

Gary Rhodes, Albert Biscarra, Lisa Loberg, and Katie Roller suggest that the next steps to improve study-abroad programs are to increase the diversity of student participants and partner with departments across the academic and student affairs spectrum.

By Gary Rhodes, Albert Biscarra, Lisa Loberg, and Katie Roller

Study Abroad as a Collaborative Endeavor

TOO OFTEN, INTERACTIONS AMONG STUDENT AFFAIRS EDUCATORS and faculty, and study-abroad educators and staff are limited to preparing for or responding to a crisis after the student's travel experience has already started. However, the success of the learning experience for students studying outside of the United States hinges on collaboration among all of the participating educators long *before* a crisis might occur. As the number of students involved in study-abroad programs mushrooms, such experiences are becoming a central component of the internationalization efforts of colleges and universities, as cited by Madeleine Green, Dao Luu, and Beth Burris. And according to Richard Sutton and Donald Rubin, these programs are increasingly viewed as a means to enhance the quality and reputation of an institution. More and more educators will see their work in support of student learning shaped by this increasing attention on study abroad. Making this work collaborative is essential.

While the collaboration required to achieve success in this arena is worthy of much attention, it is good to first ask a fundamental question: "Why send college students to study outside of the country at all?"

OUTCOMES OF STUDY-ABROAD PARTICIPATION ARE FAVORABLE FOR STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Immediate Effects

THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF STUDY ABROAD on the daily lives of postsojourn college students are myriad and well documented. Recent research by Robert Gonyea suggests that study abroad can positively impact students' perspectives on world affairs, cultural diversity, foreign-language acquisition, maturity, and self-awareness. In his longitudinal study in which seniors who studied abroad were compared to those who did not, Gonyea found that study-abroad participants reflected higher levels of different types of learning, as well as greater participation in diversity experiences. Students who studied abroad also showed greater gains in personal and social development. Additionally, an article written in 2010 by Elizabeth Redden on the impact of study abroad among students in the University of Georgia system mentions that those who studied abroad had improved classroom performance and knowledge of cultural practices, as well as higher graduation rates upon their return. Redden also reported a significant effect of study abroad on students who enter college with lower SAT scores, in that their GPAs were higher compared to similar students who

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did not study abroad. Heather Hamir has also cited research at the University of Texas indicating that participation in study abroad increased the probability of graduating in five years by 64 percent and in six years by 202 percent. Time-to-degree was also shorter for study-abroad participants.

According to George Kuh, participation in study abroad has been identified by the student development literature as an activity that positively contributes to college-student engagement. Furthermore, as Philip Anderson, Leigh Lawton, Richard Rexeisen, and Ann Hubbard claim, study abroad has proven to be highly influential in shifting ethnocentric thinking to ethnorelative thinking and increasing intercultural competence. Not only is engagement increased, but researchers also have found that study abroad has a transformational impact on the student, which can result in a diversified worldview, better understanding of self, and an acknowledgment of self-growth, as Victor Savicki, Frauke Binder, and Lynne Heller have noted. And as stated by Madeleine Green and Laura Siaya, study abroad has been cited as contributing to

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the formulation of educational and professional goals and to the preparation of college graduates entering an increasingly globalized society.

Long-Term Effects

THE BENEFITS REALIZED AS A RESULT of a study-abroad experience are not temporary. Long after a study-abroad sojourn, alumni maintain culturally diverse worldviews, engage in civic responsibility, attain higher levels of academic achievement, and make career choices based on their study-abroad experience. Alumni polled by Mary Dwyer and Courtney Peters for the International Education of Students Abroad (IES) reported their initial cultural experience abroad led them to learn more about another culture or learn another language upon return. Additionally, the respondents noted having a greater understanding of their own cultural values and biases, which led them to look at the world in a more culturally sensitive way. The alumni agreed with the statement that study abroad influenced them to have more diverse friends.

