

Developing a Faculty-Led Short-Term Study Abroad Program: An Evolutionary Process

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ABSTRACT

Students need knowledge about other cultures and opportunities to develop skills needed as global citizens in today's global world. Faculty-led short-term study abroad programs can help facilitate this need. This paper describes a narrative analysis of three faculty-led short-term study abroad trips. Observations related to practices for these trips that are supported in relevant study abroad literature are provided as well as ways in which the study abroad trip practices differ from such literature. Recommendations that could help future study abroad trips be more effective for both students and faculty are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Whether employees are located in the United States or in a global location outside the United States, there is still a need to possess skills that will enable them to interact effectively with people who are different from themselves (Nancherla, 2010). For employees located within the United States, the fact that “demographic changes are transforming the United States into a microcosm of the global village” (McPherson, 2009) only highlights the need to understand and appreciate a culturally diverse workforce that is no longer majority and historic minorities but is inclusive of large immigrant populations (Chang, 2010; Fairley & Tyler, 2009; Sobania & Braskamp, 2009). This trend, as noted by Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, and McMillen (2009), will only increase with the expectation 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” (p. 173).

Today many universities are seeking opportunities for their students to experience a culturally diverse environment that will provide them with exposure to other cultures and experience life in international locations (D'Acquisto, 2009). The importance of these efforts are emphasized by Sobania and Braskamp (2009): Since this generation and future generations of students are and will be increasingly interacting with a larger, more globalized community, they need to become ever more competent in understanding, talking with, relating to, and working with persons who differ from them politically, socioeconomically and religiously. (p. 23) Younes and Asay (2003) capture this need succinctly with the comment that “our global age requires a global education” (p. 141). In the recent decade, partly as a response to this growing need for better global understanding, “students studying abroad has been increasing by more than 150% to approximately 223,000 U.S. students” (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 173). This increase in the numbers of students studying abroad is of particular interest to colleges of business for at least two reasons. Business students represent about 19% of all undergraduate study abroad students (Loroz, 2009) there has been a large increase in the number of MBA programs requiring a travel abroad course (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 173). As globalization of the workforce and surrounding communities has continued to increase, larger numbers of students are seeking opportunities to experience other cultures and learn more about the history and cultural customs that mold their people.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International) is one of the primary accrediting bodies for collegiate business schools. AACSB International has adopted standards that “support external business trends and calls for the increased coverage of international topics and issues (Gordon, Heischmidt, Sterrett & McMillan, 2009; Helms, Mayo & Baxter, 2003). These trends in globalization and increasing numbers of students studying abroad are important to universities who are providing that desired global experience. In order to do this effectively, many business schools across the United States are designing programs and revising existing programs to better reach out and internationalize both students and faculty (Gordon et al., 2009; Helms, et al., 2003).

All of these factors, the desire of universities to provide opportunities for students to have adequate exposure to a variety of culturally diverse environments, to help students have opportunities to gain skills that will be needed to be successful in the increasingly diverse and globalized community, and to provide an internationalized academic program that meets the accreditation standards of bodies such as AACSB, are driving growth in study abroad programs. This paper is organized into five sections. The first section includes an overview of three basic formats of study abroad programs. In the second section, the focus is on short-term study abroad course design and ways an academic focus can be balanced with recreational activities to achieve measureable learning outcomes. Section three describes the two approaches to short-term study abroad that have been utilized in this emerging short-term study abroad program. In section four these narrative summaries are analyzed in relationship to relevant academic literature in terms of pre-trip activities, the actual cultural immersion process and use of group and individual academic assignments, and the process involved in returning home and processing group adjournment. This section also describes the contributions of this paper to the literature and its limitations. The final section includes concluding remarks regarding study abroad programs and their relevance to students.

