

Rapporteur Report: "Study Abroad and International Competence" Session
Mick Vande Berg
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John Hudzik and David Larsen's presentation of their paper, "Study and Learning Abroad: Integration with and Support for Internationalizing Curriculum and Learning," provided the impetus for a rich and free-wheeling discussion during the Conference's "Study Abroad and International Competence" break-out session. Dan Davidson chaired the session and presided over the discussion. The following day, Mick Vande Berg, the session's Rapporteur, offered the Conference audience a brief summary of the major lines and themes that had emerged during the discussion. The text that follows provides a somewhat expanded version of that summary.

Hudzik and Larsen's paper traces the profound changes that have occurred in study abroad during the past fifteen to twenty years—changes that, taken together, constitute nothing less than a paradigm shift in the ways that we conceive of and describe study abroad. Thomas Kuhn's familiar term "paradigm" is over-used but apt here. As Kuhn defined it in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, a paradigm provides us with a shared vision about the world in which we live, a predominant way of viewing and experiencing our reality that informs both the questions we ask, and the answers we provide. A shift from one paradigm to another occurs when the new paradigm provides a solution to a significant problem or problems that the older version cannot account for—as when Einstein's delineation of the physical laws of the universe quickly came to replace the older Newtonian explanations. Hudzik and Larsen's paper is valuable precisely because it identifies several current issues and questions that fall outside the explanatory power of the older study abroad paradigm. In doing so, it allows us to glimpse the major contours of the new paradigm that is emerging against the backdrop of the unprecedented increase in study abroad enrollments we have witnessed—an enrollment increase of more than 220%--between 1985 and the present.

In 1985, when fewer than 50,000 U.S. students earned academic credit abroad, the study abroad paradigm that held sway offered a relatively unified sense of the phenomenon. The direct descendant of the European Grand Tour, study abroad in the 1980s was more elitist both in intention and in practice than is now the case. The costs to participants of studying abroad were relatively high, and most programs appealed to the sons—and especially the daughters—of relatively well-healed families. The typical participant was female, white, and upper-middle class, and it was very likely that she was majoring in the Social Sciences or the Humanities. Study abroad was still regarded as somehow exotic, and many colleges and universities continued to describe student academic activity abroad as "foreign study." Most students were opting for programs in countries perceived as culturally similar to the U.S.: in 1985, more than 80% of students were participating in programs in a small number of western European countries.

In choosing to study abroad, students typically pursued two clearly defined goals: strengthening their foreign language skills, and getting to know another culture. Chances were high that the typical participant had studied the target language of the host culture for an extended period of time before she departed the U.S., and it was widely assumed—and to that point in time, never convincingly demonstrated—that when she returned to the home campus, her language skills would be stronger, and she would be more culturally aware.

By 2001, against the backdrop of soaring U.S. study abroad enrollments—more than 150,000 students would earn credit abroad that year—it was becoming clear that study abroad could no longer be described as the relatively unified phenomenon it had seemed to be in 1985. New goals, program models and types of students had effectively undermined the older paradigm: “diversity” was becoming a defining theme of a newly emerging paradigm. While study abroad participants were statistically as likely to be female in 2001 as was the case in 1985, efforts by numerous colleges and universities to encourage more participation of “under-represented minorities” had led to a significant growth of non-white participants, and a growing movement to democratize study abroad, with its emphasis on “broadening access” for all students, was contributing to a growing socioeconomic diversification of participants as well. In 1985, more than 80% of students had attended programs in western Europe. By 2001, barely 60% were following these well-worn pathways, with rapidly growing numbers opting for non-traditional destinations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Few institutions were still referring to the “Junior Year Abroad,” as other program models continued to attract much larger numbers of students. By 2001, fewer than 10% of students were studying abroad for a year. Nearly 50% of students were opting for short-term programs in summer, in January- and in May-terms, and increasing numbers of sophomores and, to a lesser extent, freshmen, were going abroad. Many of these short-term participants were now majoring in subject areas that had been severely under-represented in 1985, including the physical sciences, math, engineering and business; in fact, by 2001, Business students had become the second-largest group of students going abroad. The growing numbers of participants from these once severely under-represented disciplines, and the programs developed to accommodate them, were creating issues and raising questions that the older paradigm was simply ill-equipped to answer.

