

Analysis of Study Abroad Programs

The Stars

MCOM 471

Professor Stuart

24 January 2019

Executive Summary

Secondary research of Winthrop University mass communication study abroad program was conducted to see how the department could promote its partnership with schools in different countries. We compared Winthrop's International Center's website with others in the state and provide suggestions for the improvement of its website. We looked its study abroad program to analyze photos, taglines, colors, and tone of the page. The schools included Wofford University, Clemson University, and College of Charleston.

Wofford College provided a well-informed and visually engaging website. The website gave its students insight on studying abroad before scheduling a meeting for further planning. Clemson University helped its students in their study abroad research by underlining important content and using other students' experiences to persuade prospective students to study abroad. Clemson promoted the program at its school but lacked information about their partner schools. College of Charleston site was formal and simple, but its lack of color and functional design was disappointing. The sections that stood out were the helpful "FAQ" and "Information for Parents."

After viewing the International Center website and the mass communication website at Winthrop we saw that information about study abroad was not shown on the main page. The mass communication department offered layout study plans for studying in another country. While looking through the International Center's website we see that it does not list the benefits of living in another country. Neither sites mentioned the new partner school in Spain.

We looked at what scholars and mainstream media are saying about studying abroad. Many of the articles state that a small percent of American students have studied abroad, even though there are several scholarships for those who wish to live abroad. A few of the articles highlighted the benefits of studying abroad like being competitive in the job field and global awareness; however, we also wanted to look at the other side of international travel, so we looked at the challenges some have faced while overseas. The Cosmopolitan article about six women who had troubles during their travels. We wanted to show the students of Winthrop that even though studying abroad can be frightening, its extremely beneficial to their future.

We noted the lack of awareness of studying abroad based on the amount of people in the department who have studied abroad. To make study abroad in the mass communication department more known, we propose that it increase its presents not just in the department but also on the campus as a whole.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Article Review	
Scholarly	
The Challenges and Benefits of Study Abroad	4
The Benefits of Study Abroad	5
More is Better: The Impact of Study Abroad Program Duration	6
Popular	
When Studying Abroad Goes Horribly Wrong	7
How Studying Abroad Makes You a Better Leader	8
Critiques of Other University's Websites	
Wofford College	9-10
Clemson University	10-11
College of Charleston	11
Critiques of Winthrop University's Website	12-13
Recommendations	14
Works Cited	15-16

“The Challenges and Benefits of Study Abroad” by Hamad Alghamdi and Suzanne Otte

This article discusses the growing numbers and problematic issues of students who are seeking the opportunity for a higher education in other countries. Being able to provide sufficient institutional and personal support can be difficult for institutions. The article breaks down the challenges students face studying abroad such as language barriers, social integration issues, and financial concerns. With each concern a solution is offered to the study abroad programs; such as strategies for participation in volunteer work and help students to adjust in a positive manner. The article also mentions recommendations for policy makers, faculty members, and counselors to help students who are having a hard time dealing with these issues while studying abroad.

The article summarizes the advantages of study abroad, including that students are better prepared for highly competitive job fields and that they have better understanding of cross cultural and global awareness. International students are prone to experience greater opportunities created by programs and benefits for institutions and students.

“The Benefits of Study Abroad: New Study Confirms Significant Gains” by Mary M.

Dwyer and Courtney K. Peters

This article explores the long-term impacts that studying abroad has on various aspects of a student’s life from personal, professional, and academic perspectives. A study conducted by the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) collected data from more than 3,400 respondents to show how studying abroad can be “a defining moment in a young person’s life and continues to impact the participant’s life for years after the experience” (Dwyer and Peters). The article elaborates on topics from the study, such as personal growth, intercultural development, education and career attainment, the benefits of a longer stay, how to enhance a study abroad experience, and the importance of internships abroad. Each topic discussed throughout the article used the testimonials from respondents.

This article contributes insight about specific areas that students can positively improve through the study abroad experience. It has a useful infographic that shows statistics of how many students felt they improved through academic commitment and personal, intercultural, and career development throughout various lengths of study.

“More Is Better: The Impact of Study Abroad Program Duration” by Mary M. Dwyer

This article discusses a study by the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) that shows that the longer students study abroad, the more likely they will have significant academic, cultural, and personal growth benefits. Despite these benefits, few students study abroad for a full term due to various academic, social, college policy, and economic reasons. The decline in full-term international students began around the 1970s when the number of international students decreased by 23 percent since the 1960s. The study supports studying abroad for a full term and its impact on an individual, but states that there is still little evidence to show what kind of physical changes occur and how long they last in an individual. However, the study does specifically show the impact on continued language use, academic attainment measurement, intercultural and personal development, and career decisions. It also specifically mentions that this trend can be “sustained over a period as long as 50 years” (Dwyer 161).

This article gave insight about how a term abroad can impact a student on many different levels and that longer duration often has a more significant impact on students. It also showcases that research can be invalid when compared to a summer-term, since many of those individuals “were as likely or more likely to achieve sustainable benefit from studying abroad in comparison with semester students” if the term was a minimum of six weeks (Dwyer 161). This is important for research purposes because it is so counter-intuitive with the entirety of the author’s research, but can be held true for well-planned educational programs that efficiently balance the level of tourist and educational experiences.