TYPES OF STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

Many universities who are seeking to provide students with opportunities to develop skills and competencies for the increasingly globalized workforce are doing so through participation in traditional semester or year-long study abroad programs. Traditional semester or year-long study abroad programs organized by American colleges date back to the 1930's (Goldberg, 1982). 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. This change included equal changes in, and expansion of, foreign study opportunities. Looking at the background and early development of this traditional approach to study abroad as reported by Hoffa (2007), such experiences were basically viewed as an opportunity for adventure in far away exotic locations before taking on the responsibilities of adulthood (as cited in Long, Akande, Purdy & Nakano, 2010, p. 91). According to Hoffa (2007), even many of these earlier study abroad programs were perceived by students and parents "that an experience overseas would make young people more [. . .] competitive" (as cited in Long, et al., 2007, p. 91). While study abroad experiences may still offer exciting experiences in overseas locations, the goal of such programs has become much more closely aligned with helping students become more prepared to compete effectively in today's global environment. This is one reason why students are participating in study abroad programs today in increasingly larger numbers.

Some of the educational justifications for participating in this more traditional approach to study abroad are opportunities for students to better understand the interdependence of nations, see firsthand the value of diversity, and to develop perspectives that are more global (Alon & Higgins, 2005; Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001).

Study abroad experiences have the potential to move students outside their comfort zone. Instead of being involved mainly people much like themselves with whom they share similar value systems, they are provided with opportunities to interact with students and others who have different cultural customs and world views (Younes & Asay, 2003). The challenges involved in study abroad programs that can help students expand their comfort zones are varied. These can range from "negotiating public transportation systems, markets, menus, and pharmacies to higher-order things like language, customs, norms and, of course, their academic coursework" (Gardner, Steglitz & Gross, 2009, p. 20). Many administrators, faculty and staff members who work with students in colleges of business consider an international study experience as one of the best approaches for business students to learn about the international business environment and world cultures (Gordon et al., 2009). The costs of participating in a traditional semester or year-long study abroad experience include both the financial costs and the need to leave family and friends behind. For students with responsibilities for caring for young children or older parents or who need to work to help fund their education, this traditional approach to study abroad is not a viable alternative. An emerging method for the study of diverse cultures in the local area is one option being explored as way to meet learning needs for students who, for a

variety of reasons, need to remain in the local area. This innovative approach to studying different cultural issues, called study away, is discussed in the following section.

A much newer and less researched approach to provide students with an alternative to a traditional study abroad experience is the study away program. Study away programs take place in the local environment which doesn't require extensive time away from friends or job. Nor does it require the expense involved in a study abroad program (Sobania & Braskamp, 2009). While a study away program or project can provide an opportunity for immersion in a culturally diverse environment, last up to a semester and result in a strong learning experience, research has shown that "immersing students in a different culture is liable to be much more effective than an intercultural visit within their own country" (Scoffham & Barnes, 2009, p. 267). While study away programs may help raise student awareness of and understanding about various diverse cultural groups in the local area, it doesn't appear to duplicate the impact of cultural immersion that is experienced when travelling in a different country. Another approach to study abroad is the short-term study abroad program. This study abroad format, which has experienced continued growth and expansion in recent years, is discussed in the following section.

A third format for study abroad programs is known as the short-term study abroad experience. This is an experience in which "students are engaged for fewer than eight weeks and is the most common type of undergraduate study abroad in the United States" (Donnelly-Smith, 2009, p. 12). It has been estimated that approximately half of American study abroad students participate in these short-term programs (Long, et al., 2010). The short-term study abroad program may have especially strong appeal for universities with a student body comprised of a large number of first generation college students, more nontraditional students or many students who are working at one or more jobs to pay their way through college and whose parents may not be able to fund a traditional semester or year study abroad program Long, et al, 2010). For students in one or more of these situations, the short-term study abroad experience may provide an opportunity for a global study abroad experience. Donnelly-Smith suggests several reasons for the increasing popularity of short-term programs, including: they are generally more affordable than longer programs, they 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 [. . .] to study abroad without falling behind in their programs. (2009, p. 12)

Support for participation in, and associated learning from, these short-term study abroad programs is provided by the Institute of International Education in their annual guide to short-term programs in the 2007/2008 edition. This report states, "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 by Long, et al., 2010, p. 92). 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)

The fastest growing form of study abroad, short-term study abroad, typically ranges in time from one to eight weeks. Given the relatively short time period involved in this study abroad format, course design and delivery becomes a critical component of student success. It is important to examine best practices as they relate to course design and delivery, and to course outcomes and evaluations for his approach to study abroad.

SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD COURSE DESIGN

A key component of course effectiveness and student learning, as reported by Gordon et al., (2009) is the importance of achieving a balance between recreation and learning. This balance is important to ensure that the short-term study abroad course is not reduced to educational tourism (Döring, et al., 2009) but becomes a pathway whereby students have the opportunity to develop a broader base on which to build life skills that will help them become better able to engage the world (Long, et al., 2010) as a global citizen.

In designing an effective short-term study abroad course, as with other academic courses, a good place to begin is with identified learning objectives (Sobania & Braskamp, 2009). The study of a different culture and cultural practices

can involve separating the learner from the familiar and help them make new discoveries about ways they may view the world, or at least one part of it, differently (Younes & Asay, 2003).

One way to build this process into the course is through required pre-trip activities. Long, et al., (2010) recommend using such pre-trip required participation as a way to harness the students' energy and enthusiasm through the use of collaboration to develop wish lists of places to visit and potential research topics. These meetings can also provide opportunities for class members to discuss assigned readings, hear short lectures about the historical and cultural customs of the areas they will be visiting (Döring, et al., 2009).

These required preliminary meetings can begin to set academic expectations, encourage Internet research of the areas to be visited and to begin conversations with other students (Younes & Asay, 2003). Team building activities can help students begin learning more about each other (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009). Making sure students have a basic understanding of Tuckman's (1965) five stages of group development, the ability to recognize each stage, and are aware of strategies to help move the group from one stage to the next can be included in the team building activities. The meetings can also provide opportunities to ensure that the students know what is expected of them academically as well as cultural differences they will be experiencing. By providing students with opportunities to participate in developing portions of the course itinerary, beginning to build some academic knowledge of the historical and cultural customs of the areas they will be visiting, and through team building activities and group work, the opportunity to begin getting acquainted with their soon-to-be fellow travelers, students will be better prepared for both an academic and experiential activity-based learning program.

As the students move from pre-trip planning to the actual travel experience, having experiential opportunities that are tied to their course learning objectives can assist in their development of global perspectives (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; Long, et al., 2010; Sobania & Braskamp, 2009; and Younes & Asay, 2003). As students engage in experiential aspects of the cultural immersion of the study abroad trip, these opportunities can help them develop life skills that will allow them to be prepared to engage the world (Long, et al, 2010) while creating memories that will last a lifetime (Grimes-MacLellan, 2005). An environment conducive to supporting such attitude change will include student satisfaction level related to their experiences in the host country, their interactions with the nationals as compared with pre-trip expectations and motivations, and their overall enjoyment of the program (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001).

As students participate in the planned trip activities, they can be encouraged to look for historical, political, and cultural attributes that impact the customs and processes they encounter. (Döring, et al., 2010) Having specific learning objectives for each of the experiential activities is an invaluable component of raising student awareness of unique aspects of the country and its people (Sobania & Braskamp, 2009). Awareness by group leaders of participant attitudes and expectations is also helpful as the leaders work to engage not only the mind of the learners but also their hearts and soul (Döring, et al., 2010; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009). The short-term environment, as discussed by Ruhland (1993), provides an opportunity to combine travel experiences with creative approaches to teaching (as cited in Younes & Asay, 2003). Pascual-Leone & Irwin (1998) have found that self-directed and self-reflective approaches can be especially effective with adult learners (as cited in Younes & Asay, 2003).

