



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 to 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.



Heartland
Community
College students
in Belize

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.



Students from Northampton Community College in Peru

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

for undergraduates but for law school applicants as well, Alexander said.

It's not a model that every campus could replicate, but the place to start may be to ask state legislators and the governor about matching endowment gifts to state universities.

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 Berquist, 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 scholarships 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."

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 GlobalLinks Learn Abroad's Cynthia Banks and Sheila Houston (GlobalLinks, originally AustraLearn, 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 *International Educator* about how the endowment came about. The then-Office of Overseas Study put up the first few thousand dollars and promptly raised \$2,725 from a telethon 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."

Prestige of Outside Grants Can Free Up Internal Funds

While it is not always possible for international offices to match or multiply gifts or grants, landing the outside money raises the stature of study abroad programs and often elevates their standing with university leaders. One international educator at a public university was surprised to get a congratulatory call out of the blue from the head of the statewide higher education system who had just learned from an article in *InsideHigherEd* that the campus had landed a USCEFT grant to send students to China. Separately, DeDe Long, director of study abroad and international exchange at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, observed, "University leaders love to proclaim that they've gotten these grants. They are more willing to invest their own funds when you have the prize out there."

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 individuals, 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 priority in its current \$2.5 billion fundraising campaign, which started in 2012 and is already closing in on the \$2 billion 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 troubled 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.” **IE**

CHRISTOPHER CONNELL is a veteran Washington, D.C. education writer and author of NAFSA’s annual *Internationalizing the Campus* reports.

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