Short-Term Study Abroad Programs: A Diversity of Options

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ABSTRACT

Students need opportunities to study abroad that meet their individual comfort levels, educational goals, and career goals. Short-term study abroad programs can help facilitate students’ expanded global awareness. This paper describes recommendations for effective design of short-term study abroad programs from current academic literature and includes a narrative analysis of three short-term study abroad program formats with highlights of strengths and challenges that can be found in each format. Observations related to value added by short-term study abroad trips as supported in relevant study abroad literature is included. Finally, observations as to how each of these options might best fit student needs are provided.

INTRODUCTION

―A record number of U. S. students are choosing to study abroad, reflecting a strong commitment to the value of an international experience to prepare them to live and work in a more global society‖ (Institute of International Education’s [IIE] Open Doors report, 2009). As shown by the U. S. Department of Labor, the multi-cultural work environment within the United States reflects a microcosm of the global community (McPherson, 2009). Currently, foreign born and second generation Americans represent 23.4 percent of the U. S. civilian labor force age 16 and over (Masisa, 2006). It is expected that “by the end of the year 2040, more than half of the population in the United States will belong to a racial and ethnic minority group” (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, and McMillen, 2009, p. 173). Employees within the United States and those located at organizational sites outside the United States need skills that will allow them to work effectively with employees and company stakeholders who are different from themselves (Nancherla, 2010). As reported by Tarrant, “the future workforce of America depends on a citizenry that is sensitive to, and aware of, global issues” (2010, 433).

Students today are looking to their universities to provide options for them, as students, to have opportunities where they can potentially develop the skills they will need to interact effectively in a labor force that is currently diverse and is predicted to grow more diverse over the coming thirty years. According to Hoffa (2007), “In recent years, as the American economy has become increasingly globalized, knowledge of other countries has become to contemporary students what seeing the museums of Europe was to the elite youth of the past: a marker of cosmopolitan status and a preparation for their jobs, only now the jobs are in an international economy” (as cited in Long, Akande, Purdy, & Nakano, 2010, p. 91). Students are eager to experience other cultures and see something of what life is like in international locations (D’Acquisto, 2009). One approach being offered by universities is the faculty-led short-term study abroad program. This form of study abroad has been defined somewhat differently by different writers. One definition lists the time frame for a short-term study abroad program as lasting from
two weeks to three months. (Long, et al., 2010). Other writers, such as Donnelly-Smith (Fall 2009) describe short-term study abroad experiences as “those in which students are engaged for fewer than eight weeks” (p. 12) while Gordon, Heischmidt, Sterrett, and McMillan (2009) describe the short-term study abroad programs as “ranging from one to four weeks” (p. 133). What writers do agree on regarding short-term study abroad programs is their growth and their potential to offer a more intense and focused international experience. (Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Gordon, et al., 2009; Long, et al., 2010; & McMutrie, 2009). The potential quality that can be provided through the short-term study abroad program has been validated by the Institute of International Education in their 2007/2008 edition of an annual guide that describes the enormous number and variety of short-term programs, “shorter programs, if well planned, can offer a more intensive and focused experience—and may be the only realistic alternative in terms of the demands of your degree studies and economic resources” (as cited in Long, et al., 2007, p. 92).

Open Doors 2009 (IIE) reports the number of Americans studying abroad increased by 8.5% to 262,416 in the 2007/08 academic year. Long, et al., (2010) reports specifically on the growth of short-term study abroad programs, “In 1993 to 1994, only 1.7% (1,297 students) of study abroad students participated in programs that were shorter than 8 weeks duration, but the proportion quadrupled to 8% (16,478) students by 2004 to 2005” (p. 92). Continued growth is shown by the Institute of International Education’s 2009 Open Doors report, “short-term programs have the largest number of Americans studying abroad. The growth in student interest in short-term interest is of particular interest to Colleges of Business since business students represent about 20% of all Americans studying abroad (IIE Open Doors, 2009) and there has been a large increase in the number of MBA programs requiring a travel abroad course (Clarke et al., 2009).