Qualities of study abroad leaders, as a key component of trip effectiveness, are described from several perspectives. These range from the importance places by Younes & Asay (2003) on attributes such as a willingness to be helpful, dependable, engaging, and knowledgeable. Also stressed it the importance of the leaders to have the ability to facilitate effective group interactions and maintain the group's focus on the learning experience. (Scoffham & Barnes, 2009) Younes & Asay (2003) also emphasize the importance of both leaders and students to consistently have a mental awareness of the group in relation to Tuckman's (1965) five stages of group development and ways they can be a positive force in helping the group move through these stages effectively. All of the participants may feel stress from the challenge of being part of a group where they have very little personal space for the duration of the trip. At the same time, being part of the group can have considerable advantages. Many of the students may forge extremely close friendships over the period of the trip and there may be strong bonds formed across the entire group. (Scoffham & Barnes, 2009)

Nightly group meetings where students had the opportunity to discuss the events of the day, process with the group the almost overwhelming amount of information they had encountered and search for meaning in relation to their

daily study objectives were repeatedly emphasized as critical to student learning (Fowler, 2005; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009; Younes & Asay, 2003) These daily meetings offered opportunities for encouraging students to consider the ways in which their cultural experiences might influence their own behavior, attitudes, and beliefs as well as how their professional roles might be impacted (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009). Requiring student use of journals was a way for the students to document their observations and reflections about what they had seen, heard and felt (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009). The importance of reflecting on and processing experiences as a long-held educational belief was described by Dewey (1913) nearly 80 years ago: "Experience alone is not sufficient for learning to occur . . . [learning requires] active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it" (as cited in Scoffham & Barnes, 2009, p. 265).

Students were told in advance that the journals would be reviewed by trip leaders at the end of the trip and their comments would be evaluated as part of the learning outcomes. Most academic programs, including study abroad, are now held accountable for measuring student-learning outcomes (Rexeisen & Al-Khatib, 2009). As students complete the cultural immersion segment of the study-abroad trip, attention needs to be focused on the last stages of the study-abroad trip process, the post-trip activities and assessment of learning outcomes.

As students complete the last events on their trip itinerary and prepare to return to their home country, they are beginning to experience Tuckman's (1965) adjourning stage of group development (Younes & Asay, 2003). Once they return home, it is likely there will be many responsibilities and commitments waiting (e.g., family, jobs, work for other classes, etc.), that will make the attendance of post-trip meetings challenging. Reinforcing the intercultural learning that took place during the study abroad trip is one way to bring closure to the trip and anchor the learning (Scoffham & Barnes, 2009; Younes & Asay, 2003). While a study abroad trip can contribute to the students' development of life skills that can be helpful in engaging the world (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001), there are other skill sets that need to be highlighted. Depending on the extent of cultural differences experienced, the students may have been exposed to a variety of unsettling experiences. Festinger (1957) used the term cognitive dissonance to describe the responses of people to situations which conflict strongly with their expectations. He believed that it is through the process of resolving the cognitive dissonance that we generate new thinking (as cited by Scoffham & Barnes, 2009). One approach to helping students work through the emotions and experiences of their trip experiences, anchor their learning and help bring closure to this powerful learning experience could be through the completion of a post-trip reflection paper. The use of such an assignment would help accomplish the need of students to work at intercultural learning before, during and after the study abroad trip (Long, et al., 2003).

Benefits to business students who participate in one of these forms of study abroad or study away programs can involve the opportunity to "hold up a mirror to their culture and deepen their understanding of their specialist subjects" (Scoffham & Barnes, 2009, p. 257), develop "an increased level of cultural awareness and sensitivity as a result of the experience" (Canfield, 2009, p. 321); and "facilitate personal growth, change world views and even be used to enhance student resumes" (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 173).

Of particular value to business students returning from a short-term study abroad trip is the ability to identify specific skills learned from study abroad experiences that can translate to workplace effectiveness (Sobania & Braskamp, 2009). The students may need assistance in identifying how their experiences translate to workplace skills. Research completed at Michigan State University by Gardner, et al., (2009) asked employers their opinions about competencies in which new and recent hires with international experienced demonstrated higher abilities than new and recent hires without known international study or internship experiences. It is important for study abroad students to note that the results produced a meaningful separation between the two student groups.

