field station and went this year to build a solar system for a dorm at a University of Belize marine research facility.

Working with Madison made it possible, said Heartland professor Christopher Miller. “We’re a small school. We just didn’t have enough horsepower and firepower... to make it happen” by itself.

Bradshaw said that the advantage of the network “is connecting colleges with each other so that instead of one college needing to get 10 to 15 students to run a program (which can be insurmountable at a small community college), each school can recruit a few students” and share the faculty load.

A Pennsylvania Community College Expands its Place in the World

Northampton Community College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, won a 100,000 Strong in the Americas grant to build upon an ambitious study abroad program it launched in 2013 that sent eight students and two professors to the mountains of Peru to work with an NGO on the installation of what is said to be the world’s highest altitude wind turbine to produce electricity for a rural village.

Now Northampton, in partnership with the Universidad Nacional de Trujillo and the nonprofit organization WindAid, is creating a service-learning course on “Implementing Sustainable Energy Systems in Developing

An Easier Sell to Raise Money for Scholarships than Infrastructure

Paying for students to study abroad is a powerful part of the pitch for the university’s fundraisers. Prospective donors “love to give money to send students abroad,” DeDe Long, director of study abroad and international exchange at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville (UA), said. “We don’t raise money in this office, but when the development people go out and tell donors, ‘We can send students anywhere in the world you want,’ the pressure is on this office to make sure that happens. We’re the wheels.” But the money raised typically is earmarked solely for scholarships, not for building the institutional infrastructure to run strong study abroad programs, she said. “It’s much easier to raise money to send students abroad than to raise money for more staff.” She sees that need as one that foundations and programs such as the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Initiative can and should address with challenge grants.

UA was unsuccessful itself in winning one of that initiative’s initial grants, but it was named the strategic partner of Universidad Santa María La Antigua (USMA) in Panama, one of the Latin American institutions that received $25,000. Now it’s helping USMA build its own infrastructure so they have the staff, knowledge, and resources to attract and better serve students from Arkansas and universities. The grant did not cover staff travel, but Long and her counterparts at USMA both were able to secure commitments from their universities to pay for that—another small instance of leveraging.
Communities” that will send science, technology, engineering, and math students to Peru each summer to work on similar projects. The award is also helping the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, institution expand an already robust array of education abroad courses, partnerships, and exchanges offered its 16,000 students. Manuel Gonzalez, the longtime director of international programs, said some of the funds will help with an ongoing effort to streamline requirements and make it easier for faculty to propose new education abroad courses. “I’m using the grant to do what I’ve always wanted to do. Our program was homegrown and organic. We started with one program. Now we have 25. It was a huge, fast-moving snowball. We never had time to step back and say, ‘What are we doing well and what are we doing not so great?’” he said.

With assistance from an outside consultant, Northampton is working on a series of online modules that faculty can take to plan and become “certified” to lead a study abroad course. “They can go online, plug answers in, and at the end they’re going to have a proposal,” Gonzalez said. Northampton also is codifying policies on such matters as bringing a spouse and travel to countries under State Department warnings. And his office now is canvassing returning faculty as well as students to evaluate how the course went.

“We’re taking a deep breath. Now we’re bombarded by faculty who want to go abroad,” said Gonzalez, whose hope is that Northampton one day will offer a degree in global studies. Northampton sends 120 students abroad each year. Gonzalez holds costs down by striking deals with partner institutions. “Our students are truly poor. For most of them a $1,700 trip is insurmountable. We always have to find very inexpensive ways to do things,” said Gonzalez, who has sent students abroad for as little as $900. “I couldn’t do it without my in-country partners. I’m good at deal making.” He’s also trying to convince partners in impoverished countries to send their students to the United States. “We’re working with a poor university in a secondary city on their self-esteem. They think they have nothing to give us, but they do,” added Gonzalez, who will use some of his 100,000 Strong grant to bring the partner’s students to Northampton.

**A Unique State Match Doubles a Study Abroad Endowment in Wyoming**

Back in 2001, Wyoming state legislators conceived a new way to help the University of Wyoming (UW) realize its ambitions to rise in the ranks of research universities: the state would match, dollar for dollar, every endowment gift of $50,000 or more, and gifts of $25,000 or more for buildings. It is a program “unique to the state of Wyoming,” according to the University of Wyoming Foundation, which over a decade raised $84 million that was doubled to $168 million.
It also explains in part how a $1.7 million gift from then-Vice President Dick Cheney and wife Lynne Cheney in 2007 has allowed his alma mater to amass an endowment for study abroad that now has grown to more than $6 million. The school also has quintupled its study abroad scholarship awards, from $45,000 to $300,000 a year. Some 335 students benefited in 2012–2013 alone.

Cheney, the former chairman and CEO of Halliburton Corp., holds two political science degrees from UW and has credited his home state institution with turning his life around after he flunked out of Yale University. The Cheneys donated another $1.7 million, also matched by the state, to renovate a building that now houses the Cheney International Center and both Cheneys serve on the international programs advisory board. They have also helped the university attract more donors, most notably at a December 2010 fundraiser they hosted with friends in Jackson, Wyoming. Anne Alexander, director of the Cheney International Center at the University of Wyoming, brought students to the event to tell of their education abroad experiences all over the world.

