

Blending Learning: New Tools Mean New Opportunities

EDUCATORS ARE FINDING INNOVATIVE WAYS to use high-tech tools to open the door to international study, even for students in curricular programs with little flexibility.

Keeping Costs Down and Staying on Track While Studying Abroad

At Bemidji State University (BSU) in Minnesota, a new program allows students to study at one of nearly a dozen institutions abroad while continuing to pay their tuition and fees to BSU, and to continue their progress toward graduation by taking BSU courses online.

“We felt that two of the biggest obstacles to an education abroad experience were cost and a fear of delayed graduation,” says Sanjeev Phukan, director of international relations. “Our goal was to create a mechanism by which students could study abroad affordably, with little or no interruption in their graduation plans.”

Phukan approached colleagues at institutions in a number of international locations and set up memoranda of understanding and exchange agreements with them. Students pay tuition and fees to their home college or university and only pay room and board to the host institution. For BSU students, about half of the credits earned during the semester are BSU classes taken online, and the other half are on an arranged basis, with the content being delivered at

the host institution.

“Costs are much lower than in direct enrollment study abroad programs since the tuition is still being paid to us; and the students remain full-time students so there is no interruption of financial aid,” Phukan explains. In some cases the cost of the semester abroad may even be less than the cost of a semester at home. “The cost of room and board at some of our partner institutions is lower by an amount that is actually greater than the cost of the students’ round-trip airfare to the study abroad location,” Phukan says.

In other places, the cost of a semester abroad may be somewhat higher, but the increased cost consists solely of the difference in room and board costs and airfare to the host institution.

In addition to making study abroad possible for BSU students who would not otherwise have been able to do it, “the international students who come to us along this two-way street,” are another benefit of the program, Phukan says. And he points out that while they are not fee-paying students, “they certainly add all the intangible benefits to our campus that comes from having a greater diversity of students with us.”



USING MODERN TECHNOLOGY TO EXPLORE THE ANCIENT PAST

IN SPRING OF 2011, Robert Vander Poppen, a professor of classical art and archaeology at Rollins College, took a group of students to Pompeii on a 10-day spring break study abroad program.

A small grant allowed him to incorporate the use of iPads into the course design.

"Mobile technology allowed us to do a couple of innovative things," he says. "First, it let us abandon the age-old format of the course pack, and it freed students from having to purchase and carry around textbooks. Second, we were able to ask the students to prepare themselves by having them analyze a building in Pompeii. We asked them to envision themselves as developers of a future app for tourists."

Before departure, the students generated digital models of buildings adapted from plans in the public domain using Google SketchUp; assembled a bibliography of the relevant primary and

recent research literature on the structures they had chosen; and uploaded scans of the documents onto their iPads.

In Italy they were on site for eight days, from the moment the gates opened in the morning until about 4:00 p.m. each day. "We went into nearly every building that's open to the public on the site, and also made some side excursions, to Herculaneum and to the museum," Vander Poppen says. Each day, students had a couple of hours to walk around the building they had chosen, with the source material and with versions of the digital models they had created, reading the texts they had downloaded, and accessing images from the ArtStor database. "The latter was key," Vander Poppen says, "because many of the paintings and mosaics from Pompeii have been moved to the National Archeological Museum in Naples." Even more to the point, "The ability to have

the images with you, to stand in the very place where the originals once existed, gives you a completely different appreciation for the way they worked in the room: who could have seen them, from what angle, all those sorts of things that are lost when you look at a work that is not in its original context. Being able to bring up those images via databases that a lot of colleges subscribe to already allows students to engage in that sort of face-to-face, on-the-spot examination of things that aren't present there anymore."

Later, when the students did see the original art works in the museum, Vander Poppen says, "There was a multiplier effect. They had already experienced those works in their original context. So when we were standing in front of those pieces in the museum, they were able to remember the images as they had existed in that space. When we went to see the original paintings, all of that came flooding back, and we had a very productive discussion."