Research conducted at the University of Minnesota in “Beyond Immediate Impact: Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE)” further demonstrates the long-term effects of study abroad. The project examined the impact of study abroad on five dimensions of postgraduate life: civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and voluntary simplicity. From these findings, the researchers concluded that study abroad was one of the most influential experiences of the respondents’ undergraduate tenure and has continued to have a lasting impact on returnees’ global, social, civic, and career engagement.

CONNECTING STUDY ABROAD TO RETENTION AND SUCCESS STRATEGIES

RESEARCH THAT HAS IDENTIFIED THE CONNECTION OF STUDY ABROAD to student retention and success has led some colleges and universities to implement efforts to intentionally use study abroad for this purpose on campus. According to Jessica Luchessi, assistant director of international studies abroad at the University of San Diego (USD), her campus has included study-abroad programming as one of its strategies for retaining second-year students. Because cost has long been a concern of students considering study-abroad programs, an important part of USD’s strategy has included identifying funding to make study abroad available to a larger number of students. For example, the Second Year Experience Abroad program at USD provides study-abroad schol-

arships to Pell Grant recipients. Because the university was able to guarantee scholarships to all Pell Grant recipients who participated in this program, the International Studies Abroad department believes that it helped promote study abroad among students of lower social economic status. Study abroad became a potential opportunity for students who otherwise would not have been able to participate. Although this strategy was only implemented in 2009, increase in retention rates has already been documented (see Table 1).

In a similar vein, Indiana University has implemented a program titled the IU 21st Century Scholars Covenant Study Abroad Grant, according to the Indiana University Office of Overseas Study. This program exemplifies how a large university can simultaneously recognize the positive effect of study abroad on students while being realistic about the financial obstacles a significant number of students face when exploring travel-abroad opportunities. This need-

based aid program specifically serves students already receiving financial assistance as part of a university aid program. Associate Vice President for Overseas Study Kathleen Sideli believes the program provides strong evidence that “when given the opportunity, students with demonstrated need who would have never considered studying abroad did so successfully.” Details of the positive changes study abroad has brought about for students at Indiana University are listed in Table 1. Overall, the success of the programs at Indiana University and the University of San Diego serves as a reminder that for financially strapped students, the dilemma of whether to go abroad may boil down to the ability to cover the costs.

Students with financial need are not the only segments of the student population receiving special attention. The First Year Study Abroad Experience at Arcadia University provides special outreach to honors students, who make up approximately 25 percent of all

TABLE 1. IMPACT OF STUDY ABROAD ON STUDENT RETENTION AND SUCCESS

Indiana University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95.3 percent of students who study abroad (using the entering cohort from 1999) graduated within six years, compared to 68.5 percent of students who did not study abroad. • The average study-abroad student had a probability of .91 of completing the bachelor’s degree in four years, compared to .84 for peers. • The average study-abroad student earned a cumulative GPA of 3.21, compared to 3.12 for peers who didn’t study abroad.
St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame, Indiana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In student cohorts from 2000–2004, students who studied abroad had four-year graduation rates of approximately 90 percent, while those who did not had rates of approximately 80 percent. • Students who studied abroad had higher college GPAs at St. Mary’s, although they entered St. Mary’s with higher high school GPAs as well.
University of Georgia System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who study abroad had a 17.8 percent higher four-year graduation rate. • Students of color who study abroad had a 17.9 percent higher four-year graduation rate. • African-American students who studied abroad had a 31.2 percent higher four-year graduation rate. • African-Americans who studied abroad had six-year graduation rates roughly the same as white students who studied abroad (84.4 percent vs. 88.6 percent).
University of Minnesota (Systemwide)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the fall 1999 and fall 2000 first-year students, over 85 percent of those who studied abroad graduated in five years, while about 50 percent of those who did not study abroad graduated in five years.
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the fall 2003 first-year students, 64.5 percent of those who studied abroad graduated by their fourth year, compared to 41.0 percent among non-study-abroad students • Only 6.0 percent of those who studied abroad drop out by the fourth year, compared to 33.3 percent of those who did not study abroad.
University of San Diego	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historically, approximately 15 percent of students after freshman year have been lost, with an additional 10 percent after sophomore year. • After implementing a Second Year Experience Abroad program, the first-year-to-sophomore retention rate for the 2009 first-year student cohort was 88 percent, the highest ever. • The sophomore-to-junior retention rate was 81 percent, also the highest ever.
University of Texas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 2002 first-year cohort, 60 percent of study-abroad participants graduate in four years, compared to 45 percent of nonparticipants. • Graduation rates were also 20 percent higher among participants five and six years after admission.