Foster Friess, an investor, philanthropist, and born-again Christian who is a major donor to conservative political and religious causes, was so impressed that he instructed the university to shift without fanfare to the Cheney endowment his earlier $1 million gift to UW. All the scholarships bear the Cheney name, not that of Friess. “We had a long and extensive conversation with him. We told him, ‘The conditions are already set up and it’s got their name on it. You couldn’t attach any additional strings to it.’ He was fine with that,” said Alexander.

Another businessman at the fundraiser, Bill Newton, took it upon himself to begin paying to send a dozen or more MBA students each year on a week-long field trip to visit companies in Germany as part of a course on global business.

Like public radio listeners, major donors especially like knowing their contributions to the study abroad endowment will be matched, Alexander said. It was “just the icing on the cake” for the Cheneys, but “it’s a real incentive for a lot of our donors.”

The University of Wyoming sends about 400 students overseas each year, with most receiving $600 to $1,000 for short-term programs. Those going for long terms can get up to $2,000, combat veterans receive up to $3,000, and there are fellowships up to $7,000 for top students.

Since its inception, UW has awarded more than $1 million in Cheney Study Abroad Scholarships to 1,060 students, including about 140 graduate students. It’s become “an outstanding recruiting tool for UW,” not just...
favorable than the 1980s for supporting education abroad, he wrote, the environment “is certainly more
from corporations and the MSU Federal Credit Union. His office subsequently raised large gifts
were earmarked for the endowment, as well as profits on
Britrail, Eurail, and International Student Identity Cards
as an endowment. Gliozza said commissions on sales of
abroad courses, but it took until 1989 to reach the $20,000
thon appeal to alumni and faculty who had taught study
about how the endowment came about.
Michigan State was among the USCEFT grantees in
the China 100,000 Initiative and has also gotten six-figure
gifts for study abroad from the Coca-Cola Foundation and
Amway. Its website offers a compendium of information on
dozens of sources of study abroad scholarships from outside
the university, including the Foundation for Global Scholars,
launched in 2006 by GlobaLinks Learn Abroad’s Cynthia
Banks and Sheila Houston (GlobaLinks, originally Aus-
Austra-Learn, recently merged with International Studies Abroad).
Michigan State first established an endowment for study
abroad in 1984 under then-director Charles Gliozza,
who wrote an account in the July/August 2007 Interna-
tional Educator about how the endowment came about.
The then–Office of Overseas Study put up the first few
dollar and promptly raised $2,725 from a tele-
thon appeal to alumni and faculty who had taught study
abroad courses, but it took until 1989 to reach the $20,000
level that the university then required to be recognized
as an endowment. Gliozza said commissions on sales of
Britrail, Eurail, and International Student Identity Cards
were earmarked for the endowment, as well as profits on
foreign currency. His office subsequently raised large gifts
from corporations and the MSU Federal Credit Union.
Nowadays, he wrote, the environment “is certainly more
favorable than the 1980s for supporting education abroad,
particularly in establishing an endowment.”

Michigan State Started Small
but Built a Mighty Endowment
Michigan State University operates one of the country’s
largest study abroad programs, each year sending 2,400 or
more students, three-quarters of whom receive some form
of assistance. “Within our office, we have a combined $4
million in endowments for scholarships,” said Brett Ber-
quist, executive director of the Office of Study Abroad.
“This generates approximately $200,000 per year, which we
match from operating funds for about $430,000 in scholar-
ships distributed directly through our office.” But many
Michigan State colleges and divisions have even greater
resources of their own for education abroad, and they add
up to $2.3 million a year in study abroad scholarships.
“Increasing scholarship endowments for education abroad
is part of our university goals. We joined IIE’s Generation Study Abroad with the goal, among others,
of doubling our endowment,” Berquist said. “We recently
sent out our first-ever direct mail campaign to 30,000
study abroad alumni.”

Major Gifts Form the Bedrock for
Study Abroad Endowments
Like any large fundraising drive for a worthy cause, major
endowments are built not on small donations but big gifts
in the six- and seven-figure range, whether from individ-
uals, corporations, credit unions, or foundations. Former
University of Michigan President Mary Sue Coleman and
University of South Florida President Judy Genshaft set
an example at their institutions by each donating with
their spouses more than $1 million to send presidential
“scholars” to study overseas. Coleman, who is retiring,
also has donated her pay increases in their entirety to
study abroad scholarships.
Ohio State University has made study abroad a prior-
ity in its current $2.5 billion fundraising campaign, which
started in 2012 and is already closing in on the $2 bil-
lion mark. Some $10 million came in the form of a $5
million donation and a pledge of $5 million more from
Keith Monda, the retired CEO of the luxury goods maker
Coach, Inc., and wife Linda to provide $6,000 "Monda
International Experience Scholarships" to 50 arts and
science majors each year and eventually to 100. Monda,
an alumnus, said, “Our objective was to do a little bit to
level the playing field, to make sure that everybody who
has an interest in understanding the broader world has
the opportunity to do that. If you look around this trou-
bled world that we live in, maybe some of the problems
wouldn’t be as extreme if people at least understood the
other individual’s point of view.” Nearly 2,000 Ohio State
students study abroad each year.
Shifting Priorities From Foundations

