Motivations, Impact and Outcomes Affiliated with Short-Term Study Abroad Programs for Business Students

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ABSTRACT

Short-term study abroad programs are quickly becoming the most popular way to study abroad (IIE, 2019). However, research on the motivations for, impact and outcomes from choosing to study abroad on a short-term program are not abundant. Therefore, a knowledge and information gap exists. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the experiences of business students who participated in a short-term study abroad program between 2015-2020 in order to fill some of this research gap. This study examines the motivations for student program selection, the impact of their time abroad and the outcomes that followed their return home as they moved forward with their educations and careers. The findings of this study support that the geographic location and the timing of the program in relation to other events in a student's life are two of the most important factors considered by a student in his or her decision to participate in a short-term study abroad program. When reflecting on the impact that their participation in a short-term study abroad made, survey respondents reported a heightened sense of independence and ability to adapt to a new environment. Respondents also reported an expansion in their cultural awareness. Finally, respondents who graduated and are alumni of the university offered that their participation in a short-term program abroad inspired a passion for international travel and encouraged them to seek out international positions in their careers either now or in the future.

Keywords: *short-term, study abroad, business, outcomes, impact, motivations*

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Introduction

Short-term study abroad programs are an emerging and growing phenomenon. Universities across the globe are finding that, contrary to historic trends, more students are engaging in short-term programs now than in long-term programs. And, this trend seems to be here to stay (Fitzsimmons et al., 2013; Institute of International Education (IIE), 2019; Sachau, 2010). This research serves to generate knowledge and information on business student motivations, performance and outcomes related to business student participation in a short-term study abroad program during their undergraduate degree. For the purposes of this research study, a short-term program is defined to be an experience abroad that is less than eight weeks in duration during either the fall, December, spring, mini-term or summer terms of their undergraduate education (IIE, 2018). Particularly, this research study examines why students selected their specific program, why they chose a program of short-term length, how the program impacted their education and experiences in college, and how it has impacted them since graduating, if applicable. Additionally, the study assesses students' undergraduate grade point averages, time to graduation, undergraduate involvement, and attitudes about suggesting a short-term program to another student.

Short-term programs abroad are quickly growing in popularity each year (Interis et al., 2018), but much historical research has been focused on the impact of longer programs abroad (Gullekson et al., 2011). Therefore, there is a significant knowledge gap surrounding short-term study abroad programs, despite the investment in their development and execution. Research on the motivations, impact and outcomes of short-term study abroad experiences for business students is necessary and impactful because institutions of higher education need to understand the results that can be anticipated from students' participation in short-term experiences abroad.

Initially, colleges and universities can benefit from understanding what motivates business students to pursue short-term study abroad experiences. Through exploring students' motivations, institutions of higher education can enhance their understanding of what modern students are seeking out when they choose to go abroad on a short-term program. Knowledge about what students are searching for in a program abroad will enhance an institution's ability to design and market their programs accordingly. Furthermore, evaluating the impact and outcomes from participation in short-term study abroad programs will afford higher education institutions the opportunity to begin to evaluate program effectiveness, adjust experiences or curriculum where needed and standardize components of study abroad programs to ensure that students get the maximum return on their investment. Without more research on short-term study abroad programs, it is nearly impossible for colleges and universities to understand the agglomerate impact of such experiences on its students. This is a concerning prospect since short-term study abroad participation continues to increase year-over-year (IIE, 2019). Previous research studies have proven to be valuable, but the volume of information about short-term programs in general, and more specifically in relation to business students, is not sufficient. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess which factors are driving the increase in participation in short-term programs, which experiences were perceived to be the most impactful by participants, and what tangible takeaways students reported after returning to their home country.

Literature Review

The world and economy have experienced rapid globalization in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Through the rise of air travel, the expansion of free trade, and the advent of the information age, the global society has become increasingly interconnected (National Geographic, 2012). Therefore, it is more imperative now than ever before that business students graduate with appropriate knowledge, skills and perspectives to equip them for successful engagement in international business in their future careers (Hallows et al., 2011; Tarrant, 2010). Study abroad programs have become increasingly popular at colleges and universities over the last twenty years, mirroring the parallel trend of increasing globalization (Institute of International Education (IIE), 2019). And, in the past ten years, short-term study abroad programs have begun to emerge as the most popular choice for many students (Fitzsimmons et al., 2013; IIE, 2019; Sachau, 2010). Short-term study abroad is defined by the Institute of International Education (IIE) to be any study abroad program lasting eight weeks or less in duration (IIE, 2018). Study abroad can take many forms. Some common types of study abroad are faculty-directed programs, program provider programs, foreign exchange programs, direct enroll programs and non-credit or other programs (Leigh, 2017).

For much of the 20th century, study abroad was a luxury that was only available to wealthy students who often traveled to capital cities in Europe to study the humanities or a foreign language (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). Just over twenty years ago, only 3.3% of students studying abroad participated in short-term programs (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). However, this percentage exponentially grew from 3.3% to 55.4% by the 2006-2007 academic year and increased again to 64.6% by the 2017-2018 academic year (Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Redden,

2019). In the 2017-2018 academic year, business students made up 20.8% of all study abroad participants (Redden, 2019).