All educators in and outside the classroom can encourage students, particularly those who may not self-identify as a likely study-abroad candidate, to pursue this opportunity during recruitment to the institution, through academic advising, and in courses.

first-year study-abroad program participants. Although initially started to alleviate pressures on a larger than usual first-year class, the program has become a regular opportunity for Arcadia students. While the university is collecting additional data on the impact of their first-year program on student retention and success, initial analysis of the data points to participants having higher retention and success rates compared to students who do not participate in the program. Professor of English and Faculty Director of the Honors Program William Meiers states that there is an effort to implement enrollment management strategies to include participants from diverse backgrounds, such as first-generation college students, so the program mirrors the student population at Arcadia University. If the data show that the first-year program has a positive impact on retention and success for first-generation and at-risk students, the program may consider focusing on these students as a special population, as it currently does for honors students.

Some universities have already implemented special study-abroad programs in an effort to specifically focus on the promotion of retention and success for at-risk students. For example, the University of Arkansas-Little Rock offered a semester-long course for fall 2011 that incorporates a 10-day Costa Rica study-abroad component. The program is specifically intended for entering full-time first-year students, some of whom may be considered at-risk in terms of academic success and retention. It is hoped that the course will increase student success by promoting first-year student development of study skills, goal setting, and time and stress management, among other goals.

Indiana University's Kathleen Sideli's synthesis of the impacts for students on her campus is typical: "[S]tudents who choose to study abroad plan their schedules more carefully, given the strong support they have on campus and in Overseas Study. It is also believed they end up more motivated and more focused because of their experiences abroad."

As shown in Table 1, the experiences of institutions of varying sizes and types confirm a broad range of positive outcomes for students related to learning, success, and retention at the institution. The table summarizes data on the impact of study abroad on retention and success at seven US colleges and universities.

INCREASING DIVERSITY AS A CENTRAL GOAL

ONE IMPORTANT CHALLENGE FACING those who support the study-abroad experience for students is increasing the diversity of those who participate. Articles by Ingrid Norton in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and Elizabeth Redden in *Inside Higher Ed* have noted that while the enrollment of minorities in college is steadily increasing, their participation in study abroad has not. Study-abroad professionals have been attentive to this imbalance, and according to Norton, some colleges and universities have sought to expand the reach of their study-abroad programs through avenues such as financial assistance and outreach efforts that address the concerns of many students of color. Mark Salisbury, Paul Umbach, Michael Paulsen, and Ernest Pascarella have listed barriers to student participation in study abroad, which often include perception of finances, concerns over graduating on time, cultural background, and level of family support. These factors contribute to the gap between student interest in study abroad and student participation and are a singularly important focus of collaborators involved in increasing diverse student participation in study abroad.