As the cost of technology continues to scale down, and as more students have their own mobile devices, the possibilities for applying technology to study abroad will become even more exciting. "Mobile technology has had the effect of democratizing

the ability to engage in archaeological research, and to bring together meaningful collections of sources, images, and data in ways that were impossible, or at least astronomically expensive, just a few years ago," Vander Poppen says.

When asked what the best thing about the experience was, he relates an anecdote about the first morning the students arrived on the site in Pompeii. "We got to the Forum and there was this beautiful view of Mt. Vesuvius. And we all got to sit down and read the letter that Pliny the Younger wrote to his friend, the historian Tacitus. In that letter he describes his uncle's actions on the morning the volcano erupted. To be able to be there, to sit in that space and look at the volcano looming behind, and see the students in that first moment take in the remains of the Roman forum, and think about its destruction. To have the opportunity to do that on the spot, and really immerse themselves in the experience in all sorts of different sensory ways, was just amazing to see."





Direct Study Abroad



CSA International, Inc.®
Center for Study Abroad

Low Cost Programs Worldwide

Register Direct With CSA
Open to All - Low Prices

Confirmations Sent Quickly
Early Registration Advised

Universities and Institutes
Academic Quality - Since 1990

- High quality - Low prices.
- Easy to register - Open to all.
- Admission guaranteed.
- Confirmations sent quickly.
- Flexibility (independence).
- Earn academic credit.
- Financial Aid assistance.
- Visa documents assistance.
- Housing assistance.
- CSA counselor support.
- Location on-site support.
- Credit cards accepted online.
- Balance payment options.
- Accountable - Since 1990.

Go Direct With CSA

CONTACT:

Program Manager
Center For Study Abroad (CSA)
325 Washington Ave. S. # 93
Kent, WA 98032 USA
Tel # 206 583 8191 USA
info@centerforstudyabroad.com
License # 602 292 407

www.centerforstudyabroad.com

The University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) has a program in Fuxin, China, that offers education majors the chance to do their student teaching abroad. A faculty adviser from Shenyang University oversees them in their student teaching assignments in Chinese K–12 schools, but the students are also enrolled in an online education course with a professor at UMSL.

“She uses Skype to conference with the students about teaching and professionalization, and the cross-cultural questions they’re obviously going to have, teaching in a different situation,” says Nate Daugherty, study abroad coordinator at UMSL. “And they use our course management system, a Blackboard system, to turn in their assignments, receive their grades, etc. Students like it because they can have an American professor they’re familiar with address their questions and teach them what they need to know for transferring this experience back to the U.S. And the gain for the university is something that a lot of American universities worry about, which is the ability to control the academic quality of the experience.”

The U.S. professor travels to China with the students at the beginning of the program to make sure everything is set up properly and ready to go, but most of the on-site monitoring is done by local faculty.

“One of the things that makes it work so well is that we have a great relationship, not just with the school the students are teaching in, but with the university there as well,” Daugherty says. “Our students fly into Beijing, and they meet them at the airport and show them around Beijing for a few days before they take them to Fuxin. All of that is much easier when you have a local university connection.”

Internationalizing the Home Campus Through Online Connections

Whereas the online education course at UMSL is designed exclusively for the group of students who are doing their student teaching abroad, at Meredith College, a small private liberal arts college in North Carolina, education students get some of their practical classroom experience in Italy while fully participating in a required education course that is taking place on the home campus in Raleigh.

“It’s a required teaching and learning course that includes an observational component,” says Brooke Shurer, director of international programs. Most of the students enrolled in the class are doing their observations in Raleigh schools. “And for the students who are in Italy, we’ve been able to facilitate placement for students in local Italian schools. But they are still taking the course, just like they would if they were in the U.S.”

The students in Italy fully participate in the course via Skype—listening to class lectures and discussions in real time, and participating in groups via their iPads when group work is required.

“It really enriches the discussion,” says Shurer. “We want students to be exposed to different ways of thinking. This is a really creative way to facilitate that so that students in a U.S. classroom, studying U.S. teaching and learning, are also able to benefit from the firsthand perspective of their peers who are experiencing Italian teaching and learning at the same time.”