Short-term study abroad programs appeal to both universities and students for a variety of reasons. As noted by Donnelly-Smith, short-term study abroad programs “are generally more affordable than longer programs; appeal to students who might not be able or willing to commit to a semester or a year abroad, and they allow students in structured academic programs like engineering, nursing, and education to study abroad without falling behind in their programs” (p. 12). Gordon (2009) comments on the appeal these programs can have for the non-traditional students or students who are working their way through school. While non-traditional students may have job and family responsibilities that could prohibit their participating in a semester-long study abroad program, a short-term study abroad program might be doable. The same is true for first generation college students who may be working to pay their costs of attending the university. Universities can help students learn “to translate their study abroad experiences into a framework recognizable to employers and to draw the connection between study abroad and the world of work” (Gardner, Steglitz, & Gross, 2009, p. 20). Helping students develop an awareness of the workplace-related skills they have developed while participating in a study abroad trip can be a catalyst for their seeing study abroad as a professional development opportunity from which they can develop marketable career skills.

All of these factors, the need for students to be prepared for today’s global work environment abroad as well as the increasingly multi-cultural work environment within the United States, the desire for universities to meet the growing student demand for study abroad opportunities that fit needs of traditional, non-traditional, and first generation college students, and to help students make the connection between their experiences gained through study abroad as they relate to marketable job skills, are driving growth in short-term study abroad programs. This paper is organized into four sections. The first section includes an overview of design elements that are essential if a short-term study abroad program is going to effectively integrate experiential learning with a sound academic experience. Section two describes
three different approaches for implementing a short-term study abroad program. In section three each format is analyzed in terms of strengths provided and potential challenges or areas that might be a concern depending on individual student needs and abilities. This section also describes the contributions of this paper to the literature. The final section includes concluding remarks regarding short-term study abroad programs and their relevance to students.

DESIGN OF SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

With universities and larger numbers of students endorsing this relatively young approach to study abroad, Hoffa (2007) has emphasized the need for care in the design and delivery of these programs, “the increasing popularity of these programs demands again that instructors reflect on the goals of our study tours and take steps to assure that for-credit travel maintains the academic standards of our other courses as well as the personal growth and cultural learning that can come through structured out-of-classroom experiences” (as cited by Long, et al., 2007, p. 92).

Given the relatively short time period involved in this study abroad format, course design and delivery becomes a critical component of student success. Five components of course design, delivery, and assessment of effectiveness are discussed in this paper. These include (1) identifying learning objectives and preparing a course syllabus that provides an academic anchor and helps to set the focus for the course; (2) required pre-trip meetings that involve both faculty and students in areas such as team building, preparation of key sites to visit and related academic/experiential activities, and expectations regarding behaviors for serving as ambassadors of the university; (3) trip implementation with use of time to the fullest extent possible to explore historical, political and cultural attributes of the country and end-of-day group meetings for discussion and self-reflection of the day’s activities; (4) preparation for the return trip to the home country and how the events up to this point can be applied to the end-of-trip formal self-reflection paper and ways the skills and experiences from the program can be related to career goals plus tentative plans for a post-trip meeting within three to five months following the end of the trip; and (5) outcomes assessment of the trip by the participating faculty.