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 develop marketable career goals. Another aspect of bringing closure to the study abroad trip is assessing the learning outcomes and documenting the learning that has occurred.

Learning outcomes for study abroad programs can be assessed for a variety of reasons. The assessment might stem from a desire to improve a program, to market future programs to students and other stakeholder groups (Long, et al., 2003), or as part of an assurance of learning plan that is a component of the college's accreditation program (Helms,

et al., 2003). There are a variety of approaches to assessment of learning outcomes. Long, et al., (2010) have found that using some form of pre- and post-trip measurement can help identify changes in students' inter-cultural sensitivity and perceptions of the people and customs in the host country. Another approach to assessment of learning outcomes in short-term study abroad trips is non-anonymous student journal postings (Ruhland, 1993; Fowler, 2005; Canfield, Lowe & Hovestadt, 2009). One example of the use of non-anonymous student journal postings in assessment of a short-term study abroad trip is provided by Long, et al., (2010): Faculty reviewed journals and open-ended survey questions for content analysis. Common themes were identified and in addition to individual opinions, this provided a basis for assessing the program. The assessment of the non-anonymous journal postings as reported by Long, et al., (2010) were generally positive and reflected that students appeared to have made advancements toward greater cultural sensitivity and had developed the ability to question their own assumptions and become aware of alternative approaches of cultural customs that affected their daily lives during the study abroad trip.

TWO APPROACHES TO SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD: AN ANALYSIS

A mid-sized regional university located in the Southwestern area of the United States decided in 2008 to initiate its first faculty-led study abroad program in the College of Business. Since that first trip they have participated in two additional faculty-led study abroad trips, one in 2009 and the third in 2010. Approximately half of the students at this university are first generation college students who work to help pay their costs of pursuing a college degree. The university has taken two approaches to short-term study abroad to date. Their first two experiences involved visiting another country where there was a high level of difference in terms of culture and practices. The third experience involved visiting a neighboring country where there were a large variety of different cultures and customs that were accepted including many that were quite similar to those found in the home country.

In 2008 the first group of students traveled to Russia where they partnered with a business institute located in Nizhny Novgorod. The academic focus of this group was economics. This was a good fit with the institute in Nizhny Novgorod because economics is one of their major areas of academic focus. The faculty member traveling with this group was a member of economics faculty of the home university and the Russian economic system had been an area of interest and study for him for many years. There was also a staff member from the American university traveling with the group as a co-sponsor. The American students were introduced to Russian students who were actively involved in the daily program. This involved their attending classes together, visiting companies and local cultural areas of interest, plus a week-end trip by train to Moscow. There were academic events and social events for both groups. Since most of the Russian students spoke some English, American students had almost constant access to at least a basic level of translation of Russian to English. In addition a professional translator also traveled with the student group. While some American-style fast food was available at a near-by shopping mall, most of the meals were composed of Russian dishes. The group had nightly group discussions that included both American and Russian students.

In 2009 a second group of students traveled to Nizhny Novgorod to work with faculty and students from the same institute. The academic background of the faculty member leading this trip was in human resources management and the academic focus of the trip was related to cultural diversity with an additional interest in marketing and management practices in Russia. There same staff member from the American university who traveled with the group to Russia in 2008 also traveling with this group as a co-sponsor. While cultural diversity, marketing and management practices were not major areas of academic focus for the institute, their faculty delivered lectures on marketing, talked about a variety of cultural issues and several issues related to management. In addition to faculty lectures, the program of study included visits to area companies, a visit with a successful entrepreneur, visits to cultural sites, and a week-end trip to Moscow. During the majority of time the American students were in Russia, the business institute was also hosting a group of German students. The American students had opportunities to spend more time with the German students than with Russian students. Because of the total size of the two student groups, and because the German students would be leaving earlier than the American students, several planned student activities were cancelled for the American students because of the difficulty of transporting the total group to various sites or because the location being visited was not able to accommodate such a large group. This left the American students will more unscheduled time than had been

expected and a lack of ability to travel independently because of language differences. There was one evening when the American students met as a group to discuss their experiences in Russia. With a large number of unexpected schedule changes and the faculty member's overall involvement in trying to assist with re-scheduling of plans, there were limited opportunities for other nightly discussions.