Nonetheless, despite the explosive growth of short-term study abroad programs, there is a dearth of research on how these programs impact students. It is often assumed that short-term study abroad experiences are beneficial for developing intercultural fluency, deepening understanding and enhancing communication (Stone & Petrick, 2013), but the actual evidence that these benefits result from short-term study abroad participation is limited since the program format is relatively new in the larger history of study abroad (Gullekson et al., 2011). Furthermore, even with the few benefits that have been well-researched, it is often unclear if they are due to travel, interaction with other cultures, classroom study while abroad or a combination of all of these and other factors (Stone & Petrick, 2013).

The rationale for the pattern of increasing participation in short-term study abroad programs seems to be multi-fold. Generally, short-term programs are perceived to be more affordable and provide an alternative for students who are unwilling or unable to commit to a full semester or year abroad (Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Fitzsimmons et al., 2013). Additionally, it has been observed that a promise of personal growth, career enhancement potential, timing with degree requirements and financial commitment are extremely important program attributes that potential participants assess prior to making a commitment to participate in a program abroad, regardless of length (Interis et al., 2018; Movassaghi & Göçer, 2014). Short-term study abroad programs often appeal to students since they satisfy each of the aforementioned considerations, while being especially attractive to those who have historically been deterred by the perceived cost and/or time commitment of a longer program since these elements are more obstructive with a mid-length or long-term option. Therefore, short-term programs are making study abroad

experiences more accessible to business students than ever before. Although there has been considerable debate over whether short-term programs can achieve the same quality of learning outcomes as a longer program abroad, the data supports that short-term programs are increasing the quantity of students that can experience going abroad during their college education (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). This increased accessibility is a positive change since study abroad has been found to be one of the most important experiences students can have during their undergraduate years (Paige et al., 2009, p. S41; Stone & Petrick, 2013).

Furthermore, there are a number of different types of short-term study abroad programs available to students today, including faculty-directed programs, affiliate program provider options and programs in which a student directly enrolls in a foreign partner university of their home institution. Faculty-directed programs are a short-term study abroad experience in which a faculty member from the home university accompanies students on the program and serves as the primary contact (Leigh, 2017). Leigh (2017) describes faculty-directed programs to be intensive, highly structured courses with limited free time where students have a large number of contact hours with the professor and are responsible for turning in a number of assignments while abroad. Program provider study abroad experiences are pre-arranged programs created by a third-party with housing options, an on-site program staff, optional excursions, orientation for students and the possibility of group flight options (Leigh, 2017). According to Leigh, program provider options can take a number of forms academically, from the student enrolling in courses at a host university abroad to having faculty from the home institution teach courses at the host program site. Finally, direct enroll programs are when a student works with a host institution to enroll directly as a visiting student for the duration of their program (Leigh, 2017).

Students can benefit tremendously in the areas of personal growth, intercultural competence and academic performance from studying abroad, and research suggests that learners can improve certain skills in even just a 3-4-week period (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2018; Stone & Petrick, 2013). However, all skills are not equally attainable abroad across all program types. Studies show that short-term study abroad is most effective at developing teamwork skills, work ethic and leadership, while longer programs can lead to more significant gains in foreign language and communication (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017). However, when considering the specific skills that business students might want or need to develop in college for their future professions, teamwork, work ethic and leadership are high on the list (National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), n.d.). Through study abroad programs, business students can become more aware of cultural nuances and economic operations that differ from that of their home country. And, by challenging their previous beliefs, students can gain confidence and independence in their pursuit to become more open-minded about business and culture (Dayton et al., 2018; Hallows et al., 2011).

Part of the impact of a study abroad program, regardless of length, comes from the opportunity to interact directly with a new culture. Direct exposure to people in new and different cultures has been found to be a stronger educational tool than traditional classroom learning about culture and the business environments of other countries (Hallows et al., 2013). Gullekson's 2011 study used a control group to more accurately measure the impact of study abroad. The results suggested that business study abroad programs of short and long-term lengths can lead to significant changes in intercultural development that will not be matched by students who are completing a similar program at the home university simultaneously (Gullekson et al., 2011). And, previous research suggests that the learnings that come with immersing oneself in a

new culture can be obtained without spending a long amount of time in that place, provided that the program has sufficient depth of content (DeLoach et al., 2019). In one survey of over 6400 graduates at 22 different colleges, it was found that students who went overseas for short periods of time were just as likely to become globally engaged as students who went abroad for several months to one year (Fischer, 2009; Hallows et al., 2011; Paige et al., 2009).

When considering outcomes of short-term study abroad, students generally want to enhance their career-readiness and employability (Interis et al., 2018; Movassaghi & Göçer, 2014). Studying abroad has been shown to provide students with a greater understanding of potential career possibilities and a newfound confidence to pursue those career opportunities that had previously been unknown or unconsidered (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017). Additionally, study abroad programs of any length have proven to be beneficial for students in their job search. A number of former study abroad participants reported that their participation in a study abroad program was a point of personal connection with an employer and was beneficial in an interview, regardless of whether international experience was an explicit requirement for the job (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017). It is important to note that, regardless of the length of the program, research supports that the students who have better outcomes when applying their study abroad experience to the job search are those who have career prospects in mind when they choose to study abroad and can articulate their goals (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017).

