

# INTERNATIONAL STUDY OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS\*

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The role of the United States as a leader among nations is changing rapidly. Despite our position of international leadership for almost fifty years, we are ill prepared for the changes in business, manufacturing, diplomacy, science and technology that have come with an intensely interdependent world. Effectiveness in such a world requires a citizenry whose knowledge is sufficiently international in scope to cope with global interdependence. (Advisory Council for International Educational Exchange, Educating for Global Competence 1989)

## *A Case for Study Abroad Experiences*

How many years have those of us in higher education been talking about “internationalizing” or “globalizing” our campuses? It has clearly been over a decade as indicated by the opening statement. And, the evidence indicates that not much progress has been made. The report of the National Task Force on Undergraduate Education (1990) Abroad included the following paragraph.

There is abundant evidence that our citizens (students) are not well prepared for the international realities ahead. By any measure, whether it is comparisons of foreign language proficiency, tests of geographic literacy, or availability of specialists to advise

government or business regarding Eastern Europe or other distant but important parts of the world, the level of international knowledge and understanding in the United States is wanting. In comparison with others, we as a people are poorly educated to deal with the political, economic and social issues which we will face in a new global era that will not measure strength primarily in terms of military preparedness.

Internationalization attempts have taken place on four fronts: curriculum changes, hiring diverse faculty members, enrolling international students and supporting study abroad experiences. Most of these activities have met with limited, if any, success. The following is a brief discussion of each of these four approaches.

### *Curriculum Impact*

The attempts to globalize institutions through curriculum reform have resulted in little success. General education requirements have changed from American Civilization to World Civilization classes, courses like Cross Cultural Communication have been added and new majors such as International Studies have been created. Lip service has been paid the globalization efforts, but with the exception of some majors (languages and international business, for example) these efforts do not require any international experience. Studying another culture is not the same as experiencing it. After returning from a semester in China, one student was asked by a class if he just couldn't have read and studied about that country instead of making the trip. He became very animated as he replied; "I didn't just read about the Great Wall. I walked on it! I walked through the Forbidden City! I shared my faith with Chinese people one-on-one." Efforts at curriculum reform will never have that kind of impact.

### *Faculty Impact*

Every college and university in the country is making a strong effort to employ faculty from under-represented groups and from other countries. While some progress is being made, the future is not optimistic if this is to be the major strategy used to internationalize campuses. There aren't enough of these individuals to satisfy all of the openings which have been created. Even when these diverse individuals are found, they often do not bring a different culture to the campus. In many instances their graduate study in U.S. universities has thoroughly assimilated them into the culture of the States. They may provide valuable role models but often contribute little to the internationalizing efforts. These faculty members are hired to teach their discipline, and any cultural impact they may have is a by-product of their main task.

### *International Student Impact*

Clearly the presence of international students has a very positive influence on our campuses. These students share their customs in some very meaningful ways that are greatly appreciated. At Point Loma there is a special chapel, which is led by internationals. They carry the flags of their countries, lead in the worship and later in the day the dining hall serves meals representative of the students' homeland. As with diverse faculty, the impact of this effort is minimal as there are so few international students who can afford to attend private universities in the States. The twenty to thirty that attend PLNU can only have so much influence. In addition, these students do not see their primary task that of teaching U.S. students a different culture. They are trying to understand and succeed in the culture of the United States. While they enjoy sharing their own customs, their goal is to obtain a university degree. The pressure they feel to accomplish this task is more than enough to keep them busy.

### *Study Abroad Impact*

The position taken in this paper is that the most effective way to internationalize campuses is to get students into international settings. It is estimated that five percent of all undergraduates enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities spend a semester in a study abroad setting. Imagine five percent of a student body studying abroad each semester, and think about the impact they would have when they returned. Students who have experienced living and learning on the social and educational terms of a foreign culture are broadened in ways impossible to achieve on the home campus. They benefit academically and culturally, and are better prepared to face the challenges of the globalized future than students who do not have this experience. Education abroad generally improves returned-student classroom performance, assists student development in positive ways, and makes them more likely to become contributing and empathetic citizens of the world. Their impact on the often narrowing and isolationist strains of traditional American culture cannot be overestimated.