All educators in and outside the classroom can encourage students, particularly those who may not self-identify as a likely study-abroad candidate, to pursue this opportunity during recruitment to the institution, through academic advising, and in courses. They can also support students who choose study abroad prior to, during, and after their experience. Encouraging students of color to study outside the United

States has particular benefits for those students. Norton has argued that participation in such an experience can facilitate the development of a deeper understanding of race and a reconsideration of the student's own racial backgrounds. Research at the Georgia System of Higher Education by Richard Sutton and Donald Rubin (GLOSSARI) provides evidence that study abroad can play a significant role in supporting retention and success by students of color, revealing that African American students who studied abroad had a graduation rate 31 percent higher than African American students who did not study abroad. Among other students of color, there was an 18 percent increase in the graduation rate of students who studied abroad. While the student-of-color study-abroad experience has only recently emerged as a line of inquiry among researchers, these initial findings are indicative of the potential promise that study abroad may hold.

WHAT CAN EDUCATORS DO TO SUPPORT STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD? COLLABORATE

THE STUDY ABROAD OFFICE FUNCTIONS

as a sort of mini-institution; on a typical day, the work of a study-abroad professional can range from admissions to academic advising, residence life, and student conduct issues, as well as providing support for students with special needs and diverse backgrounds. Table 2 offers a snapshot of the many roles of study-abroad staff.

Obvious partners for the Study Abroad office include: academic departments; faculty groups; the Student Health Center; Support for Students with Special Needs and Disabilities; the Office of Student Conduct; Residential Life/Housing; Counseling/Mental Health/Psychological Services; Dean of Students; Offices Supporting Students From Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds; Office Supporting International Students and Scholars; Academic Advisement; Orientation Programs; Office Supporting Gay, Lesbian, Transgender Students; Career/Internship Office; Campus Security; and Women's Issues/Sexual Harassment and Assault.

Along with helping to facilitate student learning and success, a central role of these collaborations is student safety. Despite the many benefits of an international experience, it is not without risk. Legal issues, injuries, and even death occur abroad. For example, as mentioned by Mary Beth Marklein in a *USA Today* article, as well as by Bruce LaBrack, former professor at the University of the Pacific who developed training courses supporting international educational exchange programs, students on study-abroad programs have died of alcohol-related accidents or injuries, have been murdered, have committed suicide, and have been the victims of fire, traffic accidents, earthquakes, and the like. Others have been harassed because of their race/ethnicity, have been victims of crime or sexual harassment and assault, and have been jailed and accused of crimes, including murder. Others have not been provided

TABLE 2. IT'S ALL PART OF THE JOB DESCRIPTION^a

Academic freedom advocate	Financial aid officer	Public relations officer
Academic program developer/advisor	Grades department administrator	Recruiter
Admissions and enrollment officer	Housing rental agent	Risk manager
Academic records officer	Currency exchange expert	Student affairs administrator
Budgetary officer	Insurance counselor	Student conduct judicial officer
Bursar	International communications expert	Students with disabilities manager
Computer center manager	International law expert	Student health professional
Contract developer	Internship program sponsor	Testing administrator
Course development and evaluation administrator	Librarian	Textbook manager
Crisis and emergency manager	Loan officer	Translator
Cross-cultural issues consultant	Orientation program administrator	Transportation supervisor
Drug and alcohol counselor	Paralegal	Travel agent and tour operator
Equipment manager	Parental liaison	Visa and immigration specialist
Evaluation officer	Personal and professional counselor	Women's issues advocate
Facilities manager	Personnel administrator	Writer and editor
	Program developer and evaluator	

^a Rhodes, G., & Millington, W. G. (1994, March). Avoiding liability in study abroad: Home campus and international campus concerns. *NAFSA Newsletter*, pp. 3, 44, 46.

Study-abroad professionals and resources are available to the larger campus community when students are engaged in academic and cocurricular activities that take them abroad outside an official study-abroad experience.

needed support for physical disabilities. The expertise of student affairs educators is of critical importance in these instances and should contribute to policies and procedures that prepare campuses to effectively respond to incidents and limit the potential of negative outcomes—not just on the home campus, but also abroad.