In 2010 a third set of students traveled to British Columbia. This faculty-led study abroad trip utilized a different trip format. The faculty member and staff member traveling with this group to British Columbia had also traveled with the group of students to Russia in 2009. The academic focus of this trip was cultural diversity. On this trip there was contact with three universities in Vancouver. One university has had a long term relationship with the American university and the group was hosted to a home cooked meal and a presentation about local culture and business practices. A former graduate of the American institute spoke about experiences related to his career with a large international company. A doctoral faculty from a second university located in Vancouver spoke with us about cultural intelligence and the diversity of cultures represented in British Columbia. A third experience with a university in British Columbia was when the group stayed in a dormitory on the campus for several nights.

Rather than being based in one location, this group stayed in five different locations as the group's activities moved to different geographic areas in British Columbia over the two week program. The American students did not have opportunities to interact directly with students from the universities located in the Vancouver/Vancouver Island area. In these areas of British Columbia, English was widely spoken and American foods were easily available. The cultural diversity of this area was easily visible and the group heard many different languages being spoken as well as having opportunities to sample traditional foods from several different cultures. Frequently, when the group arrived at an area, student could explore in groups and meet back at an agreed upon time. The fact that the overall difference factor of the British Columbia locations was much lower for this trip than for the Russian locations allowed the students a much greater degree of flexibility and independence than that experienced by the two groups who traveled to Russia. The group traveled within British Columbia in mini-vans and there were no nightly discussions of daily events held for this group. Characteristics of the students participating in each of these three groups are discussed in the following section.

The initial trip to Russia in 2008 included a total of fourteen participants. There were eleven students, the faculty member and a staff member and her spouse. Except for one student who was 19, the ages of the other students ranged from 21 to 25. Four international students traveled with the group. They represented Taiwan, Bolivia, Thailand and Bogotá. The seven American students were Caucasian, non-Hispanic. The student group included five males and six females. There were nine undergraduate students and two graduate students.

The trip to Russia in 2009 included a total of sixteen participants. There were twelve students, the faculty member and a staff member and her spouse. The Provost/Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Director of Study Abroad visited in Russia for several days during the latter part of the trip. The ages of the other students ranged from 21 to 30. Three international students traveled with the group. They represented Peru, Brazil and Ecuador. Of the nine American students, eight were Caucasian, non-Hispanic and one was Hispanic. The student group included six males and six females. There were five undergraduate students and seven graduate students.

The trip to British Columbia in 2010 included a total of sixteen participants. There were fifteen students, the faculty member and a staff member and her spouse. The staff member was also one of the fifteen students. The ages of the students ranged from 20 to 32. Four international students traveled with the group. They represented Taiwan and China. Of the eleven American students, ten were Caucasian, non-Hispanic and one was Hispanic. The student group included seven males and eight females. There were five undergraduate students and ten graduate students.

Observations about these three trips reflect both similarities to recommendations found in academic literature related to short-term study abroad programs and ways in which experiences and activities during the trips differ from recommendation in the academic literature. Based on these observations, recommendations for changes to be considered on future trips have been made.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These observations relate primarily to three areas: (a) making pre-trip meetings a required component of the trip; (b) scheduling group and individual academic assignments as part of the trip itinerary; and (c) returning to the home country and the adjourning stage of group development. Observations have been made related to each of these three areas. A discussion of the relationships of these areas to academic study-abroad literature is provided in the following paragraphs. Recommendations are also included in each section for ways future study abroad trips might be adapted to strengthen student involvement and student learning.

