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Advancing the Participation of Business Students in Study Abroad Programs

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ADVANCING THE PARTICIPATION OF BUSINESS STUDENTS IN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

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Advancing the Participation of Business Students in Study Abroad Programs

Zahir A. Quraeshi^α, Mushtaq Luqmani^σ & Ann Veeck^p

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I. INTRODUCTION

Academics, policymakers and business people in recent years have been strongly underscoring the need for our students to develop and strengthen their skills to function successfully in a multicultural, diverse workplace. Business schools in the U.S. are involved in a wide variety of internationalization initiatives to contribute towards this goal. Such initiatives include encouraging enrollment of foreign students, facilitating international faculty exchanges, including international content in functional courses in business, inviting practitioners with international expertise to share their experiences with students, increasing internationally oriented internships, and last but not the least, encouraging students to participate in short-term as well as semester long Study Abroad programs. The latter - Study Abroad programs - have become a vital ingredient of these internationalization initiatives.

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According to the Lincoln Commission (2005) on the Study Abroad fellowship program composed of prominent academics and policymakers, "Engagement of American undergraduates with the world around them is vital to the nation's well-being. It is in the national interest of the United States to send at least one million undergraduates abroad annually" (p.4). The Association of International Educators, NAFSA (2003) has recommended the establishment of a national program to bolster study abroad as an "integral part of college students' education" (p.11) to support this bold goal. "Study abroad must become the norm, not the exception, at higher education institutions in the United States. (p.3)...The United States can no longer afford to be passive about study abroad. We need to aggressively promote it to each rising generation. And we need to remove the roadblocks that stand in their way."(p.5)

II. BACKGROUND

Clearly, the literature directs attention to the numerous benefits that can be realized through Study Abroad experiences. Study Abroad programs can strengthen cross-cultural awareness and self-confidence (Black & Duhon, 2006); contribute towards building a more mature personal identity (Angulo, 2008; Black & Duhon, 2006); and help to improve personal and professional self-images (Cushner & Mahon, 2002) leading to personal as well as intellectual growth (Bates, 1997; Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1991; Drews & Meyer, 1996; Hutchins, 1996; McCabe, 1994; Thomlison, 1991; Waldbaum, 1996; Zhai, 2000). Such programs help in enhancing abilities to have successful interactions in different cultures (Jones, 2003; Williams, 2005). This is important because, with the globalization of markets, intercultural competence has been identified as a crucial business success factor (Hilton, 2007). Clarke, Flaherty, Wright and McMillen (2009) in a review of the literature suggest that Study Abroad programs contribute to proficiencies in cross-cultural interactions and enhancing cultural sensitivity. This can be particularly useful, say Curran (2007) and Norris & Gillespie (2009), at later stages of careers when employers look for attributes that include initiative and adaptability – experiences that Study Abroad programs provide. Moreover, participating in Study Abroad programs contribute towards helping to better understand one's

own cultural values and biases (Gammonley, Rotabi, and Gamble, 2007; Langley & Breese, 2005; Milstein, 2005; Mistretta, 2008; Williams, 2005) while developing less ethnocentric, more favorable attitudes toward other cultures (Carlson & Widaman, 1988); Kitsantas, 2004). Study Abroad programs help to nurture globally minded individuals with broadened perspectives, who are likely to oppose prejudice, are more accepting of alternative viewpoints (Carlson et al., 1990; Douglas & Jones-Rikkens, 2001; Golay, 2006; Hadis, 2005), and are engaged in deeper understanding of wide ranging global issues (Carlson et al., 1990; Carsello & Creaser, 1976; Douglas & Jones-Rikkens, 2001; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Golay, 2006; Gonyea, 2008; Schuster et al., 1998).

While the benefits of Study Abroad programs are widely documented, participation of students in such programs remains low. About 270 thousand U.S. students studied abroad in 2009-2010, a mere 1.35 percent of the approximately 20 million students enrolled at U.S. institutions of higher education ; about 20% of those studying abroad are business students (Institute of International Education, 2011). A major reason is that the benefits of SA programs are largely those that are articulated by groups such as academicians and policymakers from their perspective and not by the students (in particular business students) contemplating participation in these programs.