The unfortunate reality for international educators that want to secure grants to help bolster education abroad is that there is a paucity of major foundations that make education abroad a top priority. Among the few have been the Freeman, Luce, and Starr foundations. The Freeman Foundation in particular made a major impact over the past two decades on expanding East Asian studies at liberal arts colleges, including a $100 million, four-year Undergraduate Asian Studies Initiative launched in 2000 that allowed 84 campuses to hire new faculty, create new courses, and send students off to study in Japan, China, and a dozen other countries. But Freeman has changed its funding practices and priorities since the 2010 death of founder Houghton “Buck” Freeman, the son of insurance magnate Mansfield Freeman, who was passionate about Asia and once taught at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Buck Freeman, who was born in Shanghai, shared that passion and a fervent belief that education abroad could improve East-West understanding and ties. “Over the last couple of years the (Freeman) trustees are trying to figure out what makes the most sense today relative to what kinds of things were funded in the past,” said Hildy Simmons, a philanthropy consultant and longtime adviser to the foundation.

Looking back on the Undergraduate Asian Studies Initiative, Simmons said, one thing that stood out was that while the new faculty positions took root and curricula remained infused with more emphasis on East Asia, “it was clear the study abroad piece was the hardest one to sustain.”

Freeman for a decade also sponsored the Freeman Awards for Study in Asia (Freeman-ASIA) that sent U.S. undergraduates with financial need to study in East or Southeast Asia, but that Institute of International Education–administered program awarded its last scholarships in 2013. More recently, Freeman has provided funds for select universities to send undergraduates on internships in the region. It has given two rounds of $100,000 grants to 11 universities to help students gain those valuable experiences. Freeman, with $300 million in assets, has always kept a low profile with few employees and no website. Graeme Freeman, son of the founder, remains executive director.

Indiana University (IU) has its own endowed Hutton International Experiences Program thanks to a $9 million gift in 2003 from alumnus Edward L. Hutton, a former W.R. Grace and pharmaceutical executive. The study abroad scholarships are managed by the Hutton Honors College but available to any IU student with a 3.4 GPA or better. Some 480 students received $731,000 in awards in 2013–2014 ranging from $500 to $3,000 depending on the length of the program. Since its inception, the endowment has awarded $7.8 million in scholarships to 5,450 students, according to J.R. Nolasco, the program manager, and, with some additional donations, the endowment now stands at $11 million. The late benefactor allowed some funds to be used to pay the salary of a full-time manager for the scholarship program. That was “a remarkable dimension of the gift,” Matthew Auer, then-dean of Hutton Honors College, told the International Educator in 2011. The Edward L. Hutton Foundation also gave IU’s Office of Overseas Study two grants totaling $450,000 in 2004 and 2007 to encourage faculty to develop new short-term programs and to subsidize how much students paid to go.

Indeed, the strings attached to study abroad gifts often bar use of any funds for staffing or overhead, as the University of Arkansas’s Long also pointed out, and that’s where seed grants or gifts can provide funding that helps institutions build more robust, sustainable programs that ultimately send more students abroad than would have been the case if the funds had solely been allocated for scholarships and subsidizing program fees.

Linking Education Abroad to Other Top University Priorities

Because study abroad grants and gifts often have funds earmarked for specific uses (usually not including staffing when expanding study abroad programs), this makes it all the more crucial for international educators to get their institutions’ leaders to make sending students to study, work, and do research overseas a priority. But it also helps if the study abroad advocates can make a compelling case for how education abroad can help the university achieve its other top goals.

At the 36,000-student University of North Texas (UNT), the overriding goal is to become a Tier One research university, a status already achieved by the University of Texas, Texas A&M University, and Rice University, and one that several other state campuses are vying for. UNT Vice Provost for International Affairs Richard Nader has sought to convince more faculty to involve students in their research work and partnerships in other countries. “You have to do a lot of looking around. Research-active faculty are four times more likely to be globally engaged in the pursuit of knowledge,” he
said. These faculty may be in the dark about the services the international office can provide to prepare students and make the arrangements to follow professors overseas. “We have a lot of faculty activity in Thailand and Southeast Asia,” he added. If professors bring students to assist in and learn from their research, “they’ll get kudos from their department for doing what they love to do anyway. That’s a win-win both for the faculty and the international office.” And when there’s support from the top and a wider recognition among deans about how education abroad can contribute to the drive for Tier One status, “then everybody feels compelled to contribute,” said Nader.

North Texas is using its 100,000 Strong in the Americas grant to bolster a partnership with Universidad de Magallanes in Chile and the Institute for Ecology and Biodiversity. It is tripling enrollment in an ambitious course called “Tracing Darwin’s Path” that sends students to do field studies, research, and internships at the UNESCO Cape Horn Biosphere Reserve and elsewhere in Chile.