The Point Loma Nazarene University students who traveled and studied in Kenya provide one example of this impact. Among other activities, the students saw the beauty of the Serengeti Plain and the animals that live there, they marveled at the wonderful scientific work taking place the research labs, visited two mission works in the slums of Nairobi and heard lectures that brought new insight into the difficulty of bringing the various tribes of Kenya together to form a single government. Those students will never be able to look at that country through the same eyes again. They recognize that the problems of Kenya are huge but see the people as industrious and determined. They see them as God's people.

This scenario can be repeated over and over with students who have studied in Russia, China, Spain, Chili, and the list goes on and on. Students can have their eyes opened to the realities of this world, but the evidence seems to indicate that this is unlikely to happen through course work

or interaction with just a few people from other countries. It has the best chance of happening in a study abroad experience.

As a brief aside, PLNU has a very meaningful short-term mission program called LoveWorks. Each year between 100 and 200 students raise their own funds to participate in a mission experience in some location throughout the world. This program has been very effective at giving them a new perspective on that ministry. Still, the LoveWorks mission trips don't have the same impact as a study abroad experience. The goals, going to minister or going to study and learn, are distinct, and the impact on the participants is different.

### *The Point Loma Model*

The PLNU program has grown from 27 students studying a full semester abroad during the '97-'98 academic year to 125 during '00-'01. In addition, five PLNU courses had an international travel component of at least two weeks. Fifty-four students have enrolled in international programs during the fall of 2001 and it is expected that over 100 will be studying abroad in the spring. All of these students return to the university as changed individuals.

### *Campus Climate*

To understand the study abroad efforts at Point Loma Nazarene University it is beneficial to understand the campus climate. The University operates under a city imposed enrollment cap of two thousand full-time students. That cap was reached in 1997. Since then, each year the institution has turned away nearly as many students as it has accepted. In the spring of '97 it was determined that it would be beneficial to the university and to the students if a study abroad program was created. It was the firm conviction of the academic administrators that this would

be a valuable experience, and with a “surplus” of students the institution would not lose revenue or have empty beds in the dormitories if some of the students spent a semester at an international site. In addition, there was strong support of a study abroad program from all parts of the institution. This support is critical! Without institutional commitment and administrative support at all levels, from the president down to the individuals in the registrar’s office, it is unlikely that a strong international program can be developed and maintained.

### *Study Abroad Programs*

There are several different approaches to providing study abroad opportunities. These range from the extreme of purchasing property and developing branch campuses in other countries to the extreme of urging students to direct enroll in foreign universities with little or no assistance from the home institution. In the first case the home institution has complete control over the curriculum, staffing, facilities and admission standards. With this control also comes all of the responsibility. An example of this branch campus model is the Romania Study Program that was sponsored by Eastern Nazarene University. The other extreme, direct enrollment, avoids all of the responsibilities but also relinquishes all of the control of the program. Which one of these approaches an institution selects, if either, will depend on the amount of control and responsibility they are willing to accept. PLNU has made the decision not to go in either of these directions but to adopt modifications both. The University is offering, essentially, two types of programs, PLNU courses with an international component and cooperative programs with other colleges and universities.

**PLNU Courses With an International Component:** PLNU courses with an international component fall into two categories. In the first category Point Loma courses are taught entirely in an international setting. Courses of this type are offered during the summer and usually involve

one faculty member and up to 15 students. Examples of such an offerings include an art history course that was offered during a four week European study trip during the summer of 1999 and a world capitals course in which the students literally traveled around the world stopping in eight different capitals.

Courses in the second category involve class work on the PLNU campus with an international travel component as a part of the requirements. Courses of this type are more popular than those of the first category and have several advantages for students, faculty and the institution. A regular PLNU class is offered during the fall or spring semester with some reduction in the classroom hours. At the conclusion of the semester the class participates in a two to four-week required travel component. The majority of the reading and testing for the class is completed prior to the travel. Students usually keep a journal and are required to write a paper that integrates the travel component into the course content. The cost of the travel is collected as a fee for the class and therefore becomes part of the student's financial need package supported with financial aid. During the past two academic years the University has offered the following courses, each of which required international travel and study.