A review of short-term study abroad academic literature provides examples of a variety of ways in which learning objectives have been approached for the course that will be delivered as part of the study abroad program. Sobania and Braskamp (2009) provide an example of learning objectives for a course that will be focused on cross-cultural understanding, “to identify similarities and differences in cultural values; to recognize ethnocentric reactions that inhibit the cultivation of cross-cultural understanding; and to challenge one’s own stereotypes and myths about people” (p. 25). These would serve as guidelines to help focus the students’ attention on expectations for what they would be doing and learning in the course. Younes and Asay (2003) provide an example of learning objectives that are similar in some ways but also are more explicit in raising student expectations that this will be both a fun and educational experience, “to learn and earn credit hours, to have fun and a good experience, to interact with new cultures, to make friends, and to gain personal growth” (p. 143 – 144). Another area of emphasis that could be included in learning objectives would be information regarding expected guidelines for students who would be studying abroad. Arkans (2009) stresses the need to “ensure they’re aware of what’s expected from them academically, that they serve as the university’s ‘ambassadors,’ and that they understand cultural differences, such as those between the U.S. legal system and those elsewhere” (p. 11). This information could be included as a learning objective or as a statement of expectations elsewhere in the course syllabi.
While it is generally accepted that the faculty member is responsible for being prepared to teach the course and insure that students have a valid learning experience, engaging students in pre-trip activities can serve as a means of teambuilding in advance of the actual trip (Scoffham, & Barnes, 2009) and of engaging students in actively learning about the historical, political, and cultural particularities and interrelationships between countries (Döring, Lahmar, Bouaballah, Bouafia, Bouaid, Gobsch, & Runge, 2010). Using required pre-trip meetings can also be a way to deliver short lectures related to the cities they will be visiting, show related films and involve students in class discussions on assigned course readings. (Long, et al., 2010) Involving students in helping to plan the trip itinerary is an approach that has been used effectively by Long, et al., (2010) to help students develop ownership in the course and to also begin the teambuilding process which would help students bond in advance of leaving for the host country. (Long, et al., 2010). Döring, et al., (2010) encourages students to use a variety of sources to gain information in advance about the host country, including: “television, Internet (Facebook), newspapers, journals/magazines, books, educational institutions, and personal conversations” (p. 246). In addition, Döring, et al., (2010) recommend students focus on developing a subjective level of knowledge about the host country in areas such as, “religion, current events, politics, science/education, daily life, economy, and history” (p. 247). Younes and Asay (2003) also support the use of preliminary meetings to help prepare students for the travel experience. What is important is that students are prepared to travel to the host country with enough information and understanding of the country’s culture and its people to be able to understand what they will experience.

While participating in the actual short-term study abroad trip, faculty will be challenged to provide “a careful balance between recreation and learning” (Gordon, 2009, p. 134) while “preparing students to be globally competent citizens” (Sobania, 2009, p. 25). At the same time, the experience of travel can provide opportunities for creative approaches to teaching that can be particularly effective for adult learners. (Younes & Asay, 2003) Scoffham and Barnes (2009) propose the use of a learning model intended to move students through five stages: “(1) the cognitive dimension involves learning new facts, ideas and concepts; (2) the affective dimension occurs as learning shifts away from the intellectual towards personal and connected knowing, often as part of a shared experience; (3) the existential dimension consists of deep soul-searching in which students question their values, life purpose and sense of meaning; (4) the empowerment dimension comes about as the students begins to resolve issues and realizes that they can make a differences; and (5) the action dimension is the final stage in which students realign their lives, either personally or professionally, as a result of their learning” (p. 258).

A consistent theme among writers who were discussing short-term study abroad trips was that of the importance of frequent guided self-reflection both individually and for the group as a whole. Younes & Asay (2003) describe the strong value students ascribed to daily group meetings where discussions and opportunities for self-reflection helped them process what at times was an almost overwhelming amount of information. Canfield, Low & Hovestadt (2009) recommended that students be required to maintain a personal journal. This was a way of initiating self-reflection but students were also directed to consider how what they were experiencing might relate to current or future career goals. This focus on helping students to look at their experiences in ways that could add value to the skill set they would have to offer to an employer because of their participation in the short-term study abroad program is an approach strongly encouraged by Gardner, et al. (2009) Regardless of the particular learning model and course assignments and activities faculty may build into their program, Scoffham & Barnes (2009) make an
important observation, “truly effective teaching involves engaging not only the mind, but also the heart and the soul” (p. 258).

