

## Curriculum Integration of Study Abroad

*"A nation, like a person, has a mind -- a mind that must be kept informed and alert, that must know itself, that understands the hopes and needs of its neighbors -- all the other nations that live within the narrowing circle of the world." --Franklin Roosevelt*

According to a national study conducted by the American Council on Education, the Art & Science Group, and the College Board, 81 percent of high school seniors desire to or expect to study abroad in college ("College Bound"). Meanwhile, NAFSA: Association of International Educators reports only five percent of college students study abroad. That leaves 76 percent of the college market left behind. If Samford University could be known as a study abroad school, this would give the institution a decided advantage when recruiting students and young faculty.

*The Idea:* With the completion of the ACE Internationalization Lab in 2014, the next logical step in the internationalizing of Samford University for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is **Curriculum Integration** of Study Abroad coursework.

**Background:** There have been three distinct periods in the evolution of study abroad in American academe. The first period developed in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century primarily among universities in the northeast. This period can be characterized as "the junior year abroad." Students studied primarily in language, culture, and literature courses. The second era saw a democratization of study abroad among universities throughout the nation. It was during this time that Samford students in the world languages began to study overseas, and the university purchased the Daniel House in London. Coursework remained primarily focused on language, culture, literature, and the fine arts. To this day, more than 90 percent of Samford credits earned abroad are in the general education subjects of language, culture, literature, and fine arts. Samford is behind the academic curve.

Since 2000, a third era has emerged in which more and more university students study abroad in their area of academic expertise. Business majors study international business trends in Hong Kong and Shanghai, art majors study the development of ceramics in Tuscany, nursing majors study healthcare trends in Germany, interior design students study Scandinavian design in Copenhagen, and film students study the cinema in Mumbai. Except in isolated cases, few Samford students study abroad within their major and enhance their marketability as prospective employees with a global outlook.

*The goal:* This year, more than 600 colleges, universities and educational partners worldwide (including more than 400 U.S. universities) joined an effort by the Institute for International Education in New York to double American study abroad participation by the year 2020. Samford is not currently a commitment partner, but we are well positioned to join the effort by integrating study abroad throughout the university curriculum. This is accomplished through extensive program research and collaboration with individual academic departments.

The goals of Curriculum Integration are to:

- increase integration of study abroad into all undergraduate majors
- create *access* to study abroad for all students
- provide opportunities for students to study abroad without extending the length of their degree plan
- provide additional scholarships and more affordable study abroad opportunities for all students
- tailor international education experiences to meet the academic requirements and goals of each department and to achieve specific learning outcomes
- make study abroad *discipline*-focused rather than destination-focused (which reflects our current program)
- create long term change—a more internationalized undergraduate experience

*How it works:* ACCESS-MATCH-MOTIVATE—An Office of Curriculum Integration would assemble a small staff of study abroad researchers to work with faculty and department chairs to identify the most enriching study abroad experiences for their majors. Choosing from the thousands of education abroad options open to all American university students, the research team looks for semester abroad coursework that is complementary to the major and is then approved as an academic option by the faculty in a particular department. An academic department can approve a number of options in a variety of locations but students can only spend one semester abroad within the major. All departments take part in this process.

Two outcomes of this process are that all Samford undergraduate students will have access to an international option within their major, and Samford faculty will become active participants in setting international education goals for their students.

*Impact on learning:* Engaging students across the university in a study abroad experience benefits student learning on several levels.

- Curriculum Integration of study abroad benefits learning by adding an international perspective to all majors and career choices.
- Curriculum Integration improves cultural sensitivity for students who study abroad through enhanced pre-departure and re-entry orientations.
- A massive ten year study in the state university system of Georgia (GLOSSARI) found that students who study abroad have higher retention and graduation rates at the four and six year marks (as high as 17.8 percent higher) which had a direct impact on campus revenue. This effect was highest for lower achieving or at-risk students (Sutton and Rubin).
- GLOSSARI also found that the increased retention and graduation rates hold across the variables of race, gender, and variance in SAT/ACT scores.
- GLOSSARI also found that mean cumulative GPA increased more for study abroad students after their return to campus than for the domestic control group.
- The studies that show positive correlations between study abroad and graduation rates and GPA increases have been replicated at The University of Minnesota

- (system wide), The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Indiana University, the University of Connecticut, the University of Texas at Austin, San Diego State University and the Community College System of California.
- The American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS) found that 65 percent of students who study abroad report the experience contributed significantly to their ability to choose a meaningful career, 80 percent said it helped their ability to adapt in diverse workplace environments, and 68 percent said it contributed to their ability to understand an organization's culture ("AIFS").
  - Students in the same study reported the experience created a desire for more diverse friendships (87%), a better understanding of themselves and their values (90%), a sense of confidence in new situations (93%), the ability to be more flexible and open minded (89%), and the ability to take initiative (87%).