Studies related specifically to the participation of business students in Study Abroad programs can be delineated into two categories: research based on the perceptions of those conducting these programs (Brokaw, 1996; Duke, 2000; Toncar & Cudmore, 2000; Kaufman et al., 2011) and research on the perceptions of business students (Albers-Miller, Prenshaw & Straughan, 1999; Toncar, Reid & Anderson, 2005; Naffziger, Bott & Mueller, 2008; DeJong, Schnusenber & Goel, 2010; Presley, Damron-Martinez & Zhang, 2010). At most, perceptions of business students have been contrasted with that of non-business students, for example by Toncar, Reid and Anderson (2005), who note differences in motivations for SA participation between these two groups. We argue that motivations to participate of business students may vary by student class (e.g. freshman, sophomore etc.). As Study Abroad program initiatives mature, different Study Abroad programs with progressively different learning and experiential objectives can be designed and targeted to specific levels of business students.

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The present study is based on the premise that the likelihood of participation in SA programs may vary considerably between business students at different

class levels. Study Abroad programs can be designed so that these are attractive to business students at different levels and encourage greater participation.

Accordingly, a survey of business students at a Midwestern university, with a large (3500 students) AACSB -accredited program in business, was conducted to examine attitudes towards participation in Study Abroad programs. Specifically, the main research objectives of the survey were to determine:

- Overall interest of business students in participation in Study Abroad programs
- Perceptions of benefits received from participation in Study Abroad
- Perceptions of deterrents to participation in Study Abroad
- Incentives that would facilitate participation in Study Abroad programs
- Differences between business students' inclinations to participate in Study Abroad programs based on their class level.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A professor who generated "active stakeholder interest" through involvement of students in her Marketing Research class directed the survey. The students assumed shared responsibilities for managing the survey procedures, including questionnaire development, data collection, and data analysis. Prior to conducting the survey, a pretest yielded a sample size of 116 completed surveys and was used to develop the constructs and refine the questions. Business students were recruited to participate in the survey through select faculty, who sent the survey link to students in their classes. The survey was available for students to take during a two-week period in November 2010. All students who participated in the survey were entered into a drawing for five \$20 gift cards. The population of the survey was defined as all students who took classes at the College of Business.

The questionnaire addressed a number of issues related to study abroad, including likelihood to participate in short-term and long-term programs; perceived obstacles and benefits; knowledge of types of programs, expenses, and credit offered; perceived support of friends, family, future employers, and university personnel to overseas travel; attractiveness of incentives to participation; and basic demographics. In addition, one open-ended question was included at the end of the questionnaire, asking "What final comments do you have related to study abroad programs?"

1,388 students completed the survey. The students who responded to the survey had the following composition:

- Had participated in Study Abroad: 5.2%;
- Female: 56.3%; Male 43.7%

- Freshmen: 18.1%; Sophomores: 16.3%; Juniors: 25.0%; Seniors: 31.1%; Graduate students: 09.6%
- African American or Black: 6.9%; Asian: 4.0%; Caucasian or White: 80.2%; Hispanic or Latino: 4.5%; Native American or Native Alaskan: 0.7%; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander: 0.1%; Other: 3.6% (note: based on census categories; more than one category could be selected).

Altogether, the Business student body is fairly well represented by the sample.

V. FINDINGS

To refine the scales, factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was conducted. After eliminating items based on low factor loadings (<.5), high cross loadings (<.35), negative contribution to alpha, and/or low item-total correlation (Churchill, 1979; Nunally, 1978), six factors (eigenvalues>1) were retained (see Table 1).