As the end of the trip nears, students may need guidance in ways they can begin considering how they will finalize this very emotional and sometimes almost overwhelming experience. As mentioned earlier, multiple writers have emphasized the importance of reflection and discussion, and this may need to be even more focused as students begin moving toward returning to their home country where they will quickly become absorbed in their daily lives again. A part of participatory learning, as noted by Fowler (2005) is that students not only reflect on what they have done but also analyze and elicit lessons. Faculty may use a variety of final assignments to help students bring closure to the trip. Long, et al., (2010) have used a post-trip reflection paper as a means of helping students work through the emotions and experiences of their trip experiences, anchor their learning and help bring closure to a powerful learning experience. A number of writers (Canfield, Lowe & Hovestadt, 2009; Fowler, 2005; Long, et al., 2010; Ruhland, 2993) have used non-anonymous student journal postings where the student journal would be submitted either individually or in conjunction with a post-trip paper. A post-trip meeting may be planned for several months after the end of the trip as a way of bringing students back together and once again reflecting on their experiences and the skills they have gained from the trip. (Gardner, et al., 2009) The post-trip assignments can be helpful to faculty as they review student learning and make plans for how future trips might be shaped by the experiences and learning that occurred as part of the current trip.

THREE APPROACHES TO SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD: AN ANALYSIS

A College of Business in a mid-sized regional university located in the Southwestern area of the United States has participated in three faculty-led short-term study abroad trips to two very different locations. A site visit by one of their faculty members was made to a third location in anticipation of developing an additional study abroad opportunity. Two trips, one in 2008 and a second in 2009 were to Nizhny Novgorod and Moscow, Russia. The third trip, in 2010, was to British Columbia, Canada. In 2009 sites in Guanajuato and Queretaro, Mexico were explored as the potential location for a third faculty-led short-term study abroad trip.

The College of Business in another mid-sized regional university, also located in the Southwestern area of the United States also participated in a faculty-led short-term study abroad trip in 2010. This trip was to Ontario and Quebec, Canada. The two universities are similar in that approximately half of the students at both universities are first generation college students who work to help pay their costs of pursuing a college degree. The study abroad experiences of these two universities are similar in that both have participated in multiple faculty-led short-term study abroad trips. Both universities have supported short-term study abroad programs to cultures very different from their home country, the second university being very experienced in this area. Both have also participated in faculty-led short-term study abroad trips to Canada, a neighboring country where there were a large variety of different cultures and customs as well as many that were quite similar to those found in the home country.

Three unique formats for short-term study abroad programs are described and analysis of each is included. The three short-term study abroad formats include:

1. Studying as part of a faculty-led short-term study abroad group in a country where English is not commonly spoken by many of the local people and the culture and customs vary considerably from those in the U.S. The countries discussed related to this format include Russia and Mexico.
2. Studying as part of a faculty-led short-term study abroad group in a country where English is widely spoken by most of the local people and the culture and customs are more similar than different in many ways to those in the U.S. but with some strong cultural ties to Britain and France. The country discussed related to this format is Canada, specifically the areas of British Columbia, Quebec, and Montreal.

3. Studying as part of a university designed program where students individually or collectively may elect to attend a pre-designed short-term study abroad program without being accompanied by a faculty member from their home university. The country discussed related to this format is Canada, specifically a program sponsored by the College of Business at Laval University in Quebec City, Canada.