Despite previous research that seems to suggest that there are a myriad of benefits associated with short-term study abroad and a push for global competence in graduates, there is no clear, measurable consensus on what study abroad experiences should be teaching students in order to make them globally competent (Edelstein, 2014; Farrugia & Sanger, 2017). Without a clear consensus, it is difficult to standardize expectations around program experiences and

outcomes. And, specifically for short-term programs abroad, program providers have to fight against the misguided reputation of the study abroad program being a glorified vacation (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). Some researchers have even reported that groups of students who took part in short-term programs abroad saw no changes in certain measured criteria when tested before and after their participation (Fitzsimmons et al., 2013; Gullekson et al., 2011). These findings demonstrate the importance of proper framing and structuring of short-term study abroad programs.

The structure of a short-term study abroad program seems to be one of the most critical attributes in determining its success or failure. Previous studies suggest that highly structured short-term programs with group projects and activities are linked to significant improvement in collaboration, teamwork, interpersonal communication, and leadership skills (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017). In addition, highly structured programs have been most successful when they also include ongoing reflection activities and in-depth experiences working or studying with host country participants (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). Therefore, it seems that intentionality and immersion are two of the most important elements of a short-term program abroad. A program with a well-defined purpose that is supported by structured activities and cultural immersion is likely to be a transformative experience in a student's life and education. In fact, students have reported that the structure of a program abroad has a more significant impact than the duration on their ability to develop new skills through a study abroad experience (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017).

Methods

This exploratory research project attempts to answer whether participation in a short-term study abroad program, lasting eight weeks or less in duration, affects a student in his or her undergraduate business career. In other words, what motivates students to choose a short-term program, how does participating in the short-term program change their worldview or values, and what impact does it have on their educational endeavors? In order to answer this question, data was gathered from current students and alumni of a large business school (COB) within a southeastern public land-grant university. As a means of gathering this data, an online survey was designed through QuestionPro and administered to any COB student who had previously completed a short-term study abroad program since 2015. Specifically, adult students and alumni ages approximately 18-30 who met the criterion of having completed a short-term program abroad during their tenure as an undergraduate student in the COB were studied. Participants were recruited based on records held in a database owned by the COB International Programs & Study Abroad office; therefore, students who were not graduates or current students of the COB and those who had not been on at least one short-term program abroad were excluded from participation. Otherwise, there were no exclusion criteria based on race, gender, sexuality or any other factor.

A quantitative methods approach was determined to be the most suitable option to address the research question. Surveys have traditionally been considered to be a quantitative research tool serving the purpose of producing statistics or numerical descriptions about some aspects of the study population (Fowler, 2009). However, the research team also believed that open-ended or free response questions, which are qualitative in nature, would add value to the study by way of producing insights on additional ideas and beliefs not represented in the fixed

survey answer choices. Ultimately, the research sought to learn about how students interpreted their experiences abroad and how they believed these experiences impacted their lives after their return. These desired learning outcomes also aligned with the definition of a qualitative research study in some ways in that they were focused on "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 6). Therefore, the survey instrument included open-ended portions in its design in an effort to gain in-depth descriptions, contextualization and insight into why COB students chose short-term study abroad programs. However, the more structured portions of the survey were used to measure, rank, categorize and identify patterns from the larger conglomeration of answers. In order to turn the qualitative portions of the data into quantitative items, a coding method was used. In terms of quantifying the open-ended questions, the chosen coding method can best be described as "an interactive process whereby the researcher [identified] categories that [emerged] from the answers, as well as [imposed] order on the answers that [were] obtained" (Fowler, 2009, p. 147). More specifically, an inductive coding process was used. This process was characterized by observing the data, clustering all data units in a group that went together, and then assigning a name to the cluster, resulting in a theme (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Once themes were defined for each of the open-ended questions, the relative frequency of each theme's occurrence in the total dataset for that question was determined and recorded. This is a standard methodology in the humanities and social science research arenas.

In order to best design a survey instrument on the topic of study abroad duration and impact, relevant literature was used in analysis. Material was primarily sourced from reputable organizations such as the Institute for International Education (IIE), and previously published

research projects from other institutions of higher education were utilized. IIE is a non-profit organization that has existed for over a century with the mission to promote international student exchange and aid, foreign affairs, and international peace and security. In order to ensure the relevancy of the literature reviewed for this project, a standard that all sources needed to have been published within approximately the last ten years was implemented. This standard was necessary since short-term study abroad programs are an emerging and dynamic topic that has not been heavily researched in the past. As previously mentioned, within the last twenty years short-term stud abroad participation has grown by over 60% (Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Redden, 2019). The questions were designed over the course of multiple weeks in which the research team reviewed the available literature related to short-term study abroad and transformed those topics into appropriate questions through discussion and debate.

