Faculty as Global Learners: The Transformative Impact of Leading Off-Campus Programs

Integrating Off-Campus Study and On-Campus Learning—September 15-16, 2017
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- Sponsored by Elon University Center for Engaged Learning, Seminar on Integrating Global Learning with the University Experience: Higher-impact Study Abroad and Off-Campus Domestic Study
The Impetus for Our Study

• At liberal arts colleges, faculty-led off-campus study away and study abroad programs present high strategic value but entail institutional costs.

• We wanted to examine the impact of leading global programs on:
  – faculty members’ teaching, research, service, and overall well-being; and
  – Faculty members’ perceptions of student learning in those programs.

• Make recommendations to campuses to better support faculty leaders and make the most of these opportunities.
Theoretical Framework: Transformative learning theory

Mezirow and Taylor’s (2009) transformative learning paradigm theory has primarily been used to study post-secondary students and adult learners in the workplace. We explored the theory’s applicability to the faculty learning process while leading university-based study away programs.
Theoretical Perspective: Global Learning

“...a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability.” (AAC&U Shared Futures: Global and Social Responsibility initiative)
Research Methods

Sample: 28 private liberal arts colleges (ACM, 14; ACS, 13; Elon University)

- **Survey 1 (Fall 2015): Understanding Faculty & Student Transformation in Study Abroad/Study Away Programs at Liberal Arts Institutions (n=223)**
  - 59 questions: demographic factors, institutional support, preparation, and outcomes for teaching, research, service, and attitudinal changes

- **Survey 2 (Fall 2016): Follow-Up Questions for Faculty Members Who Lead Study Away and Study Abroad at Liberal Arts Institutions (n=72)**
  - 8 open-ended questions: global learning, critical incidents, institutional support, other high-impact practices, pedagogy, assessment, impact on faculty leader
Participant Demographics

- 53% female
- 77% are tenured
- 59% are age 50 or older
- Institutional affiliation:
  - 47% ACM; 37% ACS; 16% Elon
- Race/Ethnicity:
  - 83% identified as White; 3% identified as Black; 2%
    identified as Asian; 4% identified as Latino
- Academic discipline:
  - 39% Arts & Humanities; 19% Social Science; 13%
    Interdisciplinary; 13% STEM; 9% Pre-professional
Location of Faculty-Led Programs

Survey Categories taken from the Open Doors Report - Demographics, Survey 1 (Fall 2015)

Domestic - 7%
Latin America / Caribbean - 19%
Europe - 28%
Asia – 13%
Sub-Saharan Africa - 7%
Middle East / North Africa – 5%
Oceania – 2%
More than one region – 8%
Missing – 11%
Program Responsibilities

As a program leader, participants were, on average, responsible for 8 of the following tasks/areas.

**Pre-Departure:** Arrange student housing; Plan and lead student orientation; Present cross-cultural training; Create a program budget.

**In-country / on-site:** Oversee student housing; Plan and present student orientation; Enforce student disciplinary code; Address student medical needs; Continue cross-cultural training; Oversee program budget and payments to local vendors; Mentor a co-instructor or program assistant.

**Post-Program:** Plan and lead a post-program debriefing session.

52% of respondents were responsible for carrying out 8 or more of these tasks.
Finding #1

Faculty members at liberal arts colleges reported benefiting from consistent, strong institutional support across the entire study away / study abroad experience (from proposal to re-entry).
Institutional Support = Positive Feelings

- Participants who reported high levels of institutional support were more likely to experience positive feelings post-SA/SA:
  - Support:
    - training, compensation, recognition, staff support
  - Positive feelings:
    - eager to lead a different or the same SA/SA program
    - found SA/SA to be a worthwhile use of time and energy
    - felt more connected to the mission of their institution
    - improved relationships with colleagues
    - felt renewed or energized
Institutional Support: Self-Reported Skills and Gaps

Areas of highest confidence:
• “Designing effective pedagogical methods for teaching students in the field.” (29.1%)
• “Cross-cultural adaptation/culture shock.” (16.1%)
• “Administrative responsibilities (e.g., budgeting).” (10.3%)

Areas of lowest confidence:
• “Student healthcare, including mental health” (22.9%)
• “FERPA Guidelines” (14.8%)
• “Assessing student growth and learning” (6.7%)
Finding #2

Faculty who led study away / study abroad programs reported a variety of **positive changes** – including attitudes and behaviors.
Faculty Narratives: Shifts in Learning

• Pursue new research areas
• Develop a secondary expertise
• Become more interdisciplinary
• Develop intercultural and bilingual learning
• Improve problem solving
• Rethink assumptions
Faculty Narratives: Attitudinal Shifts

• Renewed interest/fueled work
• Intentionally seeking to teach to transform
• Happier, braver
• Greater spirituality, more empathy
• Deeper reflection on own identity
• Tackling global learning more aggressively
Faculty Narratives: Behavioral Shifts

- Increase flexibility as a teacher
- Identify as a more effective leader
- Contribute to global goals across the curriculum
- Become more modest, more realistic
Finding #3

Faculty report that their institutions do not support the things they say they value in global learning.
Perception of Institutional Values

- **59%** believed “to a great extent” that “**Global learning** is a priority for my institution.”

- **22%** believed “to a great extent” that “**Supporting faculty** members who lead global programs is a priority for my institution.”
Proper support can help any (willing) faculty member successfully lead a SA/SA program at any point in their career.
No significant relationships between these factors and behavioral and attitudinal outcomes:

**Factors**
- Tenure Status
- Academic Rank
- Sex
- Marital Status
- Parental Status
- Program Destination
- Academic Discipline
- Amount of leadership responsibilities for SASA Program

**Outcome Variables**
- Teaching
- Research
- Service
- Positive Feelings
- Negative Feelings
- Composite Transformation Score
Finding #5

Faculty members integrated study away/study abroad with other recognized High Impact Practices (Kuh, 2008).
94% (n=64) of Survey II respondents reported that they incorporated at least one other High-Impact Practice (Kuh, 2008) into their SA/SA program.
Desired Outcomes of our Study

• Elucidate faculty perceptions of the value of off-campus programs for faculty leaders, students, and institutions
• Create a white paper advocating for institutional policy changes that support faculty transformation in global education
• Begin to document how faculty preparation affects positive student learning outcomes
Additional Outcomes

• Articulate Good Practices in Global Education to enhance the transformative impact on faculty
• Develop an instrument on faculty transformation in Global Education
• Develop faculty communities of practice
• Contribute to resources on how students learn (SOTL)