The first format described for a short-term faculty-led study abroad program focuses on studying in a country where English is not widely spoken by the local people in the areas being visited and where many aspects of the culture and customs are different from those commonly found in the U. S. This section includes an analysis of advantages and challenges experienced during two separate trips to Nizhny Novgorod and Moscow, Russia and expected advantages and challenges of a planned trip to Guanajuato and Queretaro, Mexico. Based on current unrest in Mexico, plans for student travel to these areas have been postponed.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nizhny Novgorod and Moscow, Russia</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language/Culture</strong> (Host country uses Cyrillic alphabet. Host country customs and culture are based on historical background and legal/political system that is much different from that found in the U.S.)</td>
<td>Cultural immersion experience is very distinctive. Offers students the opportunity to step outside their comfort zone.</td>
<td>The language difference is a barrier to U.S. students being able to visit local areas in small groups without assistance of a trained translator.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method of Program Development</strong> (Program content was negotiated in advance between the Study Abroad Coordinator at NNCI and the faculty member who would be traveling with students.)</td>
<td>This method allowed input from both parties about preferred content and activities.</td>
<td>Requests by the U.S. university were for content areas outside the Russian institute’s main academic areas. They accommodated those requests but more open communications could have created a program that might have been a better fit for both schools.</td>
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<td><strong>Transportation</strong> (Provided by host school. Included charter bus, city bus, cars, and local metro system.)</td>
<td>Opportunity to experience transportation used daily by people in the host country.</td>
<td>In some cases the size of the group limited availability to visit key locations.</td>
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<td><strong>Program Format</strong> (Time, instructional design, and flexibility.)</td>
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<td><strong>Program Cost</strong> The cost for each of the two trips was the most expensive of all trips being reviewed.</td>
<td>Scheduling in advance can help lower cost of plane tickets.</td>
<td>Can be difficult to predict in advance and can impact overall student cost negatively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guanajuato and Queretaro, Mexico</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Language/Culture</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Host country uses Spanish language. Host country customs and culture are based on historical background and legal/political system that is much different from that found in the U.S.)</td>
<td>Cultural immersion experience is very distinctive. Offers students the opportunity to step outside their comfort zone.</td>
<td>The language difference is a barrier to U.S. students being able to visit local areas in small groups without assistance of a trained translator.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method of Program Development</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Development of program content would be facilitated by people with contacts at local businesses in coordination with the faculty member who would be traveling with students.)</td>
<td>This method would allow study abroad participants access to a variety of businesses (small to large) and cultural activities. The location of at least one university in the area would also provide opportunities for students from the U.S. to meet and interact with students from Mexico.</td>
<td>The site visit did not include touring a university that had a College of Business. It would enhance the program and student interactions if the students in Mexico were studying topics related to business.</td>
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<td><strong>Transportation</strong>&lt;br&gt;(It would be necessary to arrange for rental of passenger vans with drivers for the duration of the trip.)</td>
<td>Drivers would be familiar with the areas to be visited. It would leave faculty free to focus on program-related discussion with students during travel to and from various sites.</td>
<td>If the size of the group required multiple vehicles, it would be difficult to see that all students participated in the same discussion activities. However, if a second sponsor was participating, the sponsors could collaborate regarding topics for the program-related discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Program Format</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Time, instructional design, and flexibility.)</td>
<td>It is expected that such a program would last for approximately twelve days and would be based on the format described earlier in this paper. Some flexibility could be built into the schedule.</td>
<td>It is expected that there would be few unexpected challenges and would be mostly limited to time involved in traveling from one location to another.</td>
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<td><strong>Program Cost</strong>&lt;br&gt;(The cost for students from outside the College of Business who had studied earlier in these areas was the lowest for all sites described. The recent addition of security fees have increased the costs similar to that of traveling to Quebec and Montreal. Unfortunately, security concerns have currently stopped university travel to these sites.)</td>
<td>Scheduling in advance can help lower cost of plane tickets.</td>
<td>Can be difficult to predict in advance and can impact overall student cost negatively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second format for a short-term faculty-led study abroad program focuses on studying in a country where English is widely spoken by the local people in the areas being visited and where many aspects of the culture and customs are more similar to those commonly found in the U.S. This section includes an analysis of advantages and challenges experienced during two separate trips to Canada. One trip was to the Quebec and Montreal areas of Canada. The second trip was to the province of British Columbia in Canada.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontario and Quebec, Canada</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language/Culture</strong></td>
<td>Cultural immersion experience is very distinctive. Offers students the opportunity to travel internationally and step outside their comfort zone without it being overly intimidating.</td>
<td>Many Canadians speak English and French so while students are exposed to a new language they are not forced to fully immerse themselves in French because English is often an alternative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Host country languages are English and French with French being predominant in the province of Quebec. Host country customs and culture are based on historical background and country relationships. Legal/political system has similarities to the U.S. but system has more differences than students anticipate. Very European feel in Ontario and Quebec, but especially in Quebec.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method of Program Development</strong></td>
<td>This method reduced cost significantly for the students and gave total control to the faculty leaders.</td>
<td>Handling all the arrangements is very time consuming and without a preview trip on the part of faculty, judgments are made on guides, accommodations, business visits, transportation, etc., without the benefit of firsthand knowledge. This could potentially impact the smooth delivery and high quality of the experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program content and logistics were arranged and coordinated by the Faculty Leaders who traveled with the students.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong></td>
<td>Inexpensive overall and an opportunity to experience transportation used daily by people in the host country.</td>
<td>In some cases the size of the group limited availability to visit key locations. We also limited the size of the group in order to hire a smaller bus, which saved costs. Faculty leaders had to learn bus routes and times after arriving in country. Could have been difficult to find locations and make appointments on time. Significant walking limits availability of the trip to active travelers.</td>
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<td>Arranged by faculty leaders and provided by multiple bus companies as well as American Airlines and city bus, local metro systems, trains and taxis.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Program Format</strong></td>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Challenges</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>2–4 hour pre-trip meetings</em> <em>10 days travel in-country</em> <em>Follow up academic work performed online in summer.</em> <em>Students write journals and perform independent research.</em></td>
<td>Short format is easily accessible to students. Great introductory immersion experience.</td>
<td>Limited in the amount of time available for the immersion experience because of the condensed format of the course.</td>
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| **Program Cost** | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| Scheduling in advance and arranging logistics without aid of a travel agency reduces cost. | Smaller scholarships available for shorter length of trip. |

