

lobbying Congress to provide more funding for under-represented populations and developing programs that are accessible to a broader population of students. We ask others to do the same.

Far too few U.S. students study abroad—about 1 percent by most estimates—and the numbers are skewed to wealthier students from elite colleges and universities.

- **More attention to the quality of study abroad programs.** Leaders in the field should develop standards and continually assess programmatic impact to make sure we are getting it right. There is too much at stake to fall back on “in my heart, I know it is working.” Multi-level, multi-method assessment techniques should be carefully explored.

- **A commitment to developing programs in less-traveled destinations with experiential pedagogies and language acquisition.** The programs with the most impact are constructed with keen attention to the value of active learning

techniques, the importance of language for understanding culture, and the need to get students to travel to places where they have not already been and to study themes they have not encountered.

Furthermore, study abroad need not be restricted to a student’s junior year. The impact on intellectual engagement is large. Maybe we need more study abroad in high school—or between high school and college. Or perhaps, we need to get students abroad during their sophomore year in college—which is too often a lost year in higher education.

These are among the important issues we are talking about at World Learning and SIT. We invite others to join us in this conversation to find ways of expanding study abroad to more students in more places, as a way to ensure that our campuses are places where students develop the capacities to be citizens of a globalizing world.

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Foreign Exposure

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The admirable ideal of “total” immersion in a foreign culture privileges students who plan early on for foreign study, establish early language fluency and elect majors and activities that make it easier to leave campus. But other students often find that they lack the language skills to qualify for many foreign programs or are unable to reconcile time abroad with curricular requirements at home. Especially at more self-important schools, faculties further complicate the problem by insisting that “if you haven’t taken the course with us, you haven’t really taken it.”

Less affluent students, moreover, often rule out foreign study from the start—as do many athletes, performers and campus activists who fear losing a competitive edge if they take time away from the local scene.

And yet those who miss out on foreign exposure are often those who need it most. Fostering a globally sensitive public (and electorate!) requires not so much that French-lit majors spend a year in Paris but that pre-med, pre-law and pre-business students are

exposed to the sudden jolt of seeing their home culture in a new perspective, of encountering a different, wider world which stretches the mind and soul. And this can begin to happen in just a few days—whetting young appetites forevermore!

For a dozen years, I have organized an intensive media seminar through Northwestern University, which brings several dozen students to Paris during each spring break—a cheaper project these days than traveling to Florida beaches—and more likely to garner parental support. Similar programs can thrive during colleges’ inter-sessions or summer breaks. At the same time, committed institutions are finding ways to more flexibly grant credit for courses taken abroad—including courses offered in English, albeit in non-English-speaking settings.

“When we got back from our week in Paris,” one student recently wrote, “my roommates and I decided that, from here on in, we’re going global!” The challenge for American educators in the 21st century will be to make that happen for an ever-wider range of students.

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