The unprecedented growth in student numbers during the past fifteen to twenty years has served to shift study abroad from the marginal activity it had been in 1985 to a central part of the undergraduate experience at an increasing number of institutions. Virtually all sectors at many of our institutions have come to feel the effects of rapidly increasing study abroad enrollments. Many college and university presidents, convinced that a world-class education means that students should be educated “out in the world” as well as on the home campus, and mindful of the potential marketing advantages of promoting study abroad among prospective students, are challenging their institutions to meet aggressive

study abroad enrollment targets of 10%, 20%, and even 50% of graduating classes. Business managers and Comptrollers are becoming seriously interested in setting higher study abroad fees, as increasing enrollments make tuition flight a serious issue on many campuses. Directors of residence hall systems find themselves trying to cope with growing numbers of empty beds and diminishing revenues. Department chairs in an increasing number of academic disciplines complain about drops in on-campus course enrollments, and the consequent loss of FTEs in their budgets. Faculty who had once relegated study abroad to the margins of academic activity at their institutions, now faced with larger numbers of returning students eager to talk about “transformational experiences” that frequently seem marginally connected to the classes they have taken abroad, are asking what it is that these students are actually learning over there.

The discussion that emerged out of Hudzik and Larsen’s paper and presentation focused on these and other increasingly common concerns through posing five questions. While we did not identify final answers to any of the five, none were regarded as significant issues in 1985, and taken together, these questions serve to signal the emergence of the new paradigm.

1. What is study abroad? This issue generated considerable discussion during our break-out session. Several participants spoke to the importance of identifying a “base-line” definition of study abroad, which would serve to strengthen education abroad advocacy among policy-makers in Washington, DC. One suggested that a starting point for such a definition would be the acknowledgment that study abroad needs to promote second-language education to be meaningful; another said that intercultural learning should serve as the *sine qua non* of any study abroad experience. Other participants pointed out, however, that not all faculty in traditionally under-represented fields, including many in the Sciences, Engineering and Business, would agree that study abroad should necessarily incorporate second-language or intercultural learning. Other participants spoke to the need to recognize that the traditional definition of “study abroad” does not take into account the growing numbers of students participating in internships, service learning, field work and other forms of experiential learning abroad. We settled on an incomplete consensus by noting the advantages of moving beyond the term “study abroad,” and considering the advantages of adopting the more open-ended term “education abroad” instead. In short, the growing diversity of student activity abroad, with some defined as credit-bearing and some not, allowed us to conclude that it is no longer possible to define the term, as it had seemed possible to do in 1985.
2. What are the proper goals of study abroad? The progress we made in acknowledging the difficulties of narrowly defining “study abroad” allowed us to come to a stronger consensus here: given the great diversity of

student majors and program types, it no longer seems possible to speak in universal terms about study abroad goals. One participant noted that a three-week program designed for Mechanical Engineering students that took them to three different sites in three different countries, with the goal of providing them direct experience with the theory and practice of bridge-building in eastern Europe, will certainly not include the learning of a second language as a learning goal, nor will it necessarily include intercultural learning as a goal. We did not reach complete consensus here: even while acknowledging the limitations of including intercultural learning as a goal for Engineering students enrolling in a short-term travel program, some participants still hoped that it would be possible to design a program in such a way as to allow students to make significant intercultural progress.