| **British Columbia, Canada** | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| **Language/Culture** | | |
| Host country languages are English and French with English being predominant in the province of British Columbia. Host country customs and culture are based on historical background and country relationships. Legal/political system has similarities to the U.S. but system has more differences than students anticipate. The multi-cultural composition of the population in British Columbia was much broader than in the home area. | **Offers students the opportunity to travel internationally without stepping too far outside their comfort zone. It seemed to be a good experience for U.S. students who were traveling internationally for the first time and for international students who were excited to experience the culture and customs of the area on their first trip to Canada.** | Learning enough of the historical background of the many different groups of people who live in this area to understand and appreciate the cultural differences. |

| **Method of Program Development** | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Program content and logistics were arranged and coordinated by the Faculty Leaders who traveled with the students. | This method reduced cost significantly for the students and gave total control to the faculty leaders. Trip sponsors had participated in a site visit approximately eight months prior to traveling on the trip with students. | Handling all the arrangements is very time consuming, even with a preview trip on the part of faculty. There are several excellent universities in the area. Recommendations for future groups would be to arrange opportunities for students from the U.S. to meet students from several of these universities and perhaps to invite faculty to lecture on business and/or cultural related topics. |
Transportation
Arranged by faculty leaders. Three mini-vans were rented in Seattle and members of the group had been selected as drivers.

Inexpensive overall and allowed for flexibility if times or events needed to be revised.

Drivers had to adjust to driving in a different country where traffic laws and speed limits were somewhat different. At times, especially in city traffic, it was difficult to coordinate all three vehicles. Two of the vehicles had GPS systems but they were different and frequently provided routes. Purchase of walkie-talkie radios facilitated communication between vehicles.

Program Format
*Approximately five pre-trip meetings of 1 to 1 ½ hours were scheduled. *12 days travel in-country *Follow up academic work conducted upon return. *Students were requested to write in their journals and provide a verbal report of their trip experiences.

Short format is easily accessible to students. Great introductory immersion experience.

Limited in the amount of time available for the immersion experience because of the condensed format of the course.

Program Cost
Scheduling in advance and arranging logistics without aid of a travel agency reduces cost.

Smaller scholarships available for shorter length of trip.

