

# ENRICHING THE SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Short-term faculty led study abroad programs continue to gain in popularity. The literature has long provided support for the belief that study abroad programs provide students with opportunities to expand multicultural awareness. Current literature is now showing that short-term faculty-led study abroad programs as short as two weeks can show measurable gains in students' intellectual development and that students can gain qualities and skills needed by companies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This paper contains issues addressed by two regional universities who combined faculty and students to further enhance this still relatively new format of study abroad. Issues critical to the success of this combined approach are addressed.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

As reported by Stroud (2010, 491), "The number of American students studying abroad has more than doubled, rising from under 100,000 in 1996/1997 to almost a quarter of a million in 2006/2007." Study abroad is a way to provide students with a global perspective that can better prepare them for living and leading in a globally interdependent society (Sobania & Braskamp, 2009; Vande Berg, 2009). Study abroad can be a source of multiple benefits to students and faculty alike. One benefit that can accrue from participating in study abroad is increased appreciation of the value afforded through diversity. As emphasized by Stephens and Ogunji, "effective management of diversity in organizational environments can be used by companies for achieving competitive advantage and gaining strategic advantage in an increasingly global economic setting and marketplace" (2011, 528).

Participating in study abroad can provide students with more than a descriptive exposure to differences in culture (Jones, 2003). Many Americans are members of a majority group and have little exposure to the experiences of being a member of a minority group. Yet these same majority group members live in a multicultural country with businesses operating in global markets. Students who are participants in higher education today represent many of the people who will work in and help shape the multicultural companies of tomorrow. Koskinen and Tossavainen (2004, 112) posit that "intercultural competence is a developmental process of

personal maturation whereby the learner evolves from lower to higher levels of intercultural awareness.” Study abroad programs have the potential to take students past the lectures, cases, or in-class simulation to immersion in cultural learning through experiential learning (Fairley & Tyler, 2009). The purpose of this paper is to show how short-term study abroad programs can be enriched through combining students and faculty from multiple universities.

The paper is organized into five sections. The first section includes an overview of the value that can be added in terms of growth and development and acquisition of new skills through participation in study abroad. In the second section the focus is on short-term study abroad programs and research findings that support the value in continuing to invest in this newer format for study abroad. Section three describes ways that the short-term study abroad program can be enriched. In section four a case study is provided where two universities combined faculty and students for a short-term study abroad program that worked successfully. This section also describes the contributions of this paper to the literature and its limitations. The final section includes concluding remarks regarding combined study abroad programs and their relevance to students, faculty, and universities.

### **VALUE ADDED BY STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS**

Carlson, Burn, Useem, and Yachimowicz (1990) and Citron (1996) found that study abroad students showed an enhanced ability to understand complexity, one aspect of intellectual development, and that the differences in study abroad program structure and experience can impact the outcomes of study abroad for the students involved. Michigan State University is an example of one university that has placed a high priority on assessing the impact of study abroad with a focus on measuring the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that students need to live and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004).

Higher education overall has been asked to design study abroad programs that include “opportunities that transport participants well beyond the role of a tourist, educational consumer, or isolated and unengaged American abroad” (Norris & Gillespie, 2009, 383). IEC, a not-for-profit educational institution with a consortium of U.S. universities and colleges conducted a survey in 2002 that included 17,000 alumni who had participated in its programs between 1950 and 1999. One finding of this survey addressed the career impact that the study abroad experience had on participants. As reported by Norris & Gillespie, “The study abroad experience enabled the majority of respondents to gain skills that influenced their career path, foreign language ability that they used at work, and interest in a career direction that they pursued” (2009, 386).

As the business environment has become increasingly more global, curriculum in business schools has included more international factors in the curriculum (Brustein, 2007; Tarrant, 2010) and the growth of business students participating in study abroad programs has continued to increase (Presley, Damron-Martinez, & Zhang, 2010). Business students are seeing participation in study abroad as an option to increase job skills and are more likely to express greater concern for financial issues than non-business majors (Toncar, Reid, & Anderson, 2005). Recent research has focused on the extent to which study abroad increases prospects for employability following graduation (Trooloff, Vande Berg, & Rayman, 2007-2008).

Trooloff, Vande Berg, and Rayman (2007-2008) designed their study to test the extent employers would value personal qualities and skills associated with the traditional workplace and the sorts of intercultural and global knowledge and skills that many study abroad professionals and others in colleges and universities urge students to acquire through participating in study abroad programs. As shown in Table 1, two of the top five personal qualities selected by employers came from qualities identified by study abroad professionals as being related to study abroad programs.