The research method used in this study was an online survey hosted within the QuestionPro software environment. The form of the questions varied throughout the survey between multiple choice, Likert-rating scale and open-ended questions. The survey consisted of between 14 and 35 multiple-choice questions, four questions with a 5-point Likert scale, and five open-ended questions. The number of multiple-choice questions each survey participant received depended on the number of short-term study abroad experiences they participated in and their status as either an alumni or a current student. The full survey is available in Appendix A.

Throughout the survey design process, two additional international education professionals assisted the research team. Through the combination of literature and insights from two external international education professionals, the survey instrument was validated. The literature provided a traditional perspective, while the two professionals offered a contemporary

viewpoint throughout the research project. This ensured that both perspectives informed the qualitative research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 254).

Given the nature of the project, a purposive non-probability sampling style was utilized. In being purposive, a sample population with specific experiences was recruited so that the research team could attain maximum information from the insights in the recruited population's survey responses (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The potential participants were identified through their past participation on a short-term study abroad program through the COB. Thus, only students or alumni who met this qualifying criterion were recruited for participation. After recruiting participants in this way, the actual survey population was made up of the voluntary sample of individuals who chose to engage with the recruitment email and complete the survey. The survey process was entirely online through QuestionPro.

The recruitment email was sent to 1,025 individuals who participated in a short-term study abroad program between 2015-2020. From the 1,025 identified potential participants, 314 email invitations failed since the email address on file was invalid. This is likely due to the fact that an alumni's student email address could have been deactivated by the student in the time since their graduation. Therefore, 711 unique students successfully received an email invitation to participate in the survey. It took participants eight minutes on average to complete the survey anonymously. The survey was open from March 31 to April 21, 2020 for a total of three calendar weeks.

In order to prepare the data for analysis, incomplete survey responses were removed, collective responses were reviewed and individual comments to open-ended questions evaluated. The built-in analytical capabilities of QuestionPro were used to analyze some of the data. However, Microsoft Excel was also utilized to examine averages, generate charts and code

responses. No survey data resulted in statistically significant findings based on the outcome of a 95% confidence interval t-test, so a comparison method using average scores was predominantly relied on to determine whether a survey item received a “high” or “low” score. All questions created with a Likert-scale ranged from 1-5. In order to code the free responses, key words or themes that were common in the literature and emerged from the data were identified. The frequency that the theme appeared in the respondents’ answers was determined. Then, once the frequencies had been identified, the relative percentage of that item appearing in survey responses to the total number of respondents was derived. A table with coding themes for each question is available in Appendix B.

The methods chosen are believed to be suitable to contribute to new knowledge and understanding on the topic of short-term study abroad for business students. The quantitative methods allowed the freedom to fully explore the research question and produce real-world knowledge about the behaviors, attitudes and outcomes of a specific group of people through the online survey. However, there are certain limitations associated with using this methodology. For example, this study does not use a representative sample of the broader population. Instead, a very specific group of respondents was recruited. Additionally, this survey included qualitative elements that require the researchers’ interpretation, so the research team’s perception could have influenced the results. The individuals making up the research team have certain positionality that both informed the survey design and the way in which study data was interpreted (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). As former participants in a short-term study abroad program and professionals in the field of international education, these positions colored the lens through which the research team understood the survey responses. In spite of this, it is believed that the selected approach will contribute to new knowledge and will outweigh the stated

limitations since much historical research is focused on the impact of longer programs abroad, and short-term programs abroad are quickly growing in popularity each year. The lack of published research about short-term programs justifies the methods utilized for this project, as it will be taking a step towards filling this research and information gap about the motivations for, impact and outcomes of short-term programs with undergraduate business students.

Results

Of the 711 potential participants that received an email invitation to participate in the online survey, 116 students completed the entirety of the survey. This equates to a response rate of 16.3%. Of the 116 survey respondents, 81% were current students and 19% were alumni of the COB. Sixty-nine percent of respondents self-identified as female and 31% identified as male. All respondents completed at least one short-term study abroad program, and 16.4% of respondents completed a long-term program as well. The total number of short-term programs that survey respondents participated in is shown in the chart below.

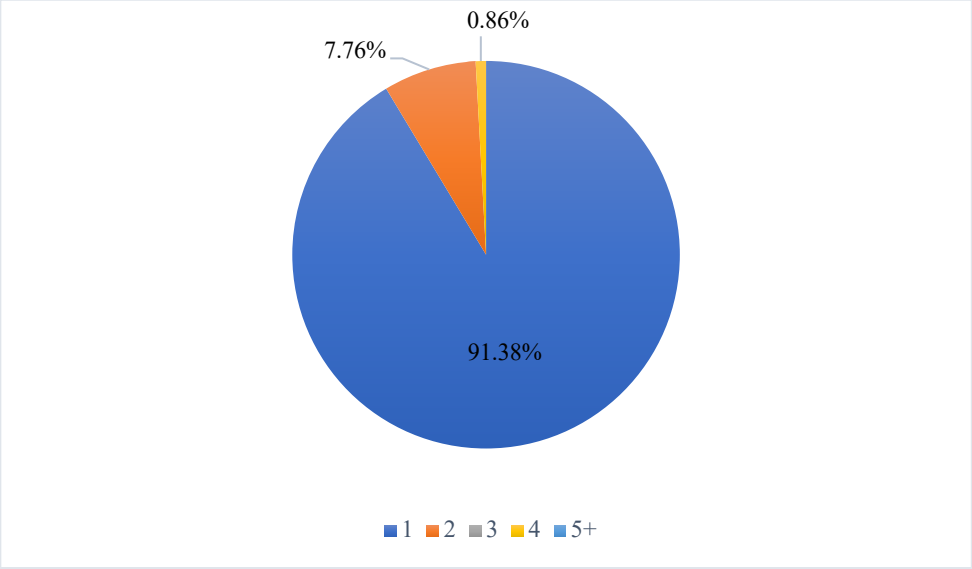


Figure 1. Pie chart showing the highest number of short-term programs respondents completed.

