

Internationalization at Home Alternatives to Study Abroad: Implications for Students' Development of Global, International, and Intercultural Competencies

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Abstract

Colleges and universities are increasingly internationalizing their curricular and cocurricular efforts on campuses; subsequently, it is important to compare whether internationalization at home activities may be associated with students' self-reported development of global, international, and intercultural (GII) competencies. This study examined undergraduate students' participation in study abroad and on-campus global/international activities within nine large public research universities in the United States. Framed within several intercultural development theories, the results of this study suggest that students' participation in activities related to internationalization at home—participation in on-campus global/international activities such as enrollment in global/international coursework, interactions with international students, and participation in global/international cocurricular activities—may yield greater perceived benefits than study abroad for students' development of GII competencies.

Keywords

study abroad, internationalization of the curriculum, internationalization of teaching, learning and research, internationalization of higher education, globalization and international higher education

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Increasingly, colleges and universities recognize the importance of expanding student learning and development outcomes to include global, international, and intercultural (GII) competencies (Brown & Jones, 2007; Burnett & Huisman, 2010; de Wit, 1995; Greenholtz, 2000; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Lambert, 1996; Lee, Poch, Shaw, & Williams, 2012). GII competencies are broadly defined in this article to include knowledge about several dimensions of global and international cultures; appreciation of cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity; understanding of the complexities of issues in a global context; and comfort in working with people from other cultures. This definition has emerged under the auspices of several major bodies of work focusing on multicultural and global competency (Deardorff, 2006; Morais & Ogden, 2010; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Pope & Mueller, 2005; Wilson, 1996), cross-cultural effectiveness (Kealey, 1989), intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Hammer, 1989; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009), intercultural communication (Deardorff, 2006, 2009; Kim, 1993, 1994), and intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986; Hammer et al., 2003), among others. GII competencies enable people to live and work effectively with others from diverse cultural backgrounds (Bennett, 1993; Landis & Bhagat, 1996; Taylor, 1994); furthermore, the development of GII competencies can foster the development of leadership skills essential for effective participation and leadership in an increasingly complex and diverse global environment (Earnest, 2003).

In this article, we examine various ways in which undergraduates students develop GII competencies from engagement in a variety of formal and informal activities. Contending that study abroad may not be an accessible or affordable opportunity for all students, this study investigated whether on-campus engagement in globally/internationally themed activities promoted students' self-reported development of GII competencies as much as study abroad. As colleges and universities seek to internationalize their campuses—known as “internationalization at home” (Nilsson, 1990, 2000; Osfield, 2008; Otten, 2000; Paige, 2003)—it is increasingly important to assess whether on-campus activities hold the same benefits as study abroad in promoting students' development of competencies to thrive in an increasingly global world.

CUT TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DATA SET, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.... FULL PAPER AVAILABLE AT SAGE PUBLICATIONS

The research questions framing this study are as follows:

- With what frequency do students participate in on-campus internationalization at home and off-campus international and global activities?
- Does participation in on-campus internationalization at home activities (e.g., curricular, cocurricular, and student interactions with international students) have the same significant relationships with students' development of GII competencies as participation in study abroad?

Method

Instrument

The Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey is based at the Center for Studies of Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley. The web-based SERU survey sampling plan is a census scan of the undergraduate experience. In the SERU survey, students answer a set of core questions related to their academic engagement, research experiences, sense of belonging, satisfaction, and demographic information. Students are also randomly assigned one of four modules containing items focused specifically on a research theme, including student life and development, civic engagement, academic and global experiences, and a module specifically created by each partner institution.

Participants

The survey was administered in spring 2011 to 213,160 undergraduate students across nine large public universities in the United States classified by the Carnegie Foundation as having very high research activity. The institutional-level response rate for the SERU survey was 38.1% ($n = 81,135$).

Table 2. Survey Respondents' Participation in Global and International Activities.