<b>Course</b>	<b>International Trip</b>
Environmental Biology	Kenya
Renaissance/Reformation	England
History of Germany and Austria	Germany and Austria
World Capitals	Seven country trip

Sociology of Religion	Israel
Special Studies in Bible	Israel
History of Mathematics	England
Christian Tradition	Kenya
British Literature	England
Political Science	Italy

While planning and leading these courses is very demanding, the institution has had success in recruiting both faculty and students for such experiences. This type of experience also has no financial downside for the home institution. Students pay their regular tuition, room and board charges are collected as normal and the faculty salary is a part of the regular contract. All travel expenses are collected from student fees.

Point Loma is currently sponsoring its first off-campus semester—a fifteen-week program that is housed in Vienna, Austria. A PLNU faculty member is leading this program for thirteen students who will live in rented dormitory space while in Austria. Faculty members from the University of Vienna have been contracted to teach courses in German and Political Science and the PLNU instructor will teach courses in History and Art. In the future this model may be used for semesters in other parts of the world.

**Joint Programs with Other Colleges and Universities:** By far, the most common study abroad program in which students enroll is a cooperative program with another educational provider. This alternative offers many of the advantages of branch campuses and direct enrollment while minimizing the negatives of those options.

PLNU is a member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and shares in sponsoring their student programs. These programs offer students opportunities to study in Egypt, Costa Rica, Russia and China. Along with the other CCCU institutions Point Loma shares in the cost, work and responsibilities for these programs. The CCCU member institutions share jointly in hiring the director, securing the facilities, establishing the curriculum and hiring the faculty. The key words here are “share jointly.” Each institution has some control but not all of the responsibility or risk related to these programs. Point Loma could not offer even one of these programs on its own. Together with the partner institutions the university can offer all of them. These programs are not sufficient, however. With the number of students wishing to study internationally it is more and more difficult for a student to be accepted into one of the CCCU options as there are too many applicants for the number of openings. The CCCU offerings are limited as well. Most students do not opt for the countries in which these programs are offered.

Most PLNU students who study abroad do so through cooperative settings sponsored by other colleges and universities – both Christian and secular. Personnel in the International Studies office help students locate the program that most directly fits their needs and desires. Since PLNU has minimal if any control in these programs they are carefully evaluated to be sure that the program is accredited and that the courses meet the students’ needs. The sites are also evaluated to assure that students will be safe and will receive the necessary support.

Programs sponsored by other Christian Colleges and Universities include:

- European Nazarene College in Switzerland
- Africa Nazarene University in Kenya
- Nazarene Theological College in South Africa
- Korea Nazarene University
- EduVenture in Indonesia

The EduVenture program deserves some comment. This program is not the creation of a college or university. Dr. Tom Wisley, a missionary and educator, had a vision of spreading the gospel in remote areas of the world and at the same time drawing North American college students into the effort. Tom and his two sons and their families have established a “campus” in the high country of Irian Jaya, Indonesia in one of the most remote areas in the world. (Currently this program is operating on the island of Sumba, Indonesia.) Several PLNU students have participated in this strong academic program and have probably been changed more than students in any other program. They have been impacted physically, academically, socially and spiritually. Like the CCCU, EduVenture is not a credit granting institution. Therefore, students enroll in PLNU courses that are offered in the Indonesia setting.