Table 1 : Factors and Scale Items for Study Abroad Survey

Scale Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient α
<u>Anxiety - Related Obstacles*</u>			0.896
I don't want to leave the comforts of my home	2.8	1.863	
I might be lonely	2.73	1.803	
I would miss my family	3.37	2.003	
I would miss my friends	2.89	1.851	
I would be nervous about going to another country	2.75	1.729	
It might not be safe	2.74	1.759	
I would miss out on school activities	2.32	1.648	
*7-pt. scale, 7=most definitely an obstacle			
<u>Expense - Related Obstacles*</u>			0.860
Studying abroad would be too expensive	4.99	1.935	
I simply can't afford to study abroad	4.59	2.099	
*7-pt. scale, 7=most definitely an obstacle			
<u>Time - Related Obstacles*</u>			0.690
I'm just too busy	3.67	1.999	
I can't afford to take time away from my studies	3.79	1.989	
I have work commitments	3.83	2.118	
*7-pt. scale, 7=most definitely an obstacle			
<u>Perceived Benefits*</u>			0.919
I would have an opportunity to learn about a new culture	5.25	1.522	
Study abroad would be a good activity to list on a resume	5.64	1.442	
Future employers will value study abroad experience	5.44	1.493	
I would gain confidence	5.03	1.632	
I would get to travel	5.73	1.485	
I would become more mature	4.73	1.77	
I would understand the world more	5.37	1.453	
I would learn new life skills	5.40	1.469	
I would learn more about how business is conducted in other countries	5.72	1.368	
I would be better prepared for a global career	5.72	1.403	
*7-pt. scale, 7=extremely important			

<u>Perceived Support*</u>			0.825
Support of family for study abroad	3.56	1.15	
Support of friends for study abroad	3.34	1.05	
Support of professors for study abroad	3.99	0.953	
Support of administrators for study abroad	3.98	0.967	
Support of future employers for study abroad	4.09	0.898	
*5-pt. scale, 5=definitely would like me to study abroad			
<u>Perceived Knowledge*</u>			0.945
Knowledge of the types of program offered	2.98	1.628	
Knowledge of the places where the programs are offered	3.19	1.737	
Knowledge of the costs of the programs offered	2.96	1.786	
Knowledge of the lengths of the programs offered	3.47	1.79	
Knowledge of the availability of financial aid	2.64	1.689	
Knowledge of the availability of getting course credit	2.82	1.756	
*7-pt. scale, 7=know a great deal			

The final factors were named Anxiety-Related Obstacles (seven items; $\alpha=.896$), Expense-Related Obstacles (two items; $\alpha=.860$), Time-Related Obstacles (three items; $\alpha=.690$), Perceived Benefits (ten items; $\alpha=.919$), Perceived Support (five items; $\alpha=.825$), and Perceived Knowledge (six items; $\alpha=.945$). The coefficient alpha of each of these scales ranges from very good to excellent, with the exception of the Time-Related Obstacles factor, which has an alpha that is "minimally acceptable" (DeVellis, 2012). In total, the six factors explain 67.98 of the variance of the sample data.

Scores for the six factors were created by averaging mean responses on the items within each

factor. These mean scores were used to compare differences in undergraduates' perceptions of participation in Study Abroad, with a 95% level of confidence used in all cases. As will be described in the following section, important differences in perceptions were found in attitudes of business students according to class standing.

a) Comparison by Undergraduate Class Standing

Freshmen (n=204), sophomores (n=185), juniors (n=273), and seniors (n=319) were compared using ANOVA (analysis of variance) tests to determine if significant difference exist in perceptions related to participation in Study Abroad (see table 2).

Table 2 : Study Abroad Perceptions by Class Standing

Constructs	Fresh. (n=204) Mean	Sophs. n=185 Mean	Jrs. (n=273) Mean	Srs. (n=319) Mean	F	df	p
Likelihood of participation in a study abroad program (7-pt. scale, 7=extremely likely)	3.96 ^a	3.69 ^{ab}	3.43 ^b	2.08 ^c	59.194	3	.000
Likelihood of participation in a short term program (0 to 100%)	52.88 ^a	5.58 ^b	5.41 ^b	5.39 ^c	74.084	3	.000
Likelihood of participation in a long term program (0 to 100%)	36.06 ^a	33.77 ^a	25.56 ^b	10.04 ^c	53.594	3	.000
Anxiety-Related Obstacles (7-pt. scale, 7=most definitely an obstacle)	3.13 ^a	3.01 ^{ab}	2.82 ^{bc}	2.71 ^c	4.228	3	.006
Expense-Related Obstacles (7-pt. scale, 7=most definitely an obstacle)	4.96	4.88	4.61	4.57	2.522	3	.057
Time-Related Obstacles (7-pt. scale, 7=most definitely an obstacle)	3.44 ^a	3.37 ^a	3.77 ^b	4.05 ^b	9.736	3	.000
Perceived Benefits (7-pt. scale, 7=extremely important)	5.58	5.41	5.39	5.32	2.329	3	.073