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
1 Interacted with students from outside the United States in social settings (e.g., in clubs or student organizations, or in informal settings)	12,705	91.8
2 Interacted with students from outside the United States in class (e.g., through discussion sections, study groups, or class projects)	12,587	90.8
3 Developed a friendship with a student from outside the United States	11,910	86.3
4 Attended a performance with an international/global focus	8,455	61.5
5 Attended lectures, symposia, workshops, or conferences on international/global topics	8,059	58.5
6 Enrolled in a course with an international/global focus	5,731	41.6
7 Worked with faculty member on a project with an international/global theme	5,497	40.0
8 Presented a paper at a symposium or conference or participated in a panel on international/global topics	3,880	28.2
9 Travel abroad for cross-cultural experience or informal education	2,272	16.4
10 Travel abroad for a service-learning, volunteer, or work experience	1,730	12.5
11 Any university study abroad, including summer study abroad	1,473	10.6
12 Obtained a certificate/minor/major with an international/global theme (e.g., in Latin American Studies)	1,258	9.2
13 Study abroad program affiliated with another college or university	771	5.6

standardized scores with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. The factors ranged in their reliability (Cronbach's α) from .71 to .94.

Global and International Engagement. Students were asked to indicate their involvement in 13 different curricular and cocurricular global/international activities by selecting either “yes, doing now or have done” or “no.” These are listed in Table 2.

Discussion

The findings illustrate some key themes noteworthy of mention. First, the majority of students reported greater frequency in interacting with international students and participating in cocurricular global/international activities than participating in curricular and study/travel abroad activities. This suggests the internationalization at home efforts conducted by these colleges and universities have higher rates of student participation and engagement than some of the more traditional and formal study and travel abroad opportunities.

Second, the results suggest that participating in some on-campus global/international activities may benefit students’ development of GII competencies more than participating in study abroad; specifically, enrolling in global/international academic coursework and attending international/global themed lectures, symposia, or conferences were activities positively predictive of students’ self-reported development in both GII competency areas. Interacting with international students and developing a friendship with an international student were positively predictive of students’ self-reported development of global/international competencies and intercultural competencies, respectively. Attending a performance with an international/global focus and participating in study abroad were positively associated only with students’ self-reported development intercultural competencies. Conclusively, this study suggests that internationalization at home activities can positively influence students’ development of GII competencies as much as—if not more than—traditional study/travel abroad.

Of interest, students who obtained an international/global certificate, minor, or major and those who presented a paper at an international/global conference reported lower intercultural competencies and global/international competencies, respectively. Due to their deeper immersion in global/international issues and topics, it is perhaps the case that these students have become aware of how much knowledge there is to be gained on international/global topics and feel a sense of humility or self-effacement with regard to their GII competency development.

In part, Lewin’s (1936) person-environment interaction theory and Deardorff’s (2009) intercultural development theory can help to explain why on-campus cocurricular experiences were beneficial for students: The comprehensive experiences found in cocurricular programs can offer students opportunities to gain knowledge about other cultures in engaging ways. When students are provided opportunities to learn about diverse global and international cultures through formal/structured (e.g., attending an international/global conference) and informal/unstructured (e.g., attending a performance with an international/global theme) experiences *on campus*, they can reap the benefits of enhanced GII competencies.

Furthermore, Allport’s (1954) contact theory can serve as a framework to understand why students who interacted with international students on campus were more likely to develop gains in GII competencies—when students interact with each other

inside and outside of classroom contexts, they grow more comfortable interacting with others from different cultures. Although the specifics of the interactions are unknown (e.g., whether the interactions were meaningful, were encouraged by educators, etc.), the interactions in and of themselves were significant predictors of students' GII competencies in this study. Within the higher education environment, then, engagement with international students can be a powerful way in which students can acquire knowledge about other cultures to enhance their intercultural competencies (Deardorff, 2009).