**Weaving Study Abroad Goals into Strategic Planning at UNC-Charlotte**

The University of North Carolina-Charlotte has tapped internal resources and engaged leaders from its seven colleges to encourage faculty to offer a spate of new summer study abroad courses. “We’ve gone from zero to 15 in three years,” said Assistant Provost for International Programs Joël Gallegos. In some instances, faculty got seed grants of $2,500 to $5,000 to get the courses started.

UNC-Charlotte is an urban university with 27,000 students. Some 660 study abroad each year. “We are a research-intensive institution. Our biggest colleges are Engineering, Computing and Informatics, Education (and) Health and Human Services. It’s a challenge for many institutions to get those areas excited about and engaged in study abroad.”

But Gallegos believes that could change, in part because of the cooperation and support he is getting from academic affairs and from deans. “We very much have an ‘it takes a village’ (attitude) on our campus,” he said. “We patch limited funding together to make interesting projects move forward.”

UNC-Charlotte is about to enter a new strategic planning cycle, and Gallegos is confident that the new blueprint will encourage the colleges to approach education abroad “in a much more structured, much more explicit way....We’re currently working with academic affairs on what those goals might look like.” Funding study abroad scholarships will also be a priority in an upcoming capital campaign. In the meantime, he said, the international office “pinches pennies” to keep the new, faculty-led courses as affordable as possible for students. “We know that is one of the best ways we’ll get our volume up.”

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Assessing Learning Outcomes for Education Abroad

Many Education Abroad Advisers have experienced a college junior just returned home from spending a semester abroad, rushing into the office, bubbling over with excitement about everything she learned about herself and her host country. However, while these individual stories of personal transformation are heart-warming, education abroad offices and institutions as a whole face a demand for aggregate data that demonstrates both program results and student growth. That’s where the design and assessment of learning outcomes for education abroad comes in. Learning outcomes can cover a broad array of goals for student growth—intercultural competence, language proficiency, an awareness of global issues, among many others—and the challenge for education abroad offices is how to assess whether they are being achieved, and then effectively use the data collected.

Defining Learning Outcomes for Effective Assessment

Effective design of learning outcomes leads to effective assessment of learning outcomes. Assessment experts argue that the first step is to spend time identifying what is important to the institution in question and then defining key terms in a way that is both clear and measurable. Only then can an institution select an appropriate assessment tool. “For example, developing intercultural competence is often a learning outcome in many education abroad programs. The problem is that this particular learning outcome is usually implicit and even where it is explicit, it is not defined in any operational way. Best practice, therefore, would require both the explicit recognition of the learning outcomes and defining it in a way that is measurable either qualitatively, quantitatively, or both,” says Kris Hemming Lou, director of international education at Willamette University (WU).

Nick Gozik, director of the Office of International Programs at Boston College, concurs, adding that the desired learning outcomes should drive the selection of assessment tools, not the other way around. “It is critical to take time… and consider what you want students to get out of an abroad experience. Many (institutions) jump immediately into selecting an instrument, perhaps because colleagues at another institution are using it, without thinking about what they want to actually assess. Without knowing what you want to assess, you can spin your wheels and not attain data that are pertinent to your institutional context and needs,” he says.

While identifying learning outcomes for education abroad, it is also important to seek input from the larger campus community. “One of the first things to do is to reach consensus—campuswide—on the purpose of education abroad and its role in the overall education of the student,” Lou says.

At Willamette University, the education abroad office surveyed faculty on how they would rank a list of common education abroad learning outcomes, both in terms of individual departments’ major requirements and with respect to the college’s general education requirements. Following the survey, faculty forums were convened to discuss the results.

“The purpose of the forums was to refine our understanding of the survey data and brainstorm about what would need to be implemented and how,” Lou says.

A related issue is making sure that learning outcomes for education abroad align with campuswide learning outcomes. At Saint Mary’s College in Notre Dame, Indiana, the learning outcomes developed for education abroad actually informed the outcomes later identified for the entire campus. Elaine Meyer-Lee, director of the Center for Women’s Intercultural Leadership at Saint Mary’s, says that their process of developing learning outcomes for education abroad entailed three stages, first involving the identification of both general outcomes and then program-specific outcomes with a specific disciplinary component. Later on, when the institution as a whole...
adopted learning outcomes for general education, the study abroad office played a key role. “The education abroad outcomes informed the larger campuswide process. For example, we had to figure out how to achieve the same outcomes for the half of our student population that doesn’t study abroad,” Meyer-Lee says.

Michigan State University (MSU) took the opposite approach. After a committee of representatives from all colleges and key departments identified institutional learning outcomes, the campus internationalization committee asked faculty what those outcomes would look like from a global perspective, and these outcomes formed the basis...
TOP 10 MYTHS
ABOUT ASSESSING EDUCATION ABROAD LEARNING OUTCOMES

MYTH #1: Pre/post surveys are sufficient for outcomes assessment.
Pre/post surveys can be part of the assessment efforts, but they provide an incomplete picture of student learning. Pre/post surveys, questionnaires, and inventories collect indirect evidence of student perceptions of their learning. It is also important to collect direct evidence of student learning during the learning experience (course or program). Using multiple direct and indirect measures provide a more complete picture of student learning.