Perceived Support (5-pt. scale, 5=definitely would like me to study abroad)	3.80	3.80	3.79	3.78	.021	3	.996
Perceived Knowledge (7-pt. scale, 7=know a great deal)	2.72 ^a	2.91 ^{ab}	3.10 ^b	3.11 ^c	3.531	3	.014

*For means on each row (by construct), groups with different subscripts are significantly different ($p < .05$)

The students were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale, with 1=not at all likely and 7=very likely, how likely they felt they would be to participate in a Study Abroad program before graduating from college. As seen in Table, 2, the results show that freshmen are most likely to believe that they will participate in Study Abroad (\bar{x} = 3.96), with perceived likelihood to participate in Study Abroad decreasing as class standing rises (sophomore \bar{x} = 3.69; junior \bar{x} = 3.43; and senior (\bar{x} = 2.08). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) techniques show that the means among classes are significantly different ($F=59.194$; $p=.000$). Likewise, lower level classmen are significantly more likely than upper level classmen to believe that they will participate in a short term Study Abroad program ($F=74.084$; $p=.000$), as well as a long term program ($F= 53.594$; $p=.000$), before they graduate.

For students of all class standings the largest perceived obstacle to participation in Study Abroad is the expense involved (Expense-Related Obstacles), with no significant differences at the 95% confidence level in mean response to the scale according to class standing ($F=2.522$; $p=.057$). Freshmen, however, are more likely to consider anxiety related to participation in Study Abroad to be an obstacle (Anxiety-Related Obstacles) in comparison to junior and seniors ($F=4.228$; $p=.006$). In contrast, juniors and seniors are more likely to view time-related constraints as an obstacle to Study Abroad (Time-Related Obstacles) than freshmen and sophomores ($F=9.736$; $p=.000$). Seniors and juniors claim to be more knowledgeable about different aspects of study abroad (Perceived Knowledge) than freshmen ($F=3.531$; $p=.014$).

There are no significant differences according to class standing in perceived benefits of participation in Study Abroad ($F=2.329$; $p=.073$) or in perceived support of others for participation in Study Abroad ($F=.021$; $p=.996$).

b) Open-Ended Comments

Quite a few of the students elected to answer the question, "What final comments do you have related to study abroad programs?" that was posed at the end of the questionnaire. The majority of the comments could be sorted into three categories: expense issues, need for information, and time and scheduling conflicts. The rest of the students' comments were labeled as miscellaneous, including such statements as noting that a friend had a good experience studying abroad, or stating that they wished that they knew a second

language.

A large number of comments were related to students' perceptions that they could not afford Study Abroad. Many of these began with positive comments such as "very/extremely interested," "great opportunity," "love to do it," etc., but ended with negative comments related to the expense of participation, such as "expensive," "need funding," "scholarships needed," "parents/family can't afford," etc.

Some of the expense-related comments made by upperclassmen stated that they had initially considered participating in Study Abroad, but had later rejected the idea due to the perceived costs.