The number of secular settings open to college students is mind-boggling. All one needs to do is pick up a copy of *Peterson’s Guide to Study Abroad* (2000) to realize the wide array of programs available. One publication indicates that there are over 4000 international opportunities available. PLNU students have participated in many different programs including:

- John Cabot University in London
- St. Louis University-Madrid Campus

- U. Of Pittsburgh's Semester At Sea
- Butler University Programs
- Arcadia University Programs

Finally, PLNU students are placed in agency consortia programs. While a single U.S. institution does not directly sponsor these they offer many advantages to students. Such programs include:

- International Education of Students
- American International University
- Council on International Educational Exchange.
- American Institute for Foreign Study
- Program Advantages and Disadvantages

There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these types of programs. Ideally, most universities would like their own programs over which they have total control. The disadvantages associated with such programs are many. As indicated earlier, they include the cost of staffing, enrollment, curriculum and facility issues to mention just a few. Most small institutions simply cannot afford to put a program in place to service only their students, and if a program were created it would probably be sufficiently specialized so as not to appeal to students from other institutions.

Point Loma students are urged to participate in programs offered by Christian institutions--programs such as Africa Nazarene University, European Nazarene College and the CCCU student programs. While these programs are very attractive to some, the fact that the course offerings are narrow makes them unacceptable to most students. Unless the student has a

particular major or is at just the right point in her studies, the courses will not transfer back to the home institution to meet specific graduation requirements.

Programs such as Saint Louis University's Madrid Campus have broad appeal. Programs of this type offer a full university curriculum, which is taught in English. While such programs offer special services for U.S. students they make no pretense of being Christian. Students enrolling in programs such as this are stepping into a secular university with all of the issues that involves.

Point Loma is using this broad variety of opportunities to fit the many needs and preferences of students. Some students do not have enough self-confidence to step into an international program without a great deal of support. These students are encouraged to consider the CCCU programs or other "island" programs designed specifically for a group of U.S. students from Christian institutions. Other students are looking for an opportunity to step out of a very sheltered environment and "test their wings." Programs such as the Madrid campus are ideal for them.

### *Christian vs. Secular Programs*

One question that must be addressed related to study abroad experiences is whether or not colleges and universities with a Christian emphasis should support students who wish to study abroad in secular settings. Or, to get more particular, should a Nazarene institution of higher education support students who wish to study in non-Wesleyan Christian programs? The reality is that students who study in CCCU programs are being strongly influenced by Christians with a Reformed background. The Reformed concept of a "Christian World View" would generally not conform to that of a Wesleyan. The reality is that students are influenced by a variety of "doctrines" both in and out of their academic settings. The purpose of study abroad programs is to broaden our campus with a global perspective. Unless our students are encouraged to look at

the world and selectively participate in it they will never comprehend it. They will not understand what is necessary to be salt and light nor will they understand how to join hands with brothers and sisters in Christ to extend his love. Like it or not, at some point students will leave the sheltered environment of our campuses and walk into the world. Providing some insight into that journey before they make the trip is not a bad idea.

At PLNU each student interested in studying abroad is carefully interviewed. Information is collected on their career goals, their college experience and their Christian values. Based upon this interview they are assisted in selecting a study abroad program that would be a good fit. There are some students who would never be recommended to enroll in a program like the University of Pittsburgh's Semester-At-Sea. There are others who have been advised not to consider European Nazarene College. It is the responsibility of International Studies office to know the programs and to advise students regarding their choices.

### *Study Abroad Issues*

Any study abroad program includes a host of both student and campus issues. Balancing these concerns is a particular challenge but necessary for an effective program.

### *Student Concerns*

Students generally have three concerns related to study abroad experiences. If these can be resolved to their satisfaction they are ready to move forward. The first relates to whether the experience will delay their graduation. With the information related to their selected major and the courses they have already completed programs usually can be found which will assist them toward graduation without causing any delay. Clearly, the second semester senior has more

difficulty finding an acceptable program than does a first semester sophomore. But, programs have even been found for those seniors who wait until their last semester to study abroad.

The second concern is the cost of the program. Students are paying a large tuition to attend a private college or university. Most of them are not ready to take on another large debt to study abroad. Again, in most instances programs are available which fit the student's (parent's) budget. At PLNU the largest financial drawback is that institutional scholarships do not apply toward study abroad programs. Each study abroad student is charged the actual cost of the program plus a two hundred dollar study abroad fee. Work is taking place to establish an endowed scholarship that will provide support to students who are accepted into a study abroad program. With the variety of programs now available, however, most students find programs that are no more expensive than a semester at PLNU.