MYTH #2: It’s fine to collect the information and then figure out what to do with the results later.
It’s important to actually use the information collected; otherwise, it can be a waste of time and effort if the data are not used. It is especially important to use the collected information to provide feedback to students for their continued learning and development. An assessment plan ensures use of data.

MYTH #3: There’s one best tool to assess outcomes in international education programs.
There is no one best assessment tool. The best tools and methods to use are the ones that most closely align with stated goals and learning objectives. Multiple tools and methods need to be used to provide a more complete picture of student learning.

MYTH #4: It’s best to develop the program first and add the assessment in later.
It’s best to “start with the end in mind” and develop a program with clearly stated goals and objectives. An assessment plan developed from the beginning can be very useful for program development, too.

MYTH #5: One person or office can do the assessment.
If possible, it’s best to identify an assessment team (including students as the key stakeholders!) that can plan and implement assessment. Assessment can quickly become overwhelming for one person. Use the expertise around you, including faculty.

MYTH #6: International educators should agree on one standardized tool that everyone can use.
International education programs are not all identical. There are different missions, purposes, priorities, goals, objectives, needs, contexts, strengths, and so on. Assessment tools must align with goals and objectives for results to be valid. Given the many variances, no one tool will align with all the varied differences, learning objectives, and circumstances.

MYTH #7: The starting point is asking, “Which assessment tool should we use?”
The starting point is asking, “What are our goals and objectives?” What do we want our students to know and be able to do? What evidence is needed to show that the objectives have been achieved? Clearly stated goals and objectives determine which assessment methods and tools to use.

MYTH #8: The main reason to assess is for program improvement and/or advocacy.
The main reason to assess is to improve student learning—to provide feedback to students so that they can continue their learning and development. Program improvement, advocacy, and other reasons become secondary. Outcomes assessment is not the same as program evaluation. These are two very different processes and too often, international educators conflate the two. Outcomes assessment is about documenting changes in student learning.

MYTH #9: Assessment is too expensive, takes too long, and is a waste of time.
With appropriate planning, assessment can be manageable, affordable (especially when adapting what’s already being done instead of trying to do something “extra”), and efficient.

MYTH #10: Anyone can do assessment—no special training or background is needed.
Many incorrect notions are perpetuated about assessment (even presented at international education conferences and in publications), so it is important for those engaged in assessment to receive professional training and knowledge in the foundations of assessment. It’s more than doing a pre/post measure.

Adapted with permission from Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International Educators: A Practical Approach (pages 111-112) by Darla K. Deardorff, EdD (Stylus, 2015).
for what the education abroad office uses for its programs.

According to Jim Lucas, assistant dean of global education and curriculum in the MSU Office of Undergraduate Education, education abroad offices have to balance their own learning outcomes with the reality of the institution to which they belong. “I’m not a fan of units making their own unique outcomes that are not related to the broader institution’s vision. We’ve overcome this issue by aligning goals intentionally and allowing for multi-level assessment,” he says.

Best Practices for Learning Outcomes Assessment

Lucas breaks down the assessment of learning outcomes of education abroad into three steps: (1) determining the role education abroad plays in the overall university learning outcomes effort and align the efforts as best as possible; (2) designing programs with assessment in mind; and (3) developing a culture in which assessment becomes a normal part of running a program.

At MSU, when departments are proposing new education abroad programs, the learning outcomes must be embedded in the program design. Furthermore, all education abroad proposals must be accompanied by an assessment plan.

“Proposals have to embrace both best practices for education abroad and show how the program aligns with the campus-wide learning outcomes,” Lucas says.

Gozik agrees that assessment needs to become business as usual. “It can be easy to get caught in the act of developing an assessment plan and then spend little time implementing it. Some offices are forced to submit a plan for higher-level administrators or an accrediting board. Once they are done, the plan gathers dust, so to speak, on a shared drive, yet not much else happens,” he explains.

To counter this, Gozik suggests setting up ongoing meetings for assessment, which can be facilitated by the creation of an assessment working group. “When team members are expected to provide updates on a regular basis, they are forced to demonstrate results,” he says.

He also advises starting small. “Rather than attempting to assess all learning outcomes at once, it can be easier to focus on one or two for a given period of time, and then go back to the others,” he says.

Gozik also suggests using resources that are already available on campus. “Finding an assessment specialist or a faculty or staff member who has expertise in developing certain types of instruments can be very beneficial. Engaging the expertise of others likewise aids in creating buy-in across the university,” he says.

Lou adds that it also important to have a faculty member who can help sell the assessment tool to the rest of campus. “These initiatives need a champion, someone who is willing to take the lead and do the bulk of the work to move it along. Our university now has a learning assessment faculty committee too, so this work would be coordinated with that committee as well,” he says.

Selecting the Right Tools to Assess Education Abroad Outcomes

Many campuses utilize multiple assessment tools that allow them to take a multimethod approach in order to capture both qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate different aspects of their education abroad programs. Examples of methods include pre- and post-program evaluations and student and faculty surveys.