Another large group of responses related to a desire to know more information about Study Abroad. These comments commonly included phrases, such as "don't know much," "not enough info about specific programs", "not promoted well," and "need to learn more about these." Some students, generally freshmen or sophomores, simply requested more information:

Can I get more information about the study abroad program? (Female, freshman)

I would love to do something like this; I just need to get more information. (Female, freshman)

Some upperclassmen's comments related to feeling disappointment that they did not learn more information about Study Abroad earlier, such as the following:

Keep on promoting it. I'm a senior and now. I don't have time to study abroad, but one year ago I would have definitely gone if I had known about it. Try to promote these to freshmen and sophomores; this would be a great idea. (Male senior)

The final large group of comments centered around concerns about finding time for a Study Abroad experience in a schedule or worries about other commitments. Not surprisingly, the majority of the students who lamented the lack of time to include a Study Abroad experience in their college coursework were juniors or seniors. An example is the following comment from a female senior:

It's not that I don't think they are a great idea; I just don't have the time before I graduate.

A few students simply wrote, "No time."

VI. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings demonstrate that students often begin their college career believing that they will likely

participate in a study abroad experience, but that as they progress from freshmen to upperclassmen they become increasingly less likely to believe that they will have this opportunity. At the same time, seniors remain interested in Study Abroad and continue to believe that participation in Study Abroad provides important benefits. These results suggest that seniors become aware of specific program offerings near graduation and many including those that are acquainted with these programs are unable to participate because of conflicting pressures to take courses required for graduation.

Considering that Study Abroad should be an on-going and integral educational tool targeted to all students, it is essential that students at all levels should have opportunities to participate in these programs. This objective can be achieved effectively if the planning and marketing efforts to increase Study Abroad participation are considered a long-term process targeted to the class level of students rather than a shotgun approach trying to appeal to all or to those that actively seek study

abroad experiences. Such a process would continuously encourage students to consider participation in Study Abroad programs from the time they enter as freshmen to the time they exit the university as graduating seniors. Students might, for example, participate in a short-term Study Abroad program in their freshman year, followed by SA programs later that incorporate field experiences and internships. To support this process, it is helpful to develop a range of upgraded and unique Study Abroad programs that are closely connected to a student's academic development and to the shifting interests and expectations of students at each of the different student levels (freshman, junior, sophomores and seniors). The objective is for students to gain cultural experiences and global learning perspectives that are expansive and enriched and encourage participation in Study Abroad programs that provide diversified experiences. A college can develop and promote these varied Study Abroad experiences for business students in each of four phases over the students' university career, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Study Abroad Strategies and Facilitative Actions

	Initiation Phase	Reinforcement Phase	Diversified Experience Phase	Career Enhancement Phase
Targeted Group (s)	Freshmen and incoming Sophomores	Sophomores and early Juniors	Juniors	Seniors
Targeted Study Abroad Programs	Programs with primary focus on cultural experiences	Interlocking business and cultural study abroad programs	Diversified study abroad programs tied to field experience opportunities	Study abroad programs tied to overseas internships
Targeted Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have graduates and seniors allay travel concerns and share their positive SA experiences including cultural and social benefits -Develop and implement stringent safety procedures for SA trips -Have Health Centers provide detailed information on health precautions for SA travel -Promote the safety of SA to parents/guardians - Offer comprehensive insurance coverage to mitigate student & parent anxiety on risks of SA -Offer incentives to faculty teaching Gen Ed courses to promote SA programs -Attract potential students with SA scholarships -Clarify how total student costs for SA may be lower than perceived; provide alternative financing and support options for SA <p>Reasons for targeted strategies: Reduce anxiety; reduce gaps in information and financial requirements; stimulate 'first time' study abroad; freshmen students are highly dependent on parents/guardians for financial and moral support; freshmen are most dependent on advisors for course recommendations and scheduling; Freshmen take many General Education courses; SA information from graduates has credibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extend value propositions to underscore benefits of multiple study abroad experiences -Develop 'frequent flyer' type program rewards -Send email and news blasts on study abroad programs to targeted students -Reinforce and advertise benefits of SA to first time participants -Identify opinion leaders among cohorts to diffuse concept of SA to potential new participants - Utilize recent SA participants to promote/convince non-participating students - Connect concerned parents of potential new participants with parents of prior SA participants - Increase SA scholarships to deserving students -Offer tuition rebates for multiple study abroad trips <p>Reasons for targeted strategies: Orient students to SA as building blocks for global learning; ; sensitize students to multiple cross-cultural nuances and differences; reward students for increased participation in SA; Prior participants are key influences on potential participants among peer groups; parents continue to exert influence over SA decision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize importance of strengthening student portfolios through diverse international experiences; -Develop positioning strategies accentuating global field experiences -Incorporate foreign field research projects in SA -Collaborate with foreign business schools to develop and conduct joint research projects -Develop database of companies and institutions providing international field research experiences -Consider flexibility in regular course schedules and alternative course formats to accommodate SA experiences -Increase long-term funding for SA through deferred interest and loan payments <p>Reasons for targeted strategies: Global field experience is valuable for student development and job placement; business schools need to cultivate overseas contact to arrange and monitor field experiences; students need course flexibility to have time for SA field experiences; need for more financial assistance to cover field research costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Underscore to students the value of internships and longer-term SA programs; -Develop positioning strategies accentuating overseas internships - Arrange foreign internships linked to career options -Capture global experiences of SA students through blogs, student websites, and social media -Document lessons learned from multiple study abroad programs -Develop creative financing and increase financial assistance for long-term study SA programs -Develop metrics to track and reinforce the value of SA and to improve programs spread over the study abroad phases -Provide scheduling flexibility in taking senior courses - Continue to subsidize SA expenses through student scholarships and deferred payments <p>Reasons for targeted strategies: -Successful graduates are credible sources; social media is an effective visual means of communicating SA benefits and activities; internships significantly enhances student's global marketability and career skill set; students are time-starved and pressured to complete senior level courses; higher internship expenses and mounting student debts need greater financial support</p>