Enrollment in formal global/international academic coursework was also predictive of students' self-reported GII competencies in this study; as noted by Lee et al. (2012), classrooms are powerful venues for students to develop intercultural skills and behaviors that can be supported and developed across the curriculum. Yet the results of this study also suggest that learning experiences within cocurricular activities such as attending lectures and performances on international/global themes can be powerful ways in which students can acquire GII knowledge and skills. Such activities can enhance students' awareness of different cultures, which in turn can lead to their development of effective relational intercultural skills (Deardorff, 2009).

Several international at home and travel/study abroad activities were not found to be significantly associated with students' self-reported development of GII competencies in both of our models, including studying abroad with another college, traveling abroad for service learning/volunteerism, traveling abroad for cross-cultural experiences, interacting with international students in classes, and working with faculty members on international/global research. On one hand, some of these activities—such as interactions with international students in classes—may have been so minor that they did not contribute to students' development. On the other hand, some of these activities—such as working with faculty on international/global research—may have been so significant that students' perception of their development was minimized compared to their peers because these students had a heightened awareness of the enormity of international and global issues and perceived that they still had much to learn.

Finally, we found that participating in study abroad was positively associated with students' self-reported development of intercultural—but not global/international—competencies. Although study abroad is traditionally perceived to be a paramount way in which students can gain GII competencies, our study suggests that internationalization at home activities can also promote students' development of GII competencies just as effectively as—if not more effectively than—formal study abroad. Cocurricular activities, engagement with international students, and academic coursework on campuses may be more accessible and more effective ways for colleges and universities to enhance students' development of GII competencies.

Recommendations

Colleges and universities may wish to examine why some students are more likely to engage in global/international activities than other students and seek to remove barriers for all students to participate in these activities. For example, students who

attended global/international-focused lectures, workshops, and performances reported higher development of GII competencies—these events could be offered for free or at a lower cost to encourage all students' participation, emphasized as activities in which students can earn extra credit for participating, or offered at various times during the week to encourage students to participate at times that are most convenient.

In addition, this research demonstrates the importance of continued collaboration between offices that focus on supporting global/international experiences and those that develop student programs. For example, collaboration between an office of international programs and residence life aimed at developing interactions between domestic students and international students could promote the development of GII competencies for students who participate (Markos, 2009-2010). Living-learning programs with intercultural programming or peer mentorship opportunities with international students can lead to better integration between international and domestic students (Markos, 2009-2010). We fully encourage colleges and universities to continue promoting the social engagement between international and domestic students in classrooms and outside of classrooms as well (Hser, 2005).

Students can also be encouraged to enroll in courses that offer international/global themes—these courses can be encouraged by academic or faculty advisors, added to general education requirements, and integrated into existing degree programs (Altbach & Knight, 2007). More work can be done on college campuses to assist faculty in these efforts—as suggested by several researchers, faculty often report a willingness and openness to enhancing interculturalism in their courses but struggle with knowing how to incorporate interculturalism and diversity in their pedagogy (Lee et al., 2012; Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006; Pope & Mueller, 2005).

In promoting a more holistic perspective to expand internationalization at home efforts, several authors (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hanson & Meyerson, 1995) have argued that campuses can develop a stronger connection between global and domestic cultural diversity to take greater advantage of the knowledge and expertise they have developed in both areas. Global and international themes can be embedded in several facets of campus life—from individual classrooms to collaborative research with faculty, from programming in residence life to adding new majors and certificates to the curriculum. To that end, Ping (1999) also conveyed that internationalization should not be considered as an add-on to campuses; instead, internationalization “is a radical transformation of academic disciplines, a freeing of both teaching and researcher from the dominance of the acceptance of and training in the intellectual traditions of a particular culture” (p. 18).

Finally, we recommend that scholars continue to examine the differences between the benefits of on-campus participation in international/global activities and study abroad for all students. This study examined correlations among variables; however, future experimental and causal studies should be used to tease out the benefits of students' participation in internationalization at home and study abroad. Future research can reveal insights into students' perception of their development of GII competencies and the extent to which their cultural identity affects their perceived growth in these areas. Additional research is also needed to examine whether students' self-reported development reflects their actual development of GII competencies.