When asked to comment on the qualities they thought would be enhanced through study abroad, employers listed one traditional workplace quality, “self motivated, shows initiative,” plus the two qualities that were contributed by study abroad professionals, “listens and observes well and flexible, adapts well.”

Also shown in Table 1, four of the top five personal skills selected by employers came from qualities identified by study abroad professionals as being related to study abroad programs. When asked to comment on the personal skills they thought would be enhanced through study abroad, employers indicated they did not believe study abroad enhanced skills for two of these four study abroad associate skills, “works well under pressure and analyzes, evaluates and interprets well.” For the other two personal skills recommended by study abroad professionals, “works effectively outside comfort zone and expresses self effectively in writing,” employers did associate with study abroad program participation.

**Table 1. Top Qualities and Skills Valued by Employers**

<b>Personal Qualities</b>	<b>Source of Quality (Traditional Workplace or Study Abroad)</b>	<b>Employers Rated as Enhanced by Study Abroad</b>	<b>Personal Skills</b>	<b>Source of Skill (Traditional Workplace or Study Abroad)</b>	<b>Employers Rated as Enhanced by Study Abroad</b>
Honesty & integrity	TW	No	Effective team member	TW	No
Strong work ethic	TW	No	Works well under pressure	SA	No
Self motivated, shows initiative	TW	Yes	Analyzes, evaluates and interprets well	SA	No
Listens and observes well	SA	Yes	Works effectively outside comfort zone	SA	Yes
Flexible, adapts well	SA	Yes	Expresses self effectively in writing	SA	Yes

Adapted from: Trooloff, S., Vande Berg, M., & Rayman, J. (Fall-Winter 2007-2008)

Faculty, along with study abroad and career services professionals, have to do a better job of identifying career-related study abroad outcomes if employers are going to see the impact of study abroad on personal qualities and personal skills of potential employees. At the same time, just identifying potential career-related outcomes is only one step in educating employers about the potential value-added that study abroad can provide potential employees. Of at least equal

importance is making students aware of the learning outcomes and doing so in terms of the specific knowledge, skills and perspectives they learned abroad. Students also need to be coached on how they can effectively present this information to potential employers (Hayward, 2008). Study abroad takes many forms. The format of focus for this paper is the short-term study abroad program.

### **SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS**

Study abroad programs are not new. Traditional semester or year-long study abroad programs organized by American colleges date back to the 30's (Goldberg, 1982, 2). These early programs, as discussed by Goldberg (1982), were designed for the intellectual and economic elite but underwent dramatic change and expansion due to the phenomenal growth of higher education in the United States after World War II. The world as we knew it changed again on 9-11-2001. Now organizations such as IES, a not-for-profit educational institution who completed a 50-year alumni survey, is supporting study abroad experiences shorter than a year or semester, and more oriented toward professional tasks, as being valuable study abroad experiences (Bikson, Traverton, Moini, & Lindstrom, 2003).

The popularity of short-term study abroad programs has grown greatly. Allen has shown that "from 2005 to 2006, 55.4% of students participated in a summer or January term, 40.2% in a semester abroad, and 4.4% in an academic year program" (2010, 453). A report on assessment of study abroad programs at the University of Michigan states, "it is evident that short-term programs provide notable value" (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004, 90). Sachau, Brasher, and Fee (2010) recently reported that the growth of the short-term study abroad programs reached the point that in 2007 where more than 50 percent of all study abroad programs were short-term trips lasting fewer than eight weeks. Fischer (2010) has discussed how the shorter term faculty-led study-abroad programs can provide students with limited time and limited financial resources with affordable opportunities to participate in study abroad experiences.

Universities are expanding their support of short-term faculty-led study abroad programs that frequently last for as few as ten to fifteen days. "The trend toward shorter trips is driven by a broad desire among educators to see more students spend at least a portion of their college careers outside the United States" (Doyle, Gendall, Meyer, Hoek, Tait, McKenzie, & Loorparg, 2009; McMurtrie, 2007). Many faculty mirror Ritz's report about effectiveness of the short-term faculty-led study abroad program, "If it's done right, if it's done with intensity of learning, a short-term program can have impact" (2010, 164). Fisher (2009), a writer for the Chronicle of Higher Education, reported findings that suggest "that students who go overseas for a short period of time, four weeks or less, are just as likely as those who study abroad for several months or even a year to be globally engaged."