In terms of location, survey respondents studied abroad on six out of seven continents during their most recent short-term study abroad experience. The breakdown of locations is shown in the figure below.

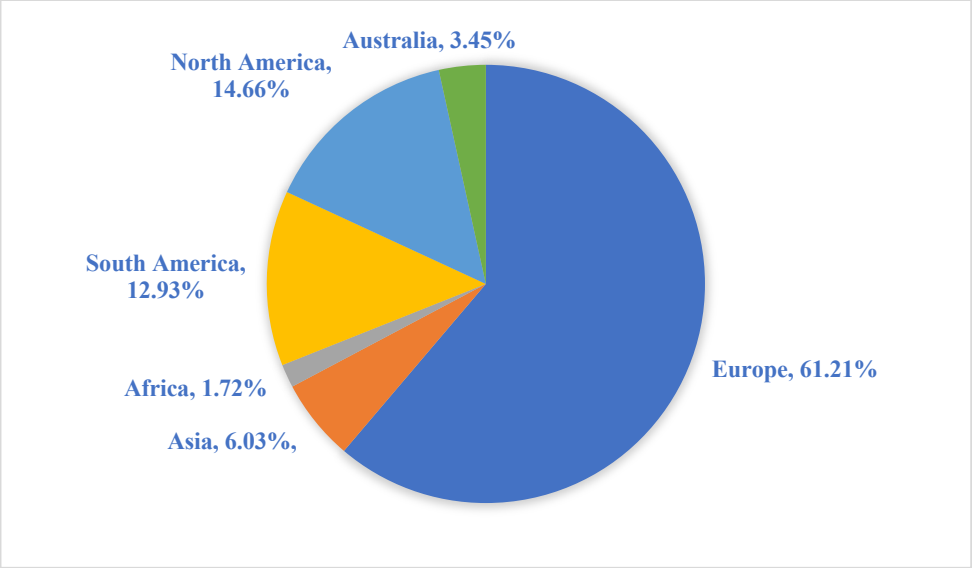


Figure 2. Pie chart showing the continent on which the respondents' most recent short-term programs took place.

When considering the type of their most recent short-term study abroad experience, the majority of respondents participated in a faculty-directed program at 76.7%, whereas 18.1% of respondents partook in an affiliate program provider experience and 5.2% directly enrolled at a university partner institution. The majority of students also self-identified as being a junior in classification during their most recent short-term program abroad at 41.4% of respondents, followed by freshman at 22.4%, then sophomore at 20.7% and finally senior at 15.5%. Most students also chose to study abroad during either the mini (May) term semester or summer, which is between the months of June to August. Just over 43% of respondents participated during the summer term, 30.4% participated during the mini-term, 17.4% partook in a December program during the university's winter break, 6.1% went abroad during the fall semester and 2.6% studied abroad during the spring semester.

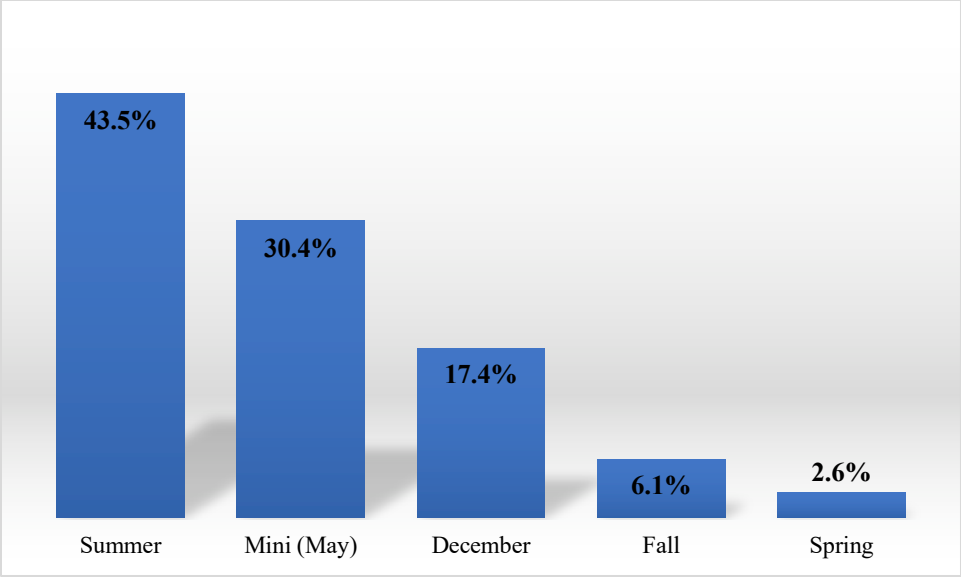


Figure 3. Breakdown of the semester/term during which the the respondents' most recent short-term study abroad program took place.

