

## **Service, Scholarship, and Study Abroad Purdue University Faculty and Students - Why Study Abroad?**

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First and foremost: What is in it for faculty? Contrary to popular opinion from those that do this on a regular basis, designing a study abroad course and executing it is not easy. There is not only the time commitment for undertaking a study abroad course, it also requires planning that can be as complex as writing an ROI grant. So why do it?

### **Here are reasons why you should not do it:**

- 1) My unit head is not supportive of me doing this because it distracts from my research and funding;
- 2) I don't have the time to devote to something that does not directly contribute to my research;
- 3) I am not good at conducting study abroad courses because it involves too much responsibility, including student safety issues;
- 4) study abroad is not scholarly and is considered to be a boondoggle by some.

### **Here are reasons why you should do it:**

- 1) Most unit heads do support study abroad when they see that it is aligned with their academic career path. They know it expands their communication abilities for faculty and students. Unit heads recognize that the investment of faculty for their students not only builds bonds between how the faculty and students interact, but more important how faculty interacts with other colleagues in foreign countries. This interaction can help the students see faculty as role models outside the classroom.
- 2) All faculty are busy and can find time to develop a study abroad course if it is important. Our role as faculty is not only to conduct research, but to teach. Often study abroad courses, if designed well, can lead to research projects with other faculty from the host countries. Also, please look at the tools on this website as well as Purdue's study abroad website to help in conducting a successful study abroad course.
- 3) Granted, there is a lot of responsibility when traveling abroad, but anyone who has done a study abroad course has mentioned that it builds confidence not only for faculty in managing students, but also to help faculty grow in character and enrich their lives.
- 4) Study abroad is scholarly and can be quantified. There are several standardized tests that can be administered to students before and after a study abroad experiences on cultural and learning elements that show the value of study abroad and such results can be published. In addition, students can be assigned projects that can range from research papers that can be published in peer-reviewed journals, to posters and abstracts that can be presented at local, national and international conferences. This is especially true if the study abroad course is "service" oriented.
- 5) At the end of the day, we are here not only to advance the science of what we do, we are here to help students learn and become leaders for the next generation. Those that do study abroad with their faculty, never forget the experience and that is priceless. In

addition to being someone's professor, be their hero. The following link highlights the benefits of study abroad from a faculty perspective (<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/06/03/nafsa> - this professor is my hero). Additional benefits for faculty conducting a study abroad course, and for students going on a study abroad are outlined below.

### **Why Study Abroad? What is in it for students?**

#### **Study abroad is a crucial part of a well-rounded undergraduate and graduate education.**

- It makes you much more marketable in the United States, because:
  - Companies need people with experiences around the world,
  - Who can speak different languages,
  - Who can transition easily into other cultures and people who bring to their jobs a sensibility and a sensitivity for other people.
- Study abroad helps young student leaders step outside their comfort zones and make themselves more open to misconceptions.
- Many students perceive the good and bad of foreign countries by what they see and hear on the news.
- Students who travel as study abroad may tend to struggle with:
  - A foreign language,
  - Trying new foods,
  - Learning directions,
  - Being forced to make new friends, and doing things that they would not normally do.
  - In doing the things above – this makes all of us better human beings – priceless.
- Study abroad connects students to the world. What happens in China, India, Africa, Europe, South America, will influence what happens in the United States and even in Indiana – but how? Students need to learn how the world is connected and how they will connect with it when they graduate. Travel to other countries will offer insights into such connections – more important it reduces fear, ignorance and prejudice among students.
- Our world is interconnected and to be successful one must develop skills that link cultures and analyze complex issues at personal, intellectual, and professional levels. This will build global competence for the student.

#### **Traveling to other countries helps students learn:**

- Subjects of interest more depth and from different cultural perspectives.
  - Learning is not inside but outside the classroom.
  - The student's education is enhanced through daily interactions in the foreign culture ranging from formal presentations by foreign faculty to interacting both visually and verbally with the "person on the street."

- Becoming proficient in a foreign language.
  - A non-English-speaking country is the ultimate foreign language classroom.
  - Emersion into another culture and 24/7 exposure to a foreign language is far more beneficial than any recorded sessions.
  
- Experience growth at a personal level.
  - Students who study abroad are more confident in themselves and the world around them.
  - Students who study abroad are more independent and confident in their skills.
  
- Develop marketable career skills that lead to better jobs and improved career trajectories including:
  - Critical thinking
  - Problem solving
  - Independence
  - Self confidence
  - Teamwork
  - Better communication
  - Motivation
  - Leadership
  - Flexibility
  - Adaptability
  - Creativity
  - Less Fear
  - Less Ignorance
  - Less Prejudice
  - Multicultural perspective
  - More Worldly

**Benefits to students from Purdue.**

- If students are approved to study abroad, you will remain enrolled at Purdue University.
  
- Students are eligible to earn credit(s) at Purdue for your coursework abroad and, in most cases, fulfill major, minor, or distribution requirements.
  
- Students often take study courses that build on work already completed at Purdue.
  
- Some students even do internships or independent research projects abroad.

An increasing number of students have been conducting research abroad and then working with Purdue faculty upon their return to West Lafayette, IN. to turn their projects into senior honors theses that can be published in the peer reviewed literature. In some instances, students who study abroad in their undergraduate years, often pursue graduate school in the form of fellowships and internships in graduate study. Also, the scholarship of study abroad is an important factor where students can work with faculty to develop projects and present them as

posters, abstracts for local, national and international conferences, and for peer-reviewed publications.

**Today's Purdue Students move the World Forward Tomorrow – Game Changers.**

Talk to a student who has had a study abroad experience. Chances are they will tell you that this was one of the best experiences in their college career. Upon returning, the students are more focused, have more energy, and have more purpose. Most often they have purpose by elevating from what they did during their study abroad experience, to the how they experienced it to the most important thing: the WHY of their experience. From this, they often form a passion for what they want to do with their lives. As such they tend to advance academically with new intellectual energy that questions more deeply their view of themselves and their world. Living and studying abroad is one of the most exciting and enriching opportunities currently being offered at Purdue.

**Take it from recent Purdue Study Abroad Students:**

- (The instructor) *“Provided freedom in the course for individual learning, by exposure to hands on activities and diverse lectures. The final project was a great way for students to reflect and reiterate everything they learned.”*
- *“The instructor encouraged us to think critically about problems in the culture we were exploring and how they compared to our own, the whole learning experience was well tied in and there was a lot learned about public health that may not have been as interesting if learned in other ways.”*