These findings, while startling and controversial to many, are supported by research conducted by Joshua McKeown (2009), Director of International Education and Programs and an instructor in the Global and International Studies Department at the State University of New York at Oswego. If length is not the key factor in study abroad success, program design and richness of the learning experience may become even more critical.

### **ENRICHING THE SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM**

"The benefits of study abroad can be profound" (Brux & Fry, 2010, 508). Study abroad has many definitions. Just in terms of time, it can be a semester, a year, three weeks, or even 10 to 15 days. The benefits of faculty-led short-term study abroad can also be profound, especially when, as noted by McKeown (2009), it is a student's first time to participate in an international experience.

As reported by Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, and Paige (2009, 2-3), “faculty can impact student learning by creating learning environments that focus on specific learning goals, connect new knowledge with what they already know, reflect on themselves as learners, and interact with each other and with faculty to apply new concepts, perspectives, and skills”. This approach to learning fits well with the environment found in a faculty-led short-term study abroad program. One activity that is designed to help students connect new knowledge with what they already know and reflect on themselves as learners is a technique called journaling. “Journaling is one method that can be useful as an instructional/learning strategy that allows students to reflect critically on material, to ground their learning in their lived experience, to develop their writing skills and to demonstrate their knowledge/understanding in a non-traditional manner” (O’Connell and Dymont, 2006, 672). A caution about journaling is that it can also be a source of stress and concern for the students, especially in a short-term study abroad program. Finding a workable balance where students can focus on taking notes for their journal and enjoy participating in the activities they are journaling about is important. It is a method frequently used to enrich study abroad programs. Interacting with the group members to assimilate new knowledge and understand how other members may perceive the same information similarly or differently and why can be helpful, especially in a diverse group. “The appropriate amount of challenge can provide potentially growth-producing conditions as the student encounters complexity, ambiguity, diversity, and other stressful experiences that require new ways of coping” (McKeown, 2009, 11).

Group diversity combined with a rich schedule of learning activities created an effective learning environment for students and faculty from two different universities on a faculty-led short-term study abroad trip in May 2011. This program is described as a case study of how two groups from two different universities combined resources effectively.

**CASE STUDY OF A COMBINED SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM** The concept of combining groups from different institutions is not new. As early as 1988, Birnbaum wrote about the fact that approaches or policies that were fruitful for one institution might actually be harmful for another. Shaw (1999) commented about the frustration and failure that can result when values, vision, and people of the institutions are ignored. An interview with a director of study abroad for a regional university reflects the strengths and challenges associated with combining groups from different institutions:

“It can be challenging to make study abroad programs where students are combined from different Universities work well. A couple of times when we have tried this we learned that students from the differing institutions didn’t necessarily have the same expectations, faculty members who hadn’t worked together in the past didn’t always work well together on the trip, and students had a hard time bonding with students from another program partly because they had worked independently to prepare for the trip for most of the semester. Students had a tendency to look to the leader from their own institution to lead the way, while the actual leader may have been from another institution. To make a study abroad program work effectively where students and faculty from multiple universities were involved, I believe you would have to work very closely with the partnering institution to have pre-departure meetings together, class meetings, and focus on the same information to promote group unity. One of the highlights of a faculty-led program is the bond that students and faculty leaders form with each member of the group, so whatever way we can make that happen, that’s the key, in my opinion” (Norton, 2011).

Faculty from different universities who would like to work together to develop a study abroad trip that would include both faculty and students from their respective universities do face challenges. They will need to address all of the issues that are part of leading a study abroad program with students from their individual university and address all of the related issues with their counterpart(s) from the partner university. It is likely that universities may accomplish the same goal (study abroad) in slightly different ways. Those differences can become large hurdles without collaboration of faculty and necessary administrative support in advance of the program delivery.

Some of the issues the faculty for this combined program addressed are discussed in the following paragraphs. Initially the faculty member from the second university was going to travel with the first group as an observer to determine if the locations in Canada and the overall program would be something that might appeal to students from their university in the future. As discussions were held and plans were being made, an invitation was issued for the observing faculty member to invite students from their university to participate in the program too. It was then we began to learn first-hand the many issues that are involved in successfully combining study abroad students from two universities. The positive experiences of the students and faculty reinforced our belief that addressing the following issues were well worth the time and effort involved.