“When Studying Abroad Goes Horribly Wrong” by Sarah Elizabeth Richards

This Cosmopolitan article tells the story of six women who shared their stories about their time abroad. They talked about their struggle teaching in a foreign country and being forced to spend the day doing hours of chores. Grace Flott spent nine months in Paris, France, and was in a building when she heard an explosion. The building caught on fire and she made the decision to jump from the fifth floor. After waking up in the hospital she realized she had fractured her spine and right ankle and received second -and-third degree on her torso, legs, and arms. She later found out that the building had no fire door or smoke detectors. Even after this accident Flott still enjoys traveling but now carries a battery-operated smoke detector, Flott states that “you have to take charge of your own safety” (Richards). Lauren Juliff decided to take a solo trip to Asia where she was sexually assaulted. However, Juliff says “that experience didn’t wreck my love for travel” (Richards). As a blogger, Juliff encourages women to travel alone but to make sure they do research before traveling.

The stories of these women allow insight to terrible experiences that can happen while one is abroad; however, they remind us that we are in charge of our own safety. They also shed light on the fact that bad things can happen anywhere, whether students are abroad or at home.

“How Studying Abroad Makes You a Better Leader” by Shellie Karabell

This article exposes the benefits that studying abroad offers to students during their academic years and the impact it has on their professional lives. American companies are not just focused on their country, according to the international consulting firm, Egon Zehnder, which reports that 72 percent of its revenue is due to the international market, which is why they are constantly looking for employees with foreign work experience. The article says that only 10 percent of Americans study abroad; many schools do not encourage international studies. However, 350 accredited educational institutions are offering study abroad programs to encourage students to go overseas and discover new places. To help students to study abroad, the Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE) is offering student scholarships up to \$10,000 for a semester.

The article emphasizes that it is important to study in another country so students can see what is happening outside the United States. Studying abroad also helps the development of self-confidence to face problems that can occur when students are not familiar with the language, customs, and culture of the job market. Students studying abroad learn to listen and hear how foreigners communicate and the expressions they use. This allows them to diversify their own language and syntax. Students who study abroad experience a shift in their way of thinking and develop creative skills that may help them adapt to different situations and places in the workforce.

Critiques of Other Universities

Wofford College

Wofford College's website is appealing and helpful. Information about study abroad and its Office of International Programs (OIP) shares a website and that makes navigation easy. On the homepage, it has a brief statement about what the office strives towards, quick links, how to schedule an advising appointment, how to apply, options for interim term, identity-based programs, and how to find the office on social media. The social media can be accessed from most of the pages on the website which increases the chance of interaction. The identity-based program also seems helpful because it allows students from historically underrepresented communities to find a country that best suits their needs based on race, ethnicity, LGBTQ, gender, mental health, special needs, and religion.

On the website, a user can view all of the programs. It has a program search function that allows users to enter various pieces of information to align with which programs they are eligible. For example, one could enter that he/she is interested in Dublin, Ireland and find roughly nine different programs at various universities that Wofford is partnered with. It is difficult to find pricing information on the website, but it does mention that pricing and financial aid should be discussed during an appointment with an OIP advisor. Overall, the functionality and attention to detail made the website very easy to understand and navigate.

This website optimizes the use of visual aids. It uses a mixture of the college's stock photos and high quality student photos to illustrate how exciting and rewarding its study abroad program can be. It makes the tone approachable due to the functionality and amount of information presented. While it requires that students make an appointment when applying, it is

obvious that one could find most of the information he/she needs just from filling out the search widget on the website. They used a simple black and white color combination for the background and text on the website, photos, and webpage banners were well placed throughout.

Clemson University

Clemson clearly wants to stick to the brand for which it is famous. The colors throughout the website are the purple and orange that are “Clemson colors” to students and fans of the university. The text on the website is underlined in either orange or purple which helps point out the most important parts of the content. To accompany the highlighted text, it uses short sentences and key words to help deliver the messages more efficiently.

Every page has a banner with different photos that appear to have been taken by students. This provides more content and grabs the attention of visitors as the pictures are so colorful. The images could also push students study abroad since they see their peers having an exciting experience.

When Clemson is presenting the three different programs available for the students, a testimonial is given from a student who have already completed the program. This guides incoming students and helps them feel more confident in their program choice. If a student wants to apply for a program, they have to go to that specific portion of the website; it does not have to be done with an advisor. The website did not give much information on the partner schools available. Clemson has a “FAQ” section that discusses everything before, during, and after the student’s term abroad. Specifically, it includes information about health regulations and laws of some countries which could be useful to learn before leaving or even during a trip if something

were to happen while abroad. Clemson also showcases that once their term abroad is complete, students can easily return to the university and finish their studies without fear of losing credits.