The third issue is how the study abroad course grades will impact a student's grade point average. The students who want to study abroad are generally the better students academically, and many are receiving PLNU academic scholarships based on their G.P.A. Still, they are not interested in participating in programs that are so difficult that they might jeopardize their academic standing. On the other hand, the faculty is not interested in having students go to a very easy program and inflate their grade point average. To deal with this concern PLNU records all grades received in study abroad programs on the student's transcript but does not use those grades to calculate the student's cumulative G.P.A. In this way the units count toward graduation and can be seen by anyone looking at the transcript, but they do not impact the grade point or the student's eligibility for an academic award.

### *Campus Concerns*

As indicated earlier, there must be broad campus support if study abroad programs are to be successful. It seems that these programs and their associated requirements impact every office on campus. For example, it takes more work to handle the financial aid for a student studying abroad than for five students studying on the home campus, advising is more difficult, courses never match exactly and faculty must be willing to make some compromises with the belief that the experience is more valuable than the specific course content, the finance officers must determine the “lost” revenue if students leave the home campus for these programs, quality control must be considered for the various programs and liability issues must be addressed. The reality is that there are enough sticky issues to cause many campus communities not to pursue study abroad as an organized effort. Still, the response back from students who study abroad will be worth every inconvenience endured on the campus, and this may be the only realistic way to internationalize our campuses.

It is worth noting that more and more prospective students are inquiring into the study abroad opportunities available to them. Many high school students are using this information to help them in the selection of the colleges to which they apply.

### *Conclusion*

The world news reminds us over and over that this is a “shrinking” world. A crisis in the investment houses in Thailand drives down the value of currencies throughout Southeast Asia. Within months that crisis reaches markets in Russia and South America. A few brief weeks later the financial impact hits Wall Street. Whether it is an issue dealing with finances, human relations or national security, it seems to be the case that when someone in the world sneezes, the United States catches a cold. So, how will students be prepared to deal with this interconnected world? How will they be exposed to the tremendous peoples of the nations and all of the

resources that are available through these peoples? How will they become familiar with the various cultures in which they will live, work and share the Gospel? It appears that possibly the most effective tool available is a vital study abroad program.

The Old Testament scriptures point out that Moses, as God's chosen leader of the Israelites, was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. God took him to the top of a mountain and let him look at all of the land that the Israelites would possess, but it was Joshua who led the people into that land. Now here is the interesting piece of the story. Joshua had been there before! He had met the people, observed their culture and seen the bounty of the land. He was not entering the land as a stranger. He had had a study abroad experience!

Perhaps there should be one body of international educators (as the Nazarene Academy for International Education) whose tasks include looking into the promises of international education, helping set the course and direction and then turning the task over to the Joshuas of the world to "take the land." If there were any truth here, wouldn't it be wise to send these individuals into the land to learn all that they can before we expect them to lead others?

\*Material for this article originally presented at the Johannesburg 2000 conference on International Education, July 9-17, 2000

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#### *World Wide Web Sites*

American InterContinental University, <http://www.studyabroad.aiuniv.edu>

American Institute for Foreign Study <http://www.aifs.com>

Beaver College's Fifty Programs. <http://www.beaver.edu/cea/>

Butler College programs in England, Australia, etc. <http://www.butler.edu/www/isa>

Commercial listing of study abroad programs <http://www.studyabroad.com/>

Council for Christian Colleges & Universities <http://www.cccu.org/students/>

Council on International Educational Exchange. <http://www.ciee.org/>

Peterson's Exchange Center, Study Abroad Sector. <http://www.petersons.com/>

PLNU Study Abroad Office <http://www.ptloma.edu/internationalstudies/>

Institute for the International Education of Students <http://www.iesabroad.org>

Institute of International Education. <http://www.iie.org>

National Association of Foreign Student Advisors. <http://www.nafsa.org>

U. of California-Irvine International Opportunities Program. <http://www.cie.uci.edu/~cie/iop/>

U. of Minnesota, International Study and Travel Center. <http://www.istc.umn.edu/>