Identifying roles for Program Leader(s) and Associate(s) represent a key issue to be addressed. In this instance it was fairly easy to determine who the leaders were and who the follower was. The program had been developed by faculty at the host university the previous year. Two faculty members from the host university were replicating a very successful program. They were rightly the leaders and the observing faculty member was essentially a learner who was pleased to be able to include some of their students in the program. This differentiation becomes a fairly important issue as students are traveling. They need to know the role of each faculty member involved and what to expect from each faculty member. At the same time, the faculty members need to be able to work comfortably together and agree among themselves what those faculty roles will be so that they are not sending mixed messages to the students. Before reaching the point where they are actually traveling, there are issues related to requirements students must meet in order to be accepted to the study abroad program, course costs and how courses will be accepted for transfer.

Program acceptance, tuition and fees, as well as how transfer credits might be handled are also issues to be addressed. Policies about acceptance were not an issue. This was partly because all seven of the participants from the guest university were graduate students in good standing. The faculty member at the guest university had traveled with two of the students on a study abroad trip the previous May and found them to be excellent travelers. They did much of the recruiting for the five other students and those places were quickly filled. There were, however, as we learned, other issues that would need to be addressed. The seven students from the guest university were international students who were approved for scholarships at their local university. As we moved through the process, it was discovered that this scholarship approval could not be transferred to another university. Fortunately the faculty and administration at both universities were supportive of finding a way to make the combined study abroad program work and a new course was created at the guest university. One of the faculty members from the host university would be the instructor of record and the course requirements would be the same for both groups of students. Because students from the guest university were provided with access to the learning management system used by the host university, all students were able to access the course web site for the host university and interact within that course. This helped increase student interactions before and after the trip. Since the guest university currently uses a slightly

different learning management system, their students needed to quickly learn how to function in the system used by the host university.

Marketing or selling the program and pre-trip preparation are critical to receiving University support to proceed with the program and to making sure that all of the necessary paperwork is in place well before deadlines. It is important to involve other students, faculty, and staff members to help get the information out about the program and to do so as early as possible. One possibility is to recruit from both prior and current participants to find students who are interested in learning more about the details of the trip. Advertising within the main campus and all satellite campus locations is a must. Encouraging students to complete enrollment information early, gather the required documents and help find fellow travelers can help fill the trip. Posting fliers, holding information fairs, and participating in any study abroad and/or international fair hosted by the university are also critical approaches to sharing information with as many potential study abroad students as possible.

The numbers worked out well for this trip even though recruitment at the guest university started much later in the year than is typical for study abroad program planning. Getting everyone involved early with pre-meetings, enrollment paperwork, passports, visas, and other documentation needed for travel will create some buzz among students and faculty about the study abroad program and help raise awareness of the program and make sure paperwork is completed earlier rather than later. Money is an area where advance information is necessary.

Establishing a reasonable budget and making sure the finances are in order are also important to a successful program. Some of the questions and topics to be discussed early in planning include: How much should a trip of this length to these planned destinations cost? How will faculty costs be covered? Are there differences in tuition and fees at each university? When should the money be collected? Where will the money be collected? Who will track the payments? Will the fee structure be the same at each university? Is it possible that the answers to questions such as these could result in a different fee structure at the different universities? If so, would that be workable for all involved? When should periodic deposits be scheduled? It will be important to establish a final "cut-off date" for new participants at least a month ahead of time. Having a "waiting list" with students who already have documents and funds and would be willing to replace a student who became no-show or one who had to drop out unexpectedly would help make the study abroad program available to as many students as possible and stabilize participation even with unexpected changes in participants. Including a non-refundable deposit is one way to help students realize that they are making a commitment. Creating a timeline for many deposits that are required of lodging, transportation or tour companies is also important. Many times bus or train tickets can be purchased ahead of time and doing so can eliminate last minute surprises or long lines. Work with the university travel agent to obtain the best rates and routes for travel. Keep copies of everything! Once agreement is reached about costs, determining how much can be accomplished in the agreed upon time frame is another issue to be considered.