Gozik says that it’s important to capture both qualitative and quantitative data because they measure different things. “You need both qualitative and quantitative efforts. It is hard to understand concepts such as intercultural engagement with quantitative methods. These questions often have a social bias, so students know what we want them to hear,” he says.

He adds that students are normally poor self-raters: “As such, if we ask a student, ‘do you think this program helped you with your critical thinking?’ then we also ask ‘if yes, give us a specific example of how this happened.’ We also try to do critical incidents or case studies that allow students to write out their answers and look for changes pre/post.”

There are many commercial assessment tools available—including the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), the Beliefs, Events, Values Inventory (BEVI), and the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI), to name a few—or institutions may elect to design their own.

“In selecting assessment tools, professionals can choose from both homegrown and for-purchase products. Both have their benefits. Instruments sold on a large scale, such as the IDI or GPI, have been regularly tested; it’s also possible to compare results across institutions and over time, given that the data are being collected on a number of campuses,” says Gozik.

“At the same time, there can be strong benefits to creating one’s own instruments,” he adds.

Gozik says that an example of an assessment tool that education abroad offices can easily develop themselves is a post-program evaluation. “It is helpful to work with a survey expert or consult manuals on the subject, so as to construct questions that give the intended results,” he says.

MSU, for example, is currently designing a new postprogram assessment tool that will have some boilerplate questions required of all education abroad programs, as well as some questions that specific colleges and faculty can add about their programs. According to Lucas, the survey can also be tailored to program specifics, such as programs that included a homestay. Similarly, questions that do not apply can also be omitted. A program that went to the United Kingdom, for example, would not ask students about foreign language proficiency.

Lucas says that the old way they did surveys was a one-size-fits-all approach. The new, modular survey design will allow each level of the university—institutional, college, department, and program—to collect the data that it feels that it needs. Faculty leading programs abroad can pull from question banks, and add their own.
Gozik advises keeping evaluations short so respondents will actually complete them and provide useful information: “It is important to go through each and every question and honestly determine whether and how the results will be used.”

Lucas adds that although preprogram and postprogram evaluations are common ways to assess student learning, the method is also challenging. “We had a case where the essay answers on the pretest were longer and more rich than the post, which they did quickly just to finish it,” he says. “If the students do not complete both the pre- and post-evaluation seriously, the data can be hard to interpret.”

He suggests looking at samples of students’ work to assess whether they are meeting the requisite learning outcomes. If an institution decides to use a commercial assessment tool, Meyer-Lee suggests trying out several of them on a small scale before making a major investment. “At Saint Mary’s, we experimented with several tools before settling on one. We would take the assessments ourselves and discuss them from a perspective of what it’s like for a student and even how useful it might be. When possible, I like it for assessment to be useful for students,” Meyer-Lee says.

**Using Assessment to Engage Students, Faculty, and Administration**

Meyer-Lee says that giving students access to their assessment results can make the process more meaningful for them and encourage reflection on their own learning and development. “Asking students about their own efforts to engage while abroad helps them to get into a mode of reflecting on their learning, and not just the customer satisfaction mode that sometimes happens when filling out postevaluations, for example,” she says.

At Saint Mary’s, the development and assessment of learning outcomes actually helped strengthen their study abroad advising. “Articulating our learning outcomes was not only for assessment but also provided advising bonuses in terms of managing student expectations. They helped us find the right program for the student in question,” Meyer-Lee says.

The data collected through assessment is also often used to refine study abroad programs. “We use the information to continually improve our programs. We make policy decisions and changes to the programs based on the data that we are getting back,” Lucas says.

Gozik likewise stresses the importance of sharing assessment results with the wider campus community. “By distributing results, in a variety of ways, an office or institution can help to create a culture of assessment on campus. People filling out evaluations, for example, know that the results are actually being used for something, and they tend to be more inclined to respond and/or provide more complete responses,” he says.

He also advises that education abroad offices consider the audience they are trying to reach. “Some groups will want more data and will be ready to digest longer reports. Others such as senior-level administrators will only want to see succinct summaries, which are easily and quickly digestible. Some will respond better to qualitative data, while others will focus on numbers. Knowing what will work best with certain groups allows for an office to more easily engage faculty, staff, and students in appropriate and effective ways,” he says.
Helping Military Veterans Study Abroad

Veterans are a growing population on U.S. college campuses, and education abroad offices are finding ways to better understand how best to help them use their educational benefits to fund study abroad.

MORE VETERANS have started studying on U.S. campuses in the last five years due to the expansion of educational benefits outlined in the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which went into full effect in 2009. Veterans who served at least 90 days on active duty after September 10, 2001, or were honorably discharged from active duty for a service-connected disability are eligible for education benefits, which include tuition payments, a housing allowance, and a book stipend.

In 2012 more than 900,000 veterans of the U.S. armed forces used their higher education benefits, an increase from 550,000 in 2009, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Both veterans and their dependents (spouses and children) are eligible to use their benefits for education abroad, subject to certain restrictions. However, no national statistics on the number of veterans using military benefits to study abroad are currently available.