As highlighted in Table 2, the broad range of responsibilities of a study-abroad administrator points to the importance of sharing expertise and information to effectively implement programs abroad. Collaborators with a Study Abroad office in the area of health and safety issues should familiarize themselves with some of the documents that guide this work. For example, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has published the *CAS General Standards*, a set of standards that guide health and safety support services activities related to study abroad. The document, “Responsible Study Abroad: Good Practices for Health and Safety” by the Interorganizational Task Force on Safety and Responsibility in Study Abroad (now the Interassociational Advisory Committee on Safety and Responsibility in Study Abroad), provides steps institutions should take to provide quality health and safety support for study abroad. It also outlines what institutions cannot do, student responsibilities, and information for parents. The Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad, Standards of Good Practice for Short-Term Education Abroad Programs, and Code of Ethics for Education Abroad, all published by The Forum on Education Abroad, include information on program development and implementation. The Center for Global Education has developed a Safety Abroad First—Educational Travel Information (SAFETI) Clearinghouse resource with background information on developing quality practices, connecting to government agencies and resources, higher education associations, sample policies and procedures, and a SAFETI Audit Checklist, as well as newsletter articles on study-abroad topics.

THE ROLE OF STUDY-ABROAD EXPERTS AS CONSULTANTS TO OTHERS

Study-abroad professionals and resources are available to the larger campus community when students are engaged in academic and cocurricular activities that take them abroad outside an official study-abroad experience. These international activities typically include service learning and community service trips, programs organized by student clubs, campus ministry outreach, and international competitions of both club sports and intercollegiate athletics. From conception through completion, programs like these might benefit from the expertise a study-abroad profession may provide. For example, if a student were injured on an international service trip, the institution would be expected to have followed high industry standards for international travel safety and support. Campus staff could expect that all offices on campus that support international activities maintain similar levels of support for programs and students. Communication and collaboration between staff in Student Affairs, Study Abroad, and other offices supporting international programs is critical to implementing effective support services for all programs abroad. Connections between study-abroad personnel and other educators on campus could be an important step in helping resolve problems related to such an incident and to assure the future health and safety of students.

CONCLUSION

US COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ARE INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZING the opportunity provided by study abroad to enrich student learning in college and over a lifetime. Along with international learning, collaboration between Student Affairs and Study Abroad can support the use of study abroad to make an impact on student retention and success. Collaboration between Study Abroad and Student Affairs can also make an important impact on

Insights of a Study-Abroad Educator

I LOVE TO TRAVEL. Though I did not experience international travel until graduate school, I have always loved discovering new places, experiencing cultures different from my own, learning new things, and ultimately learning more about myself. What I have noticed is that most of my learning—the meaning I make of my experience—occurs in informal settings. Typically, conversations with my peers and colleagues about a particular incident after I have returned assist me with efforts to process or make meaning from these experiences. These opportunities for reflection are invaluable. As I travel, I challenge myself to consider the role I have in encouraging students to make meaning of their experiences and to think about how my personal and professional perspective might impact my ability to work with them. Helping make sense of travel experiences is part of the important work of an educator involved in study abroad. Sometimes, as I describe here, it is easier to help students accomplish that than it is to do it for myself.

In May 2011, I traveled with a group of students to Cameroon. This opportunity was exciting for me on several levels. I looked forward to traveling to a region of the world that was new to me. I was looking forward to learning more about Cameroonian culture and meeting new people. I looked forward to traveling with students who had never before left the United States and had never traveled to the African continent. In a sense, I was excited about embarking on what I had predicted to be a life-changing adventure. And yet, I was also filled with a great deal of apprehension. I wanted this experience to be more than just a vacation for the students and more than an opportunity to live in an exotic location for a few weeks. I did not want this experience to turn into just an academic tour nor did I want us to be isolated from the local people and culture. I wanted the participants to have the chance to explore local surroundings and learn lessons that stretched their perception of what it meant

to learn while in college. I wanted them to begin to think about who they are as people, professionals, and global citizens. Lofty, perhaps unrealistic goals, I know. And yet, I had hope.