Travel options may vary with both location and goals for the program. Goals for study abroad to similar locations may vary from university to university. One approach might be to introduce students to different types of transportation. This could include the air travel to and from the country plus the use of trains, buses and even metro and taxis within the country. Comfort level with each of these modes of transportation can vary depending on each student's background and previous travel experiences. Students who grew up in small Texas towns have probably not experienced some of the metropolitan transportation systems that students from cities with populations in the millions are very comfortable using. Another question that might be related to budget and finance would be the costs of the different transportation options. Using a variety of

modes of transportation could be one way of helping students realize that they can function well in a larger city. Something this simple could potentially help a student decide that in the future a longer study abroad option could be something they could do with confidence. Along with travel options are decisions to be made about accommodations.

Accommodations can be an integral part of the learning experience. Should the accommodations be traditional or cultural? Are accommodations that are considered traditional for the U.S. also considered traditional for the host country? This trip included university dorms, a bed and breakfast, a vintage city hotel, and even an airport hotel the evening before departure. Each offered a different experience and the advantages and disadvantages of each were different. Costs were considered in their selection as well as location and safety issues. A study abroad trip could also be an opportunity to try spending a night or two at a hostel, something many of the students may have never considered doing before. Costs, location, and variety are all factors that could be a part of determining the selection of accommodations. Transportation and accommodations have an impact on the program schedule and that is another key issue for discussion.

Establishing a schedule early helps create a focal point for planning and program design. An intensive summer abroad program is defined by the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages Bulletin (2008, p. 2) "as six to ten weeks in a program with other students". This research team defines it as 10 – 15 days of immersion within the country's culture, incorporating business activities, and educational lectures, and leisure experiences. How much should be included in each daily schedule? Time is limited and the desire is to get the most possible from each day. How much is enough and when does it become too scheduled? This is another issue that faculty will need to discuss as they prepare for the combined study abroad program. Hopefully as the schedule is followed each day, students from the two universities are traveling as one group rather than as two separate groups who just happen to be going to the same places. Having an on-boarding plan, and making it happen is something that needs to be addressed well before time for departure.

Pre-departure meetings are a way to build excitement among students. Have several meetings where students can interact and get to know fellow travelers are critical in creating the foundation for the students to become one group. Topics to be included are required safety lectures, insurance information and emergency procedures. Developing lessons that assist with interchanges between participants in the program is one option that can help students begin learning about each other. Something as simple as sharing information about their expectations for the study abroad experience can be important. It was surprising to the U.S. students to learn that study abroad wasn't always as available in universities outside the U.S. It was also interesting to the U.S. students to learn how many international students had traveled on their own for long distances in order to study in the U.S. Learning about behavior style preferences and learning style preferences is another way to start an interchange between students from the two different universities. Even though English is one of the two major languages used in Canada, and many other countries, encouraging the students to learn some basic French phrases was something that helped create a common bond among the students at both universities.

It was not expected that learning a second language was a major part of this program. At this same time it was determined that making the effort to learn some words and phrases of the dominant language in the area, French, would be important. At a minimum many faculty may encourage and even require that students familiarize themselves with some of the basic language of the country(ies) that are on the schedule. This may include selecting different phrases that the students could try using each day. Giving the students an opportunity to share some of their experiences while traveling from one location to the next can lead to some interesting stories.



This is another issue that faculty from each of the universities participating in the program should address in advance so that expectations for all students are at least similar and hopefully the same. An additional issue that faculty may want to address in advance focuses on course requirements.

The study abroad component of course content is important from both an academic perspective and a cultural immersion perspective. In addition to related information in other sections of this case study overview, the study abroad component of the course included variety related to culture and organizational practices. All of the students participating in this program were business majors and visiting seven organizations ranging from a government organization, a museum of civilization (non-profit organization), a botanical garden/climate controlled museum, a museum about transportation, a manufacturing plant, a winery, and a micro-brewery were very well received. In addition there were four organizational presentations (agile leadership, marketing practices at Bombardier, change management practices at Bombardier, and growing a small business in Canada with expansion into the U.S.). Students who tended to be quiet and less participative in their home campus classes responded very well to each of these presentations. Students visited two universities where they received a lecture/discussion about the Canadian political system and a lecture/discussion about NAFTA. Historical and cultural information was presented through three walking tours, a guided bus tour and a whale watching event. To help students integrate this information and its meaning to them, students had a journal assignment and were expected to write in their journal each day. At the end of the study abroad portion of the course students had a specific assignment related to their journals that they uploaded to the course web site located in the host university's learning management system.