The third format for a study abroad program focuses on studying in a university located outside the home university such as Laval University located in Quebec City, Canada. This three week program is planned and administered by faculty and staff of Laval University. Students from other areas of Canada, as well as other countries, have the option of participating in this program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quebec City, Canada</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tr>
<td>Laval University</td>
<td>Cultural immersion experience is very distinctive. Offers students the opportunity to travel internationally and step outside their comfort zone. Students will have the opportunity to meet students from other countries and study with faculty from Laval University.</td>
<td>Many Canadians speak English and French so while students are exposed to a new language they are not forced to fully immerse themselves in French because English is often an alternative. The biggest challenge is being in an international location where they are responsible for learning the schedule, meeting course requirements, meeting and learning to work with students from other areas and learning to function in an international environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language/Culture</td>
<td>Host country languages are English and French with French being predominant in the province of Quebec. Host country customs and culture are based on historical background and country relationships. Legal/political system has similarities to the U.S. but system has more differences than students anticipate. Very European feel in Ontario and Quebec, but especially in Quebec.</td>
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</table>
### Method of Program Development

Program content and logistics are arranged by Laval University. This method introduces concepts and theory in one class meeting, provides an opportunity for application in a simulated setting, and frequently uses trips to local organizations in the local and surrounding areas to further reinforce and illustrate the applied practice of the theory and concepts being studied. Students will need to be prepared to be challenged academically in a variety of areas. These areas may be similar to or different from those they typically study at their home university.

### Transportation

Arranged by faculty and staff of Laval University. Provides an opportunity for students to see local and surrounding areas while learning about local transportation. Students will need to follow the pre-planned travel arrangements for many of the activities. However, they will likely also have free time to allow them to experiment with the local transportation system in the area.

### Program Format

Three weeks of pre-planned classroom lectures/discussions, experiential activities and excursions to local and surrounding areas. Format is long enough to experience being in a different culture but short enough that many students who are working to pay their college expenses could manage around a work schedule. Students who are successful will earn six semester credits. Great introductory immersion experience. Students will need to balance study requirements with desire to experience the local culture.

### Program Cost

Includes tuition, housing, breakfast, internet, access to the campus facilities as well as all programme activities as outlined in the schedule. Very competitive for access to the academic and cultural content resulting in three semester credits. Students might want to research academic requirements in advance in order to better understand what will be required of them in order to be successful.

Observations about these three formats for short-term study abroad programs reflect both advantages and challenges. The variety in the formats can allow students who are less comfortable in unfamiliar surroundings to select a trip to a location such as British Columbia where there will be many people using the English language, food choices similar to that found in the U. S. will be available, and the culture shock factor will be low. Students who are more comfortable in unfamiliar surroundings may find a trip to a country such as Russia exciting and rewarding. Still other students who prefer to travel independently may want to opt for a program such as that offered by Laval University where students are not part of a home university-sponsored group. Instead one or more students might work through their Study Abroad Office and their academic counselor to arrange to enroll in a program such as that offered by Laval University. At that point the experience becomes more like a semester study abroad except for a more brief time period.
These observations relate primarily to three arbitrarily selected formats for short-term study abroad. Certainly there are a many other ways in which short-term study abroad programs might be developed but these three formats show how study abroad programs can be developed to meet a variety of student comfort levels within an affordable budget and manageable time frame. Since both universities represented in this paper through student study abroad programs have a large number of first generation college students, it is the intent of the authors to focus on program formats that could be attractive to this group of students.

CONCLUSIONS

This section addresses conclusions that were reached regarding study abroad trips and their relevance to student needs. As universities continue to develop and expand short-term study abroad programs, it is important to have program formats that will attract a variety of students and provide programs that will not place students in an environment where their comfort zone might be stretched beyond their ability to adapt. Participating in two short-term study abroad programs that allow an international experience with a high comfort level followed by a second program where the cultural immersion might provide for a little deeper and different experience would be far more valuable than an initial program that was so different the student experienced extreme culture shock. For a student in the College of Business, a study abroad experience can provide opportunities to build marketable skills by seeing firsthand what it would like to be in a global business in another country where management styles and practices might be different from those used in their home country. Educational goals for study abroad that can lead to marketable skills include increasing knowledge, shaping attitudes, and building confidence (Sachu, Brasher, and Fee, 2010). “The benefits of study abroad can be profound” (Brux & Fry, 2010) and if the format and level of cultural immersion meets the needs of adaptability level of students, it could result in a positive personal and career-focused life changing experience.

REFERENCES

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