College of Charleston

Overall, the tone of the College of Charleston website is formal, but simple. The colors throughout the website stick to the College of Charleston colors of red, grey, and white. While using the school's colors was a good idea, the colors are not very vibrant which makes the website seem slightly old-fashioned. There are only three photos about the program on the website for prospective international students to see where they can attend.

There are a lot of sub-tabs on the website which can be confusing and difficult to navigate since the content is so repetitive. However, the "FAQ" section is very helpful to students since it answers some of their questions in a very understandable manner. It also gives information about some of the courses offered at the partner schools. Another good section is titled "Information for Parents." Since they are likely to be the ones funding the trip abroad, they can be reassured and informed about the different options their children will have abroad. The website has a section that walks students through the application process. This is helpful because it keeps students from having to make an appointment or contact someone whenever they have simple questions.

The website does not promote the programs on the main page of the website; it is actually on the website for the Center for International Education. If students do not know to look at that website, they will not be able to easily find information on the partner schools.

Critiques of Winthrop University

The International Center's website, Winthrop does not have a direct link or highlighted spot to show viewers its study abroad options. It only showcases the International Center's theme: "a home away from home" for international students. The offered partner programs do not have their own tab on the sidebar menu, but are part of a drop-down menu. The page does not highlight the benefits of the study abroad program or the financial information; viewers really have to search the website to find the information. The page does mention all of the exchange programs, partner programs, national student exchanges, and any additional opportunities that the university offers. It also has hyperlinks to detailed information about each university abroad.

The Department of Mass Communication's study abroad website is hidden under a drop-down menu. The department features 4-year study plans so that students do not fall behind on their graduation time while studying abroad, a concern of many students. Based on the website, the department allows students to travel to the following universities:

- Australia: Deakin University in Victoria
- England: Edge Hill University in Osmirk
- Ireland: Dublin School of Business in Dublin
- Norway: University of Agder in Kristiansand
- Sweden: Jonkoping University in Jonkoping

Unfortunately, the webpage does not mention the fact that students pay the same tuition that they pay at Winthrop University. The website is not updated and does not mention the

newest addition: Spain! However, the department small pieces of information without making students navigate to another page.

Recommendations

Winthrop's study abroad web pages have a very professional and formal tone which might be off-putting to some students, who do not want to read something that looks formal and/or boring. Also, the International Center does not have any kind of tagline for the program. The Department of Mass Communication tagline is: "Be Bold. Adventure. Explore." This is a bland tagline because students know that studying abroad will be an adventure, so just saying the word in the tagline frankly does nothing. This should improve to help achieve a more enticing tone and should also be used on the web page for the International Center. We also suggest that the department create an hashtag, like #eaglesabroad, so students who are currently living overseas can share their experiences with their classmates at home. This may also inspire more students to inquire about studying abroad.

Adding more photographs of student's experience would likely entice students to stay on the page. Professors discuss how great studying abroad is, but they never *show* students. Finally, the colors on both web pages are consistent with those of the university. While this might keep everything uniform, it definitely does not add any value or make the pages stand out.

The mass communication department advertises studying abroad in Johnson Hall; however, posters should be distributed all around campus to better target freshmen who may not have classes in Johnson.

Work Cited

- Alghamdi, Hamad, and Suzanne Otte. "The Challenges and Benefits of Study Abroad." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 6, no. 5, May 2016, pp. 16–22. <http://www.ijhssnet.com/journal/index/3495>.
- "Clemson Abroad." *Criminal Justice (B.S./B.A.) | Degree Programs | Clemson University, South Carolina*, www.clemson.edu/studyabroad/programs.html.
- Dwyer, Mary, and Courtney Peters. "The Benefits of Study Abroad: New Student Confirms Significant Gains." *International Education of Students*, 5 Mar. 2017. <http://www2.clarku.edu/offices/studyabroad/pdfs/IES%20Study.pdf>.
- Dwyer, Mary. "More Is Better: The Impact of Study Abroad Program Duration." *Journal of Research in Education*, Eastern Educational Research Association. George Watson, Marshall University, One John Marshall Drive, College of Education and Professional Development, Huntington, WV 25755. 30 Nov. 2003. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ891454>.
- "International Programs." *Wofford College - College Mission*, www.wofford.edu/internationalprograms/.
- Karabell, Shellie. "How Studying Abroad Makes You A Better Leader." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 29 Jan. 2016. www.forbes.com/sites/shelliekarabell/2016/01/29/how-studying-abroad-makes-you-a-better-leader/.
- Richards, Sarah Elizabeth. "When Studying Abroad Goes Horribly Wrong." *Cosmopolitan*, Cosmopolitan, 9 Oct. 2017, www.cosmopolitan.com/lifestyle/advice/a6851/gap-years-gone-bad/.

“Study Abroad Programs.” *College of Charleston*, international.cofc.edu/study-abroad/.

Winthrop University. “Mass Communication.” *Winthrop University: COE Faculty Profile* - Schary, David, www.winthrop.edu/cas/masscomm/default.aspx?id=28279.

Winthrop University. “Study Abroad.” *Winthrop University: COE Faculty Profile* - Schary, David, www.winthrop.edu/international/default.aspx?id=33723.