3. How can we assure quality in study abroad programming? We reached a clear consensus here, as several participants spoke strongly to the point that we can no longer ignore the fact that what we know about student learning abroad is largely intuitive, based more on student report and our own personal experiences abroad than on meaningful research-derived data. Several participants spoke to the need to undertake systematic studies that will allow us to answer two pressing questions: first, what do our students learn abroad, and second, what are the program characteristics that best support and promote that learning? We identified four ongoing studies, sponsored by Michigan State University, American Councils for International Education, the Institute for the International Education of Students, and Georgetown University, whose research designs promise to provide us with considerable information about student learning abroad. All participants who spoke to the need for basing future programming decisions on the results of research on outcomes assessment agreed that we can no longer afford to assume, as we did in 1985, either that our students are learning abroad as we vaguely hope that they will, or that our students will learn the same things, or in the same ways, when they enroll in different types of programs abroad.
4. What is the proper role of our faculty in study abroad? This question would not have been asked at most institutions in 1985: it was understood that the primary role that faculty members would play, if any, would consist of leading student groups abroad. Participants noted that focusing on this role to the exclusion of others is too limiting, and that if we are to make progress in fully integrating study abroad at our institutions, in making study abroad a normal and desirable part of our students' educational programs, then we must work to increase faculty involvement. In drawing this conclusion, we were mindful of the fact that it has become more challenging than it was in 1985 to identify faculty members who can regularly lead programs abroad, especially programs that last a semester or an academic year. We noted that other sorts of faculty roles abroad are

possible and desirable, however, including brief trips abroad to undertake program evaluation, to collaborate in student field research, or to teach a short module, rather than an entire course, at a partner university. We agreed that we must work to increase faculty involvement on campus as well, especially in having faculty identify student learning goals, and in becoming more involved in institutional efforts to improve curricular integration of courses taken abroad.

5. How are we going to finance study abroad? We reached very broad agreement on the need to continue to seek ways to make study abroad affordable, both for students and for our institutions. While most institutions in 1985 promoted study abroad to those whose families could afford the relatively high costs of participation, all participants agreed that today's broad democratization of study abroad has made it necessary to identify funding, and to create effective scholarship programs, that will allow any student at our institutions to go abroad, whatever their financial condition. Several participants also spoke to the need for institutions to develop the financial means, including incentive budgeting, to allow rapidly increasing numbers of students to go abroad.

Our discussion led to the identification of five recommendations for future action—none of which would have been made in 1985:

1. Develop a national study abroad agenda whose stated goal is to send 25% of U.S. students abroad by 2010. Advocacy for this position should focus clearly on: a) national security needs, b) building national capacity in second-language skills and knowledge about other cultures, and c) identification of the clear value-adds that existing study abroad programs provide. This national agenda would include the creation of an Undergraduate Study Abroad and Scholarship Program that would provide \$100 million of funding through a partnership between the federal government, institutions of higher learning, and the private sector.
2. Focus on study abroad quality as well as quantity. In the long run, increases in study abroad enrollments will only be sustained if all stakeholders—participating students, their parents, faculty and administrators on our campuses, federal and state policy-makers—agree that study abroad provides clear and worthwhile educational benefits. Achieving this will mean undertaking serious research on student learning abroad, as well as systematic evaluation of study abroad programming, on and off campus.
3. Fully integrate study abroad into the undergraduate curricula at our institutions. This will mean committing ourselves to identifying the learning competencies that we expect our students to achieve through participation in different types of education abroad programs and activities; and to

systematically involving faculty from all departments in planning for and delivery of study abroad.

4. Focus clearly on the role of study abroad/education abroad in developing national capacity in critical foreign languages. This will include applying the results of assessment research in order to maximize the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of these languages, prior to, during and after study abroad.

In closing, it is worth noting that the four participants seated at the head table during the break-out session—the authors of the paper that we discussed, the Chair of the break-out session and the Rapporteur—each represent an institution that is a Charter Member of the Forum on Education Abroad, a recently-created education abroad membership association. The emergence of the Forum, which was created a year ago in order to promote standards of good practice in education abroad, is in itself a strong manifestation of the new paradigm. The new association promotes excellence in education abroad programming through, among other things, advocating standards of good practice, promoting excellence in curricular development and academic design, and encouraging outcomes assessment and other education abroad-based research. The Forum has already expanded to more than 130 members, a rate of growth that demonstrates a rapidly growing awareness about the new paradigm among education abroad professionals.