Rebecca O’Brien, a family and consumer sciences major, participated in the Meredith program last fall. She says it is “essential” that she plan her classes carefully so that she can complete her studies in four years. “Skype allowed me to study abroad without worrying about getting off-track in working toward completing my major,” she says. “At times there were technological difficulties that were frustrating, but my professor was great about communicating and working one-on-one with me if I ever felt I was behind.” The most important thing about Skyping into a class is to have patience, O’Brien says, and adds, “I learned so much by working in the Italian school system, and enjoyed comparing my experiences to my classmates’ experiences back in the U.S.”

While there are significant benefits of using technology to open study abroad to more students, it’s important to carefully consider how to enhance pedagogic goals rather than accidentally detracting from them in the process.

“In general, we actually discourage the use of online classes while studying abroad,” Daugherty says, “because it can take away from the student’s spending time in the host culture. But in a very specific program, where all the students are taking a course

together online, it can be a very useful way to make sure those students have a connection back to the academic institution in the U.S. You just need to be very intentional about how you set it up so it doesn't distract from their experience in the host country."

"It can be a really positive experience when one thoughtfully and carefully weaves in the local culture," Shurer says. "What I really appreciate about our course is that students are not just Skyping into their local home campus course, they are using the international experience to bring an intercultural perspective into the home campus course, which is of course what we hope will be the goal of study abroad. I think we need to challenge ourselves to think about how we can weave in intercultural aspects and utilize the local culture so that it enhances the study abroad experience both for the students abroad and for students on the home campus." She adds, "We're very pleased with how this arrangement has gone, and we see

a lot of potential, especially for STEM disciplines and other lockstep curricula. This is a tool that really helps facilitate access for students that may not otherwise have thought about study abroad, and for colleges that may not have the resources to send several faculty on a faculty-led semester program. It serves multiple purposes in that way."

At Rollins College, a liberal arts college in Winter Park, Florida, some students are able to complete independent studies via distance learning while on semester abroad programs, says Giselda Beaudin, director of international programs. "But this has been a limited option, subject to the approval of the specific professor." However, she adds, "Many of our short-term, faculty-led programs use technology for coursework. This varies widely depending on the faculty leaders and how they have constructed the program." Plans are in the works for the development of a blog site for Rollins students who are on semester study abroad programs. "We want to encourage our

students to blog on a central site while abroad," Beaudin says. "We hope this will generate an interesting dialogue between students abroad and those here on the home campus."

Recognizing the benefit of study abroad for all students on a campus, not just the ones who do go abroad, is important. "Not every student is going to be able to study abroad," Shurer says. "But it helps with internationalization at home when we can bring this global perspective into U.S. classrooms, through those students who are fortunate enough to participate in our programs." **IE**

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 Paris, Florence, Honolulu and Havana, as well as faculty development workshops for education abroad. Her most recent *International Educator* article was "Preparing Faculty to Teach Abroad: Best Practices and Lessons Learned," in the September/October 2013 issue.

IEFT is expanding; Join us in the largest Convention Center in Europe 'Istanbul Congress Center'

ieft
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FAIRS OF TURKEY

25th IEFT SPRING 2014

- 8 March 2014
Eskisehir Dedepark Hotel
- 9 March 2014
Adana Hilton Hotel
- 11 March 2014
Ankara Sheraton Hotel
- 13 March 2014
Izmir Hilton Hotel
- 15-16 March 2014
Istanbul Congress Center
- 17 March 2014
Istanbul ByOtell (Asian side)
- 19 March 2014
N.Cyprus Merit Lefkosia Hotel

26th IEFT - FALL 2014

- 1-2 November 2014
Istanbul Congress Center
- 3 November 2014
Istanbul ByOtell (Asian Side)
- 5 November 2014
Ankara Sheraton Hotel
- 7 November 2014
Izmir Hilton Hotel
- 8 November 2014
Bursa Almira Hotel

Contact Us to Find Out More:

- www.ieft.net
- info@ieft.net
- +90 212 244 42 13
- +90 212 244 42 07

eeft aeft beft

MESA & GRADUATE EXCHANGES

STUDY ABROAD
The Thrust of Study Abroad in Turkey

MAR+APR.14 INTERNATIONAL EDUCATOR