The months of March and April were filled with predeparture preparation. Participants' questions focused on what to pack, what to expect, what the itinerary would look like, and so on. The students were asked to learn facts about the country: history, politics, geography, and the like. Our preparation focused on logistics, not necessarily how to prepare intellectually, or emotionally, for the trip. Neither I nor the students asked, "What will I learn?" or "How will I change?" While I would have been surprised if any of the students had asked these questions in advance, I confess I didn't ask them either.

My primary desire for students who study abroad is that they will identify their values and biases, and better understand who they are and how to be more thoughtful global citizens. Like so many others involved in study abroad, I am anxious to provide enough space for students to better understand how the experience has impacted them in these ways. I hope the same for myself. While I am diligent about making journal entries and am willing to share my thoughts with colleagues, I do not believe sharing at the deep level needed for reflection is appropriate between educator and my primary traveling companion, the student. This necessary distance, and my belief that such discussions should focus on the students' learning, raises questions about the impact this limited openness has on the students' and my own learning.

The consequences of my limited openness during our trip were most apparent as I made my transition after five weeks in Cameroon. I found myself struggling to reenter my normal routine and the US culture, and realized that withholding my anxieties from my fellow travelers during the trip might partially explain my difficult reentry. I had censored myself with the students for five weeks during an intense experience and was now paying for that censorship.

With a focus on learning and development, legitimate questions for a college educator to ask would include: What have I learned? Do I embrace and practice self-reflection and self-care? What impact does my approach to learning have on my work with students? If I am trying to make meaning of an experience I believe to be influenced by personal characteristics while students are doing the same, how supportive can I be? Whose needs come first? When do I make time to work through my own issues and with whom is it appropriate to do so? These questions complicate the way I think about learning because they focus on the needs of the individual(s) responsible for creating the learning environment and not directly on the student.

Viewed one way, all participants in study abroad are learners, including faculty, students, and staff. While one role in the study-abroad context is to facilitate learning, my trip to Cameroon and my difficult reentry taught me that I must also acknowledge my second role as learner. As the leader of a study-abroad experience, I am responsible for navigating our surroundings, for attending to the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of the students in the group, and for helping the students adapt to local customs and norms, while adapting myself. I have come to realize that during such an intense time I must recognize my dual roles as teacher and learner. Even though my position as student is unofficial and perhaps, more often than not, unacknowledged by others, I must pay attention to, and learn to navigate, both roles, as well as identify ways in which I can support students and make time for self-care and growth.

The following lessons are difficult to act on. However, I have learned, for students and for me, they are critical to understand. I offer them below.

- *Be aware of personal biases, fears, and experiences.* I have to acknowledge my own history and perspective before I can begin to assist students with their own processing of the study-abroad experience.
- *Identify methods that will assist with reflection and meaning making.* I need to understand what methods will be effective for me to use to make sense of my experiences. Does journaling work? Do I need something more? Will e-mailing or blogging work? Are there methods available that will allow for self-reflection? Are there individuals I am traveling with who could serve as my confidants in this work?
- *Self-care.* I need to take care of my own physical and emotional needs. As I focus on ensuring the health and safety of the students, I need to focus on my own needs. As I reflect on my own experiences, I must understand that they may or may not be similar to the students with whom I am working.
- *Predeparture and reentry processes.* Though I pay attention to student experiences with predeparture and reentry, I have to make time for my own predeparture and reentry processes. I recognize the importance of assisting students at these two critical junctures. I also need to attend to my own needs at these times.

The overarching lessons I have learned through my work as an educator involved in study abroad is this: If I am concerned with helping provide students with opportunities to learn and grow from study abroad, I must also be concerned with my own learning and growth during these same experiences.

V. Leilani Kupo

health and safety support to all students who participate in campus programs that take place outside the United States. Cultivating cross-campus partnerships can make an important impact on improving the quality of these programs in service to students at home and abroad.

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