Identifying course requirements and expectations early can help students be aware of what is expected of them academically and as representatives of their University, state and country. In addition to the actual content of the course and the activities for the study abroad portion of the course, there are a variety of course-related issues that will need to be discussed early in the planning stages of a combined program. How will the issue of course offerings be handled? Will each university offer their own course at their home university and then travel together? If so, will the requirements for each course be the same? Will the time frame for completing the course be similar? Will grading be standardized or if there are separate courses, will there be differences in grading standards? Even if there are separate courses, will one of the learning management systems allow access by all students so they can participate in discussion board interactions? If so, will faculty from both universities also have the same access? If students have similar course requirements and expectations, it can be a focal point as they travel together and look for information that can be used to complete assignments.

Setting the stage for positive student interaction can help establish friendships among the students. Students from the same university may or may not know each other in advance of the study abroad program. It is almost certain that students from different universities will not know each other before they enrolled in the study abroad program. How will student interaction be addressed to help create a sense of everyone belonging to the same group? While the students may come from two different universities, for the 10 – 15 days they are traveling together as part of the study abroad, will they become one group? Encouraging students at each university to make the most of the opportunity to spend time with students from the other university is one way to enrich the study abroad opportunity. If you travel with your friends you may be seeing things through a similar lens or similar background. If you have the opportunity to travel with students who have different backgrounds and experiences from you, you may have the opportunity to stretch and consider perspectives you hadn't considered before. Part of making this happen can depend on the encouragement and support provided by the faculty members. It can also be related

to advance learning that addresses cultural aspects of the areas to be visited and helping to raise awareness of cultural issues in these areas.

Cultural awareness of the areas being visited may vary among the students. The importance of preparing students in advance with basic cultural information and customs is highlighted by the following quotation from Marlene Torp, associate director at the Danish Institute for Study Abroad: "You see what you know," Ms. Torp said. "If you don't know anything, you don't see anything" (Fischer, 2009). The comment was made by Ms. Torp in reference to a student who had traveled to Moscow with a study abroad group. Upon her return the student expressed frustration to Ms. Torp that while she was awed by the sites, she felt she didn't have an adequate background to ask thoughtful questions about what she was seeing. By providing students with a background related to cultural practices and some historical information, they could be better prepared to appreciate and understand their surroundings during the study abroad program.

Study abroad program evaluation may be handled differently at different universities. Faculty can make this process go more smoothly by determining in advance how evaluation of the study abroad program will be handled. If each study abroad office has their own evaluation material and system, do all students complete both or do the students from each university complete the evaluation materials only for their home university? Is it a potential problem if the timing of the completion of evaluation materials is different at each university?

The characteristics of this study abroad program that combined students and faculty from two universities were unique and the authors believe they contributed to the success of the program. Both universities are part of the same university system and are regional universities who attract a number of first generation college students. While both universities have experience in travel in a variety of different study abroad locations, one of the attractions for traveling to Ontario and Quebec in Canada is the belief that this is a good location for students who may not have traveled out of Texas before and who may not have flown in an airplane before, ridden in a taxi, or used a metro. While there are definite multicultural aspects in Ontario and Quebec, faculty from each university believed that the study abroad program was an opportunity to experience differences in the cultures of Texas, Ontario, and Quebec, learn more about a neighboring country, and accomplish these goals in an environment that would also have some cultural aspects similar to those found in the U.S. When enrollment in the program was completed it was obvious that the students would also have an opportunity to learn (or share) about cultures of Taiwan, Mainland China, Thailand, Mexico, and Mauritius.

Faculty from the host university developed the study abroad program in 2010 and led an initial group of study abroad students to cities in Ontario and Quebec in May 2010. One of the faculty members from the host university and the faculty member from the guest university have collaborated together on a variety of academic projects over a number of years. This collaboration was the basis for the invitation for the faculty member and students from the guest university to participate in the study abroad program led by faculty from the host university in May 2011.

Fourteen students participated in the combined study abroad program. Each student, seven students from each university, brought unique characteristics to the program that enriched learning opportunities for everyone who participated in the combined study abroad program. Twelve students were graduate students and two were undergraduate students. All of the students were business majors. Five of the students were from the US and five were from Taiwan. Of the four remaining students, one was from mainland China, one was from Thailand, one was from Mexico, and one was from Mauritius. The student from Mauritius was the only native French-speaking traveler and her skills were highly valued. The majority of students from countries outside the US were widely traveled while two of the students from within the US had actually

not flown in an airplane before or traveled outside of the US before. It was interesting to notice that regardless of previous travel experience, the multi-cultural diversity within Ontario and Quebec appeared to be equally fascinating to all of the students in the combined group.