Targeted Facilitative Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop targeted information and promotional materials on SA programs -Include coverage on importance of SA during student orientations -Encourage course and curriculum advisors to recommend SA -Incorporate study abroad objectives in university guided mission statements/strategies Increase priority of planning for study abroad activities at all relevant university office levels & international office -Mobilize curriculum committees to support SA credits for Gen Ed requirements -Coordinate college initiatives to promote SA with university's international office -Disseminate information on SA at various student organizations and at university forums -Use social media to create buzz about SA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Draw on expertise of travel agents & service providers in arranging for multiple SA trips; - Collaborate with foreign business schools to develop meaningful cross-cultural exchange SA programs -Encourage foreign business faculty exchanges to facilitate study abroad instruction and supervision -Develop and facilitate course credits for fundamental courses taken overseas -Work with business college assessment committees to develop SA metrics / assess global learning objectives -Seek business faculty teaching pre-business classes to promote and to facilitate SA programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enlist help of Student Career Services to actively promote SA guided field experiences -Seek "buy-in" from faculty and college curriculum committees on granting credits for foreign field experiences - Get faculty to infuse content learnt through SA experiences in their teaching -Develop partnerships with foreign business schools to enable students to take business courses for credit overseas along with SA field experiences -Negotiate agreements with foreign institutions for discounted tuition and accommodations -Defray SA costs by seeking support from U.S. and foreign companies -Target Federal and State agencies and international foundations for global skills development funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enlist Career Center to highlight global skill sets of graduating seniors to employers -advise students on ways of leveraging global experiences in job interviews -Identify a core group of U.S. and foreign companies and seek their support in providing overseas internships and financial support -Enlist help of NGOs in providing social entrepreneurship internship opportunities - Continue advocacy within curriculum committees and administrative units to grant course credits for internships -Invite graduating students and alumni to share their valued study abroad experiences with reluctant students
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Initiation Phase - The first strategic "Initiation" phase of the dynamic process, aimed at encouraging participation in Study Abroad programs, targets primarily freshmen and incoming sophomores.

Our survey results indicate that interested students at all class levels perceive the two highest obstacles to Study Abroad to be 'too high expenses' and 'inability to pay'.

As far as expenses are concerned, we need to look for ways to reduce the financial burden for students in this and later phases. Study abroad programs will progressively cost more in the later phases as the range of study abroad programs begin to vary based on the length of the programs (e.g., short term - two to three weeks vs. full semesters), and the type of programs offered (cross-cultural experiences, interlocking cultural and business experiences, field research, internships).