College and university representatives say that veterans are a population they are increasingly seeing in their education abroad offices. “I realized we really needed to hone our process last semester after a handful of veteran students and veteran-dependent students requested letters detailing program costs so that they could apply their VA benefits. I really wanted to support this population of students by making the process clear and as easy as possible for them,” says Kayla McNickle, education abroad program coordinator at the University of Connecticut.

Cross-Campus Communication is Key

Holly Henning, an education abroad adviser at the University of Alabama, also became aware of issues related to helping veterans study abroad when she encountered a veteran who wanted to use his federal military benefits. She began collaborating with the university’s Office of Veteran and Military Affairs, initially to gather information about benefits. The relationship between the education abroad office and the veterans’ affairs office has grown over the last two years.

“One of the things we’ve learned is that we need open and clear communication between our two offices. We’ve designated a liaison in each office to ask questions and get answers,” she says.

Henning has worked closely with Jason Sellars, assistant director of the University of Alabama’s Office of Veteran and Military Affairs. Sellars is also the School Certifying Official (SCO), responsible for keeping the VA informed of the enrollment status of veterans and their dependents and certifying tuition and fees.

SCOs can be an excellent resource for education abroad offices seeking more information on how to best serve veterans. Other institutions also advise that education abroad offices reach out to their campus SCO. “I would encourage the study abroad office to tap into the expertise of the School Certifying Official on their campus. For example as an SCO, I have direct lines of communication with the VA and I might know the right way to ask specific questions about study abroad instead of the student trying to navigate that process with VA,” says Lori York, associate registrar and SCO at Augsburg College in Minneapolis.

At the University of Alabama, Sellars and Henning have worked closely to develop joint resources and cross-training for staff in both offices. “We have outlined some procedures that our offices can follow so that everyone in our office has a general understanding of how veterans’ benefits may or may not be applied to study abroad,” Henning says.

They have also added whether or not a student is a veteran to their study abroad pre-advising checklist, which also includes information about financial aid,
preferred destinations, and scholarships. It has helped
advisers better match veterans and their dependents to
eligible programs. Sellars also flags a student’s file in Stu-
dio Abroad, the web-based software that the University
of Alabama uses to manage its study abroad applications,
once he has certified a student to receive military benefits.

According to Sellars, one of the challenges for collabora-
tion between education abroad and veterans affairs offices
is that each unit often has its own shorthand and may not
initially understand what the other is talking about.

“One major issue involves study abroad departments’
use of jargon that possess the same names as VA jargon
but with different meanings. A simple example is the word
‘program.’ To the study abroad world, a ‘program’ is most
likely the specific study abroad program that the student
participates in. To VA, however, ‘program’ can either be
the academic degree program or the benefit program the
student is eligible to participate in, such as the Post-9/11
GI Bill program,” he explains.

He said he experienced this firsthand when he first
starting working with the University of Alabama educa-
tion abroad office. “We didn’t know it, but we were talking
apples and oranges until we came to a mutual understand-
ing of the term meanings,” he adds.

In addition to helping education abroad offices deal
with the financial side of veterans’ benefits, VA offices
can also provide guidance on how to address veterans’
unique needs. Sellars notes, for instance, that active duty
members of the military must obtain clearance prior to
traveling out of the country.

Leah Spinosa de Vega, director of global initiatives
and off-campus study at Augsburg College, adds that
sometimes it’s necessary to work with other offices on
campus. “In some cases veterans with disabilities require
accommodations and advising with the disability services
adviser, study abroad office and faculty-leader, or program
site director to ensure their needs are met,” she says.

Spinosa advises making sure to have a long lead time
when working with veterans. “Because they need to work
with the SCO, gather all of the supporting documentation
on cost and coursework, the study abroad process may take
longer (for veterans) than it does for other students,” she says.

One additional factor for education abroad offices to
be aware of is that many students using veterans’ benefits
may not be veterans themselves, but may be the children
or spouses of veterans. At the University of Alabama, in
fact, most of the students they work with are dependents,
not veterans.
"Many dependent students may also have parents that are already overseas actively serving and have limited contact with them while they are deployed. This can create communication issues and emotional tugs, especially if situations arise while a dependent student is abroad," Sellars says.

York also recommends that education abroad offices reach out to graduate schools on campus. "Often graduate study abroad programs are run directly out of the graduate schools instead of through a central study abroad office. Reach out to those grad programs to be sure they are aware of the restrictions on benefits being applied to study abroad. Encourage them to work with the SCO to make sure that programs are accessible," she says.

**Breaking Down the Costs**

One of the main tasks for education abroad offices to help veterans study abroad is to provide a cost breakdown of tuition and associated fees, which is then certified by the SCO. While benefits can be used to cover the cost of tuition, they cannot be applied to certain program fees or extra costs such as airfare.

"Veterans need to have really clear and detailed information about the costs (itemized cost breakdown that differentiates tuition costs from other program costs) and course work (how is it fitting into their degree progress)," says Spinosa de Vega.

McNickle says that she works closely with the VA office at the University of Connecticut when documenting program costs: "When a student requests a letter from our office with a breakdown of program costs, I send the student to the VA office with a draft before providing them with a final copy in order to ensure that the letter contains all needed information in order for the student to receive their benefits. I also confirm the veteran status of study abroad applicants with the VA office before confirming scholarship disbursements."