As a part of the survey, respondents were asked about their involvement in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. While in their undergraduate programs of study, 19.8% of respondents reported having internships, 18.9% reported working part-time, 18.2% reported being involved in student organizations, 16.9% reported volunteering during their free time, 14.9% reported being in a Greek organization, 8.6% reported being in some type of honors program, 1.8% identified themselves as a student-athlete, and 0.9% reported working full-time while in school. The trend line in the graph below represents the cumulative percentage of participation in extracurricular or co-curricular activities. Ninety-seven percent of respondents participated in at least one extracurricular or co-curricular activity during their undergraduate years, 91% participated in two, 84% participated in three, 62% participated in four, and 40% of respondents participated in five.

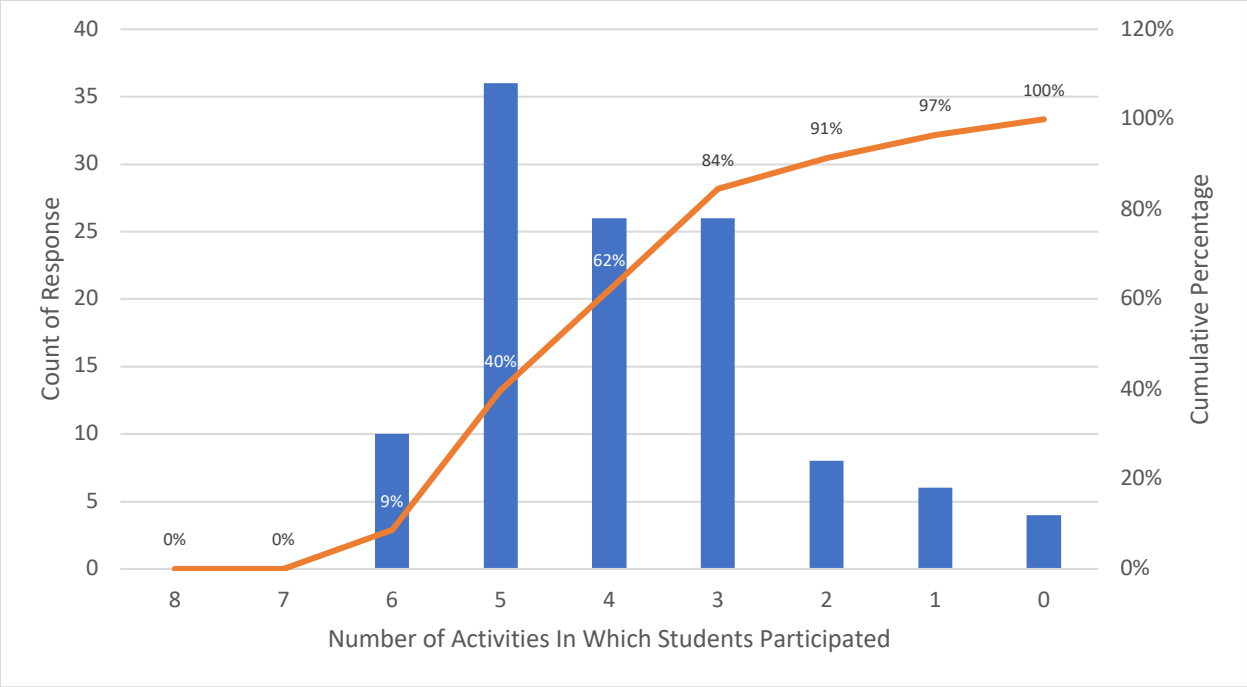


Figure 4. Pareto chart showing respondents' involvement in extracurricular and co-curricular activities by cumulative percentage and count.

Motivations

When surveyed about motivations for choosing to participate in a short-term study abroad program, the most important factor for survey respondents in the decision-making process was the desirability of the program's geographic location, which earned an average score of 4.45 out of 5. The second most important factor was how the program worked with the timing of the student's degree plan (3.78), followed by how the timing of the program impacted other on-campus commitments (3.73). The least important factors were knowing another student going on the program or who had previously participated in the program (1.94), social media influence (2.16) and having to go as a requirement for a degree or other cohort (2.41). When asked specifically why they did not choose a longer program, survey respondents identified the possibility that a long-term study abroad program would require too much time away from campus, family, and friends as their top reason. Other rationale identified by respondents as

being important to their decision not to choose a long-term program were that the timing of a long-term program abroad is undesirable with other on-campus commitments (3.4) and that the perceived financial commitment is too large (3.23). For students who participated in at least one short-term and one long-term program, respondents identified the attractiveness of and need for the courses offered abroad as being two of the more important criteria in their decision to participate in a long-term program. However, like the short-term results, the most important factor in their decision to go abroad on a long-term program was the desirability of the geographic location of the program, which earned a score of 4.31 out of 5.