As a start, in the "initiation" phase, to alleviate the financial costs of participation in a Study Abroad program, the university should consider providing SA scholarships to incoming freshmen. In addition, the college should examine ways to reduce SA program-related costs. Methods for alleviating the cost of travel should be explored, such as the use of frequent flyer miles, group travel discounts, and flexible travel arrangements. Expenses related to in-country logistics can also be controlled and managed by seeking alternative housing arrangements in the host country, such as dorms, hostels and local hotels. Meal costs can quickly add up to significant expenses during overseas stays. In our experience, meal expenses are considerably reduced when students are urged to explore local alternatives. Overseas partnering institutions can sometimes provide either cheaper university transportation or suggest inexpensive means to travel, particularly when the student hosts who know their way around serve as guides.

Our survey results show that at our university, as is probably true of other universities, many students at all class levels remain largely unaware of information on available university financial assistance. Besides University-wide Study Abroad fairs, we now have college specific SA events to publicize availability of financial assistance. Even with these efforts students express surprise when advised about available financial support. It would help if financial assistance information accompanies every mention of SA programs.

As Table 2 shows, our research findings indicate that freshmen exhibit greater interest than students at higher class levels in participating in Study Abroad programs. However, compared to upperclassmen, they lack knowledge related to various aspects related to Study Abroad, including the types of programs that are available. Information disseminated by centralized university Study Abroad offices need to be complemented by organized college efforts to enlist faculty, students and other facilitators to provide more substantive information to potential participants. Students are apt to pay attention to trusted faculty who have conducted SA programs and who promote the SA experience. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and students blogs about SA trips stimulate interest among cohort peer groups. Even at the risk of being redundant, multiple sources of SA information can help to drive home the message of value of the programs to students.

Freshmen also indicate that they have significantly higher anxiety related to participation in Study Abroad, including nervousness about foreign travel and worries that they will be lonely and miss their families and friends. Three strategies could be effective in reducing anxiety or stress: 1) Invite graduates and seniors that have completed Study Abroad to talk about their positive Study Abroad experiences, including the specific benefits that they have realized from these

experiences, 2) Educate and provide assurance to parents or guardians of students of the stringent procedures and care undertaken by school administrators and program organizers to ensure the safety of students participating in Study Abroad programs, and 3) Provide additional insurance coverage to mitigate actual and perceived risks, with notification of insurance options provided as part of information sessions related to Study Abroad.

Reinforcement Phase— In the second, “Reinforcement” phase, specific strategies are directed to sophomores and beginning juniors promoting programs that emphasize an improved understanding of cultural differences and how these and other environmental differences influence how business is conducted in other countries. Such programs typically include hands-on activities to enhance cultural sensitivity and visits to business sites.

In the targeted groups, there will be those that have not participated previously in a Study Abroad program. Our findings suggest that sophomores report a lack of fundamental information related to Study Abroad programs, as well exhibit higher anxiety about foreign travel, in comparison to upper classmen. As such, students should be provided with detailed information related to the types and lengths of programs offered. Clear information about the particular activities, organizational visits and the developmental rationale for these should be provided along with a detailed breakdown of the costs involved. In addition, this group should be informed of, and provided with, financial incentives such as SA scholarships and aid to increase their likelihood of participation. Sources of such assistance need to be extended and diversified.

Sophomores and early juniors that have previously participated in Study Abroad programs can be encouraged to take a second short term program that focuses more on interlocking cultural and business experiences, or to take semester long courses overseas. This group can also serve as key influentials in encouraging their cohorts that have not participated in Study Abroad programs to consider doing so. Further financial support can be provided for those willing to be active as cohort mentors and as logistics facilitators during a Study Abroad trip.

Diversified Experience Phase - In the third “Diversified Experience” phase, strategies are targeted mostly to juniors. Here, we need to offer these students programs that provide opportunities to gain field research experiences. Such experiences can strengthen their career portfolios and demonstrate tangible career benefits. At our college, we have developed programs that include field research and consulting projects after the completion of short-term (two-week) programs. Such courses have been oversubscribed.