Students were encouraged but not required to attend pre-trip meetings during the semester prior to the each of the scheduled short-term study abroad trips. This was due largely to conflicts in student class and work commitments. It was possible to work with students on an individual basis to share academic and travel information about the planned study abroad trip, the related academic material, and to obtain and process the required travel related paperwork. For each trip, there were opportunities for students to participate in four or five pre-trip meetings where information was discussed about some of the events, including locations planned for the trip, local cultural customs, and recommendations for packing and travel needs. Some movies and documentaries were available for individual students to borrow and view in advance of the trip to Russia and efforts were made to help students learn a few commonly used words in the Russian language. Students did make use of information located on the Internet to access information before both trips to Russia and the trip to British Columbia. Due to the 2010 Olympics there was a large amount of information on both television and the Internet about the Vancouver/Vancouver Island areas of British Columbia. Some students attended each of the planned meetings but none were able to attend all of them.

While all of the students were eager to travel and excited about the trips, there were no team building activities conducted in advance of any of the trips and students were not involved in development of the planning of the itinerary. As discussed earlier, the literature shows strong support for requiring pre-trip meetings (Long, et al, 2010). Pre-trip meetings could have provided students with opportunities to participate in team-building activities where, within available parameters, they could have begun working in groups to help plan the itinerary for the trip by identifying some wish list items based on Internet research of the areas they would be visiting, hear mini-lectures with opportunities to participate in discussions related to the course content, and complete initial course assignments related to course learning objectives (Canfield, et al, 2009; Döring, et al., 2009; Sobania & Braskamp, 2009). Such pre-trip meetings would have provided opportunities to strengthen academic goals and help prepare students in advance for some of the different cultural experiences they would experience on the trip (Younes & Asay, 2003). Since this did not happen in advance, on each of the short-term study abroad trips, the travel group was moving through Tuckman's (1965) five stages of group development in addition to dealing with the cultural and travel issues they encountered. Had they experienced some of the initial levels of group development in advance, it could have helped the travel group work together more closely at an earlier stage. If they had been able to be more involved as a group in the development of the trip itinerary it could have helped them have more ownership in the trip activities and a better sense of how each related to the course content and what specifically they would be gaining from each activity academically, culturally, as well as the potential professional importance of each.

During the cultural immersion portion of the academic course, learning activities were not always directly tied to travel activities. Providing students with trip itineraries that highlight the academic components of each activity, such as daily group discussions, could help students better understand what specifically is expected of them academically and to have the ability to take more control of their learning. As reported earlier, academic literature repeatedly emphasizes the importance of holding daily discussions to provide the student group with opportunities to process the wealth of information they had encountered and determine how this might apply to them individually (Fowler, 2005; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009; Younes & Asay, 2003). While the travel group was immersed in an environment conducive to self-directed and self-reflective learning based on daily travel experiences, the literature, as discussed earlier, (Pascual-Leone & Irwin, 1998; Ruhland, 1993), emphasized the need for group discussions to allow students to consider the ways this information might impact them individually and professionally. This happened on the first trip to Russia and the discussion groups were extremely helpful. On the second and third study-abroad trips, this did not happen. Not

having the opportunity to process this information as a group, especially on the trip to British Columbia where students were traveling in three separate vehicles, left students with different experiences rather than an overall perspective of the trip.

Requiring students to post observations and reflections of what they are seeing and hearing during the study-abroad trip to a journal, as highlighted earlier, is one way to help students reflect on these experiences and how they might influence their own behavior, attitudes, beliefs and even their professional roles (Canfield, et al, 2009; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009). Posting to journals was used as an academic assignment during the study abroad trip to British Columbia. Students were told that the comments would be for their personal use to highlight key experiences of the trip and their feelings about them and, contrary the recommendations of Long, et al., (2003), that faculty would not require them to turn in the journal for faculty review after the trip ended. As a result, students posted little to their journals during the trip and felt this was an optional way to track what was happening during the trip and that if they found another way to remember events and experiences, this would be acceptable. After the trip ended, each student did meet individually with the faculty member and each student was able to discuss their experiences, observations and reflections of the trip, any reflections were more mental and written. The opportunity to return later to written comments about a trip they had enjoyed and review learning experiences was not an outcome of the trip. However, all of the students documented activities and events with pictures and these may well provide visual reminders and prompt memories. Had the faculty member told the students in advance that the written journal comments would be reviewed as part of the course assignment, it is likely the students would have found time to post daily journal comments.