*Broad participation:* Given the national interest among college students in study abroad and the limited curricular offerings at Samford, a curriculum integration program would encourage broad participation among students and, more importantly, faculty. If Samford were to begin curriculum integration, student involvement would look more like the national participation rates. Twenty three percent of all American study abroad students study STEM subjects; 23 percent study in the humanities (including five percent in foreign language); 22 percent study the social sciences; followed by 20 percent in business; eight percent in fine arts; and four percent in education ("Open Doors").

Broad participation will also be encouraged by the process itself. Curriculum Integration will have four goals: The first is to integrate study abroad into all undergraduate degree programs. The second is to increase faculty and advisor awareness of the impact that study abroad can have in students' lives and increase the faculty knowledge base about study abroad options for students. Third, the Office of Curriculum Integration will develop innovative practices and materials to insure that Samford increases study abroad participation. Finally, the initiative hopes to create an institutional culture shift to embrace internationalization of the curriculum.

*Strengths and weaknesses:* While Samford has a rich history of study abroad participation, the glaring weakness is that our study abroad curriculum is stuck in the 1980s. Samford has to ask itself what it wants its students to get out of a study abroad experience. Do we want our geography majors to study culture and the arts in London or take Urban Planning and Society with CIEE in The Netherlands? Should a history major with an interest in Asia stay on campus or spend a semester in Vietnam with SIT studying Culture, Social Change, and Development? The answer seems simple. What happens when our students graduate and compete for jobs with graduates from Elon and Wofford who have spent a semester abroad taking classes in their major?

*How to measure outcomes:* Outcomes would be measured ultimately in student participation. Retention and graduation rates would also be monitored as well as mean GPA performance post study abroad. All of the GLOSSARI surveys and measures are free and online. To a certain extent, many of the same outcomes could be studied.

In terms of learning outcomes, there are a number of established instruments that have been used in the past to measure the effects of study abroad on cultural sensitivity, knowledge and personal development. These tests could measure:

Intercultural competence using the Global Competence Aptitude Assessment;  
The Global Competence Aptitude Assessment (GCAA) is the world's most comprehensive measure of student and faculty/staff global readiness.

Personal development using the Intercultural Development Inventory. The Intercultural Development Inventory assesses intercultural competence—the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities.

Personal understanding using the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI). The Forum on Study Abroad has partnered with the International Beliefs and Values Institute to study the effects of learning abroad. BEVI helps individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions 1) understand better what they believe and value about themselves, others, and the world at large and 2) reflect upon how such beliefs and values may - or may not - be conducive to learning, personal growth, relationships, and the pursuit of life goals.

A very important outcome of this effort would be an additional initiative in partnership with the Career Development Center. Pioneered at the University of Minnesota, **Career Integration** of Study Abroad seeks to apply the methodology of curriculum integration to a specific focus on career planning. Career integration seeks to:

- Partner to integrate learning abroad resources into career advising structures
- Develop tools and resources to help students identify, connect, and communicate the impact of their experience abroad on their professional goals before, during and after their experience abroad
- Integrate career-related outcomes into articulated individual program learning outcomes
- Create program selection and advising tools designed to help students choose opportunities to explore or build skills in career interests
- Identify student goals for careers earlier in advising and planning for going abroad

*Complementing our strategic plan:* Curriculum Integration of Study Abroad would meet or exceed many of the objectives in the Samford strategic plan. (Samford's objectives are in bold).

- The evidence suggests that study abroad experiences **magnify student success**—not just while abroad but also subsequent to the experience upon return.
- Curriculum integration would offer multiple experiences that **illuminate and expand traditional learning**.
- As many international program providers are integrating faculty-led experiences

- into their coursework abroad, curriculum integration would nourish and **recruit young faculty committed to exceptional standards of learning.**
- The GLOSSARI and CCC SOAR evidence is clear. Study abroad participation **increases retention and graduation rates** and thus has the potential for enhancing job placement.
  - By design, curriculum integration would further **define learning outcomes** in all academic departments.
  - Increased participation in study abroad would **increase experiential education opportunities** through international internships, service-learning, and teaching English abroad.
  - A career integration initiative would bring the Career Development Center into partnership with the Curriculum Integration Office.
  - Because of the pervasiveness of the program, **Samford's reach would be extended globally.**
  - **New audiences** and international partnerships would be created and nurtured—leading perhaps to student, research, and faculty exchanges.
  - As a result of sending our students to study all over the world alongside other American students from hundreds of other institutions, **the Samford story will be told with an extended reach** throughout the U.S. and the world.

According to the ACE survey, 81 percent of high school graduates want to study abroad in college. Since roughly 28 percent of Samford students study abroad, and if Samford students want a similar college experience as the rest of the country, the study abroad goals of at least 50 percent of our students are not being met. Curriculum Integration of Study Abroad would close the gap, attract new students, and increase retention toward graduation.

#### Works Cited

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