The results of our study indicate that, while juniors perceive that they are knowledgeable of Study Abroad options and have less anxiety related to foreign travel, they are concerned with how they can fit Study Abroad into their schedule. These students face time pressures and weigh study abroad options against opportunities to get work experiences domestically and to take courses to meet curriculum course requirements. The current practice at many institutions is to offer Study Abroad programs as credit/non-credit courses. Curricula need to be revisited with an eye towards incorporating Study Abroad courses as a viable alternative to required coursework at the University. We strongly recommend that Study Abroad courses be awarded credit in the curricula for majors. Moreover, there should be flexibility in scheduling short term Study Abroad program options, such as during semester breaks, so that students can participate in short-term Study Abroad programs without compromising their ability to take courses during the regular semesters.

Career Enhancement Phase – In the final phase, the Career Enhancement Phase, strategies targeted mainly to seniors should recognize that these students, on the verge of graduation, have an expressed need to strengthen their career opportunities and would be greatly amenable to Study Abroad programs such as those that include internship opportunities. A focus on developing such programs does not preclude seniors who have not had study abroad experiences to avail of the opportunities in SA programs discussed in the earlier phases if they are so inclined. For seniors the overseas internship adds another valuable dimension to their marketability for job placement and career advancement. Developing a program focused on overseas internships can be challenging but doable. Alternatives include for example a standalone program of an international internship or one in which the student studies abroad at a foreign university for a semester while working as an intern at an area company.

University/college career centers can assist by working with domestic and foreign companies with a presence in the regional community, to provide internship opportunities overseas. Opportunities that might be explored include alumni links with overseas business, government agencies, private companies that facilitate internships, and non-governmental organizations (NGO's). In these initiatives, based on the results of our survey, we need to be mindful that these do not delay the time for graduation that students anticipate.

Study Abroad can indeed be a very significant developmental process with considerable benefits to participating students. We want to share a caveat. An interesting result of the study was that students rated travel to be the top most perceived benefit of Study Abroad programs, while the lowest two ratings for benefits were learning about new cultures and

understanding the world. This outcome may partly be a result of the promotional appeal used by the program organizers for making students interested in a specific Study Abroad program. Though the appeal to travel to a specific and appealing foreign country often builds excitement in terms of recreation and fun, the cultural and business skills developed through this experience are understated and often conditions the students to a fun-oriented rather than learning-oriented mind-set. Travel as a "fun" experience should not be the primary driver but rather a complementary driver of studying abroad. Appealing to students merely on the former can lead to inappropriate student learning choices, notably of where and what to study and the benefits gained. Hence, the real benefits of learning, such as sensitivity to and understanding of another culture, and preparing for an increasingly globally connected and diverse workplace, while gaining valuable internship or course credits, should be emphasized in the promotion and presentation of Study Abroad programs. Similarly, career services for students need to impress upon students that potential employers value Study Abroad experiences including international internships and field experiences. To be successful, the value of Study Abroad programs ideally should be culturally ingrained within the entire university resulting in manifest efforts to facilitate the Study Abroad process for students

The college and university should also develop an articulated process to identify and cultivate meaningful beneficial collaborations with facilitators here and abroad, such as alumni who value international experiences, area companies, international profit and non-profit agencies, foreign educational and partner institutions and external Study Abroad program providers. Collectively perceived value of Study Abroad programs will help to advance participation by our business students.

VII. CONCLUSION

Most business schools offer Study Abroad programs to their students and hope that their students will avail of these opportunities. As these initiatives mature and gain greater attention, it is time to consider more focused strategies to encourage more business students to participate in Study Abroad programs. Based on our findings, this study proposes strategies targeted to business students at different class levels that might be more appealing based on the students expressed needs and expectations, thus improving participation. Both short-term and long-term marketing efforts and initiatives would be needed to achieve this goal. An administrative and faculty mind-set that fully embraces the commitment to strengthening and diversifying students study abroad experiences is fundamental for the process to work. We hope that business schools will be able to use our

recommendations as a basis for augmenting their Study Abroad initiatives.

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