Impact

In terms of the effect of participation in a short-term study abroad program during their undergraduate years, survey respondents identified an increased ability to adapt to new environments as the predominant impact, with the survey item earning an average score of 4.59 out of 5. Other highly scored survey items about the impact of participation in a short-term study abroad program were an increased confidence to be independent after graduation (4.45) and the development of significant relationships with faculty and peers (4.37). Respondents perceived that their participation in a short-term study abroad program had less of an impact on their major selection (3.04), the development of their language skills (3.29) or an accelerated progression towards graduation (3.46).

Outcomes

Survey respondents who identified themselves as alumni were also asked to evaluate the impact of their short-term study abroad program after graduating from their undergraduate

program. Alumni respondents identified increased interest in international travel (4.59) and a heightened interest in seeking an international or global position (3.77) as the two greatest impacts of their short-term program after graduation. Alumni respondents reported their short-term study abroad participation as being less impactful in deciding or influencing which company they chose to work for (2.55) and in salary negotiations (2.86).

Survey respondents self-reported their undergraduate grade point averages (GPA). The results of their responses are shown in the bar graph below.

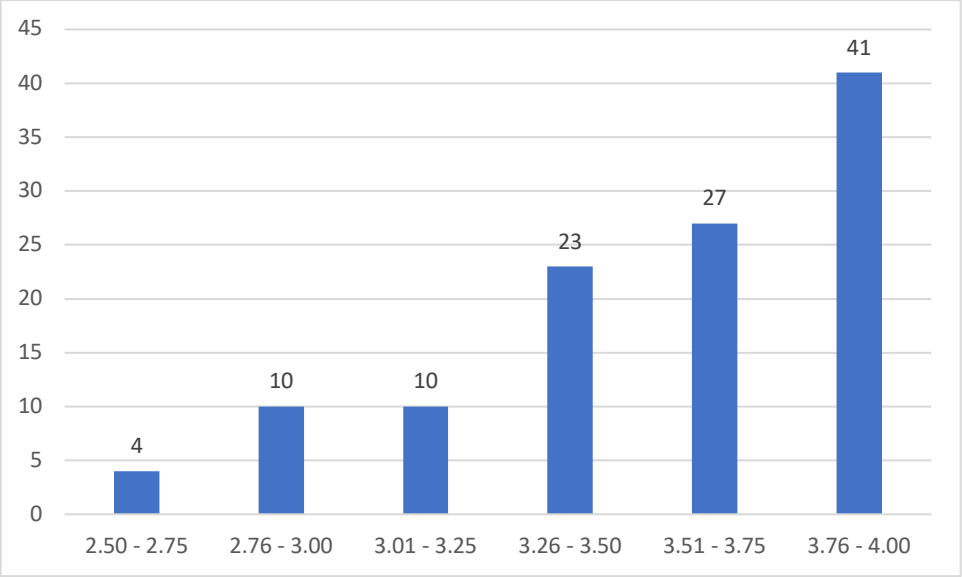


Figure 5. Self-reported GPA ranges of respondents.

Over 95% of alumni survey respondents self-reported that they required eight or less semesters to complete their undergraduate degree. Eight semesters typically translate to four years to complete an undergraduate degree, meaning that greater than 95% of alumni respondents who participated in a short-term study abroad program graduated in four years or less. Of those survey respondents who had not yet graduated, 91.4% projected that it would take eight or fewer semesters (four years or less) to complete their undergraduate degree, followed by

6.5% who estimated it would take 9-10 semesters (4.5-5 years), followed by 1.1% who believed it would take 11-12 semesters (5.5-6 years), and a final 1.1% who believed it would take 13 or more semesters (6+ years).

When asked if they would recommend a short-term program abroad to another student, 99.1% of respondents answered "Yes". Their rationale varied, but over 25% of respondents reported their short-term program as being either a "positive", "great" or "the best" experience they had during their undergraduate years. One respondent shared that "being in Spain for 7 weeks of the summer [was] truly was one of the best experiences of college." Another expressed that their short-term program abroad was "life-changing" and that their participation "will be the highlight of my college career." Furthermore, 33.3% of respondents identified the timing of the short-term study abroad program as the attribute that would make them likely to recommend a program of that type to another student. Over 25% of respondents also cited enhanced learning as a reason to participate in a short-term study abroad. And, 26.7% of respondents claimed that their participation in a short-term program challenged them to grow or expand their worldview, with one respondent sharing that they found

> "it [was] extremely valuable to see how business functions in other areas of the world. Short-term study abroad experiences made me appreciate different cultures, the luxuries we have living in the United States, and taught me that I can do hard things."

Finally, greater than 23% of respondents mentioned relationships they formed with either or both peers and faculty as a reason that they would recommend a short-term program abroad to another student.