Figure 1: Study Abroad Participants Home Country



A course was offered through each university and the faculty of record for each course was a faculty member from the host university. Their faculty had initially created the study abroad course and the study abroad program. To provide opportunities for students to interact as one group in advance of the trip, all students and faculty were provided access to the learning management system used by the host university.

To prepare students from each university to think of themselves as one group, a mandatory pre-trip meeting was scheduled for a Saturday late in April. Prior to this meeting, all students had been asked to complete a behavior style instrument produced by Target Training International that is based on four categories: Dominance, Influencing, Consistency, and Steadiness. One of the goals of the meeting was to help students see both their behavior preferences and those of the students who would be traveling on the study abroad program.

All students were expected to post to four discussion board topics before leaving for Canada: DISC Behavior Styles, Learning Styles, Student Personal Interests in Study Abroad, and Doing Business in Canada. In addition to posting their information, each student was expected to read and respond to selected posts by other students. One of the goals was to provide students with an opportunity to begin interacting with each other before they traveled together.

During the trip students were expected to make notes in their journals about daily events. They were also encouraged to spend free time together which they did. Since seven of the international students were from the guest university, they had expressed some concern about being accepted by students at the guest university. In addition to the air travel, buses, trains and the metro were used frequently. The travel time afforded students an opportunity to visit with each other and they became a very inclusive group. Their rich heritage of diversity provided interesting perspectives about each of the activities. They shared information about their home countries, work

backgrounds, families, and the things they did for fun. In addition to the planned activities (company visits, city tours, and university lecture/discussions), they constantly were immersed in a travel environment that was new and different from that of their home university. As the end of the trip arrived and the time came for the two groups to separate to return to their respective universities, there were tears and promises to stay in touch in the future. Thanks to Facebook and other social network options this is easily accomplished.

After the trip the students had research papers to complete as well as a post-trip review to post to the course web site of the host university. The journals were the basis for a project that could be in a traditional written paper format or in a video overview format. The post-trip postings were one more opportunity for the students to make comments about their experiences and reinforce the things they had learned together. One of the students from the host university completed a video of events and activities from the study abroad program with copies to be shared with all participants.

The contribution to the literature made by this paper is the overview of a short-term study abroad program that involved students and faculty from two different universities and did so successfully. A major limitation of this study is the inability to generalize the findings beyond this one set of experiences. This is due in large part to the difficulty in replicating the exact variables of personalities, trust, and the confidence that if everyone worked together the end result would be a viable and productive educational outcome. However, universities with similar student demographics, with faculty who are committed to making the program and with administrative and study abroad support, it is realistic to believe that they could expect similar results.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

To the faculty participating in this combined study abroad program, it seemed obvious that the students were participating in numerous activities that would directly enhance marketable skills. One way to strengthen future study abroad programs would be to focus more explicitly from the beginning of the programs on learning outcomes in terms of skills valued by employers. Simply raising awareness on the part of students as to how the activities and processes involved in the study abroad program could help them better relate their experiences to qualities and skills that are typically valued by employers. It is important to provide opportunities during the study abroad program for students to talk about their experiences and in what ways they believe these experiences might provide career-related learning outcomes for them personally. These kinds of discussions could also help students focus more clearly on the potential value they could provide an employer in the future because of these experiences. The added focus on career-related learning outcomes may be one more layer to an already full schedule but it is believed by these authors that it is a valuable addition.

Combining students and faculty members from multiple universities to create a successful study abroad program is more complex than only involving students and faculty members from one university. In the case of the faculty and students who participated in this program, any extra effort expended was well worth the time and work involved. In addition to visiting each of the cities and being immersed in the culture and activities unique to the three regions, the students were immersed as a group in building new relationships and learning about cultures that were unique to the group itself. It is the belief of the faculty who participated in this study abroad program that the unique composition of this group enriched this study abroad program beyond what might have happened otherwise. To replicate this experience with a different group would require the same cooperation among faculty, administration, and study abroad offices that was present for this program. It would also require of students the same positive attitude, pre-trip

preparation, and the effort to reach out and involve all students both individually and collectively, that these students exhibited during the study abroad program. We think the effort to combine the groups resulted in an environment where students were constantly learning both from the sites we visited, the scheduled activities, and from each other.

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