Since early in the previous semester when students signed up for the short-term study abroad trip, students have been receiving information about the planned trip, academic information as well as travel information. They have spent approximately two weeks in close proximity to each other and have experiences only that group has shared. They have had fun, adapted to unexpected changes, accepted challenges, and experienced cultural immersion that, with one or two exceptions, involved new and different ways of eating, living, dressing and learning. Suddenly they arrive at their home country, home town airport and the trip has ended. The students who traveled to Russia were required to submit a reflection paper that highlighted what they saw as their major learning experiences from the trip and show how it related to the academic content of the course. The first group that traveled to Russia met again at the faculty member's home about five months after the trip ended. The students were excited to see each other and seemed to have fun recounting experiences from the trip. A post-trip meeting was not scheduled for the second group although the post-trip paper seemed to help bring about some closure. A post-trip meeting has been discussed for the third group but has not been held at the time this paper is being written. The third group met individually with the faculty member to discuss their learning experiences and how they felt about each but it didn't seem to be the same as if it were an activity involving the entire group where everyone has an opportunity to remember and share events and experiences they had enjoyed or had struggled through and hopefully learned from. The group meeting after the study abroad trip has ended seems an important way to allow students the opportunity to collectively process through Tuckman's (1965) last stage of group development, adjourning.

Another reason for post-trip follow-up is to help students identify skills they may have learned that related to professional growth and the potential value they have to the students' careers (Gardner, et al., 2009). There is a need to specifically and intentionally address professional development aspects that may have been gained from the trip and to help students become aware of how they may have grown and developed professionally in ways that can be translated into marketable skills. It could be helpful for students if, as part of pre-departure preparations, either a faculty member and/or a representative of the career services office could talk with students about potential skills development that occur during their planned study abroad experience. Also, during the trip, in daily discussions of activities and related learning experiences, it would be helpful if the faculty member and students focused on how the activities they were experiencing might apply to their planned career skill set in ways that would add value for their current or future employers and make the student more promotable and/or more marketable. Intentionally reinforcing this learning during the cultural immersion and post-trip activities could help students internalize specific marketable skills they may have acquired during the study abroad experience that can help them with career development opportunities.

As part of the post-trip activities, this reinforcement could be accomplished through a face-to-face meeting with group members or electronically. An ideal approach might be to host a group meeting where students can enjoy visiting, finalize the adjourning stage of group development and also discuss how skills learned on this trip might apply to current and future careers.

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 reliance on narrative summaries as opposed to data that would allow more valid and statistical analysis that might support generalizations beyond the immediate study. However, universities with similar student demographics could realistically expect similar findings.

CONCLUSIONS

This section addresses conclusions that were reached regarding study abroad trips and their relevance to students. Developing a faculty-led short-term study abroad program can be equally challenging and rewarding for the faculty and staff involved and for the students who participate in the trip. The emotional and educational aspects of study abroad experiences are unlike anything typically experienced in more traditional classroom settings. There are multiple opportunities for all participants, faculty, staff and students, to gain lasting cultural insights and to develop personally and professionally. The associated academic and cultural learning can have an impact far beyond the time actually spent traveling on the study abroad trip. Future interactions with people in their home country can also be impacted. The workforce of the United States is in many ways a microcosm of the global village (McPherson, 2009). Students who have had the opportunity to become more knowledgeable about even one other culture and experienced being in at least one other country where they can see ways in which that country's cultural customs, both in daily life and in organizational practices, will have gained skills that can continue to help them develop personally and professionally in the future (Sobania & Braskamp, 2009; Gardner, et al., 2009).

This potential to impact faculty, staff and student growth and development makes the challenges of participating in study abroad programs more than worthwhile. Younes and Asay capture well both the emotional and educational aspects of international study abroad: "The educational gains, the dynamic group process, and the personal treasures that participants discover on these journeys lead to life-changing experiences and endearing memories to be cherished forever" (2003, p. 146).

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