Arizona State University has developed a cost breakdown form, which allows it to separate out programmatic costs from instructional costs, says Mandy Nydegger, international coordinator of faculty-directed programs.

"This enables the Pat Tillman Veterans Center to easily identify and help students understand what portion of the program fee the student's GI Bill might cover," she says.

Sellars says that while normal fees that any student would pay can be covered by VA benefits, additional fees that are specific to study abroad cannot be included unless the program is mandatory for the degree program, such as an MBA program requiring a study abroad component to complete the degree.

"In addition, regardless of a mandatory requirement, things like airfare or amenities cannot be included and...these charges (need) to be itemized and pulled out of the amount submitted to the VA," Sellars says.

To help offset the extra costs associated with study abroad that are not covered by military benefits, some institutions offer scholarships to help veterans. The University of Connecticut, for example, offers the United States Armed Forces Veteran Scholarship for students who have served in the military and are registered with the university’s Veteran’s Affairs and Military Programs. "Veterans will be automatically awarded $2,500 in scholarship support if they commit to a semester-long study abroad program and $1,000 if committed to a summer program," says McNickle.

"The vast majority of veterans who study abroad also accrue significant expenses beyond what they would pay for a normal semester of school that is largely covered by their GI Bill, which is why we started offering our Veterans Scholarship program," she explains.

McNickle says students just need to indicate their veteran status on their study abroad application to be eligible for the scholarship, which can be applied to the costs of any type of University of Connecticut-approved study abroad program. It can cover program fees, tuition, and other study abroad-related costs as long as they are billed through the university.

Henning says that one of the challenges of applying veterans’ benefits to study abroad is that many of the rules issued by the Veterans Benefits Administration are unclear, even to SCOs. "The rules are unclear and they can be interpreted in a lot of different ways," she says.

One of the major areas of confusion is in regard to the type of study abroad program that students may participate in. Sellars says that each state has a State Approving Agency that may be able to assist institutions with any new study abroad programs to make sure that they can be approved for VA benefits.

Henning says that at the University of Alabama, the easiest types of programs for students to do are faculty-led or exchange programs. If a student wants to enroll directly in a foreign institution, the host school’s programs must be VA-approved.

One of the other major restrictions is that veterans are not currently allowed to apply their military benefits to pay for programs organized by third-party providers.

"While I see the value that third-party providers provide to the study abroad world, the VA does not allow payment to go to these third-party providers, and as such, students cannot use VA benefits, such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This is a legislative situation, as Congress only permitted payments to go toward approved programs at public and private [degree-granting] institutions," Sellars says.

He explains that "third-party provider" usually refers to for-profit companies that support study abroad programs, rather than programs run through degree-granting institutions.

Sellars argues that the current restrictions on third-party providers are at odds with the public diplomacy message currently promoted by the U.S. government. "Congress needs to look seriously at the relationships with study abroad and GI Bill benefits as the current legislation does a poor job of adequately capturing all the relationships involved in the study abroad world...Third parties in this area play a pivotal role and there is an argument here that not allowing..."
Guidelines for Education Abroad Offices Working With Veterans Using Benefits to Fund Study Abroad

JASON SELLARS, assistant director of the Office of Veteran and Military Affairs at the University of Alabama, provides a quick overview of how veterans’ benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) may be applied to study abroad.

- The amount VA pays is determined by Active Duty service time of the sponsor and can range from 40 percent to 100 percent of the authorized tuition and fee amount.
- VA can pay tuition that is applied to an approved institution and its degree programs so long as the courses apply toward degree progression, but you must factor out any unauthorized charges, such as airfare, etc., in your cost breakdown.
- VA cannot currently pay third-party providers, either directly or indirectly using the school as a pass through.
- VA can either pay typical academic fees if the student is eligible to use VA benefits, or, if the program is not only applicable toward degree progression, but is also a required part the program that the student must participate in, additional fees may be able to be included.
- If a foreign institution is billing the student directly, the foreign institution must have a School Certifying Official and VA approval of its program, and submit the certification to the VA using “guest student” status and with a drop down statement that says “Courses confirmed to apply to a degree program at [the home institution].”
- If the student is pursuing a degree program at a foreign school, then that program has to be approved by VA and the foreign school would submit the certification, if a School Certifying Official has been established at that school.
- In order for a foreign school to have its degree program approved by the VA, there has to be a VA-eligible student looking to participate in the degree program. VA will not approve a program without an interested student trying to participate in the program.

TO RESEARCH IF AN INSTITUTION ALREADY HAS the program
VA approved for foreign study:

SCHOOL CERTIFYING OFFICIAL HANDBOOK (PG. 60-61 for “Guest Student” situations, PG. 85 for Study Abroad):

FOREIGN SCHOOL INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS:
http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/foreign_school_information_for_students.asp

FOREIGN PROGRAM APPROVAL INFORMATION:
http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/foreign_program_approval_information_for_schools.asp

VA STUDY ABROAD FACT SHEET:
http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/factsheets/Post_911_study_abroad_fact_sheet.pdf
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