Conclusion

Motivations

Previous literature cites a desire to be somewhere different (geographic location), a search for new experiences, the desire to live and learn in another culture and exposure to a new language or culture to be several of the primary motivations for students who choose to go abroad on a program of any length (Juvan & Lesjak, 2011; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Taylor & Rivera, 2011). The survey results support the literature in that the highest scoring factor in how and why a respondent chose a short-term study abroad program was the desirability of the geographic location to which they would be traveling. This finding supports that students want to go somewhere distinctive in some way from their current location, depending on the characteristics that each individual deems desirable. Additionally, this finding suggests that students may generally perceive the location and culture to be more important than the curriculum, cost, or any other factor associated with a short-term program abroad.

Contrastingly, when considering the issues that may deter students from choosing a study abroad program, previous research indicates that students perceive limited time, work commitments and the possibility that a study abroad program could delay their graduation to be barriers to participating in a program, with time being one of the most influential factors in a student's decision (Fitzsimmons et al., 2013). Survey respondents reported that a program's timing in relation to their degree plan and other on-campus activities was very important in their decision to participate in a short-term program abroad. And, when asked why they did not choose a longer program, the most highly ranked response was that a long-term program required too much time away from campus, family or friends. One student respondent shared that

> "an 8-week program was just the right amount of time for me. I felt like my summer was filled with fun and enrichment, but I still had time to work and be with friends and family during the [remainder of the] summer."

As was previously mentioned, survey respondents reported being involved in a number of activities on campus. Over 90% of respondents were involved in at least two extracurricular or co-curricular activities. Therefore, when considering the level of involvement of these students, an opportunity cost presents itself. The student has to make tradeoffs between the duration of their program abroad and the activities they are missing at home or on campus.

Another timing-related issue the research team considered in this study was a student's responsibility to his or her family. Research supports that a perception of burdening one's family by being unavailable for an extended period of time may make students less likely to study abroad, especially on a long-term program (Fitzsimmons et al., 2013). One survey respondent echoed these earlier research findings particularly well, stating that they "have a significant amount of responsibilities at home", and that "being away would put stress on my family." Therefore, the survey results support and reflect the earlier research findings related to timing and study abroad duration.

Impact

Students in previous studies have reported that their participation in a short-term study abroad program enhanced their confidence and independence and encouraged them to be more open-minded about business and culture in general (Dayton et al., 2018). The results of the survey support this finding. One survey respondent claimed that they

> "acquired cross-cultural sensitivity and knowledge through being immersed in another culture. Globalization is progressively increasing, and wisdom of international business concepts and etiquette are more important now than ever."

As a whole, respondents felt that their participation in a study abroad positively impacted their ability to adapt to a new environment, and they ranked this survey item at an average of 4.59 out of 5. Respondents also felt that they developed more independence while abroad, resulting in an average score of 4.45 out of 5.

An emergent theme that appeared in the survey results was the development of relationships with fellow students and faculty as a result of participating in a short-term program abroad. In response to an open question in the survey, over 23% of respondents mentioned the formation of significant relationships as being one of the reasons that they would recommend a short-term program to another student. Students reported gaining mentors in faculty on the program and lifelong friendships with peers. Some respondents even felt that the program presented them with a formal networking opportunity to expand their contacts inside the college of business while simultaneously meeting new people outside of their home university that could further their career and professional goals. On average, respondents scored their development of significant relationships with faculty and peers at a 4.37 out of 5, reflecting that most survey respondents felt that their participation in a short-term study abroad resulted in the development of new and substantial relationships.

Overall, survey respondents felt that their participation in a short-term study abroad program did not have as much of an impact on the development of their language skills. The survey item averaged at a moderate 3.29 out of 5. The score could be a result of the nature of their program's curriculum or due to other factors. However, this finding is in line with earlier research that indicated that advances in foreign language seem to be more significant after a student has participated in a long-term study abroad program than in a short-term program (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009).

Outcomes

Prior research suggests that longer programs abroad have a more positive effect on the development of certain skills that may directly contribute to favorable employability outcomes (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017). However, this same literature also found that the development of teamwork, leadership, work ethic and curiosity were either positively or neutrally impacted by a shorter duration. And, each of these items are important competencies for students entering the workplace (NACE, n.d.). When considering the alumni responses, many reported that their short-term study abroad program influenced their desire to travel abroad in the future and to seek out some type of international or global work assignment. Alumni respondents reported a lower incidence of their short-term study abroad participation affecting which company they chose to work for or their salary negotiations for positions after college.

Overall, survey respondents' self-reported undergraduate GPAs were high. The data were skewed to the left, meaning that the respondents who reported that they were in the highest GPA range (3.76-4.00) were in the majority. However, this could be due to bias in survey participation or selection bias from the programs. Many short-term programs are competitive, so those students with higher GPAs secure a disproportionate number of spots.

Less than 5% of survey respondents who had already graduated from their undergraduate studies reported taking longer than 8 semesters (four years) to graduate, which suggests that their programs abroad were either minimally or not at all disruptive to their ability to progress through their degree requirements. Of those survey respondents who are still in their undergraduate degree program, just over 91% estimated that it would take eight or fewer semesters (four years or less) for them to complete their undergraduate degree, followed by 6.5% projecting that they would require 9-10 semesters (4.5-5 years). According to data from the National Center for

Education Statistics, all U.S. 4-year institutions had an average 4-year graduation rate of 41.6%, an average 5-year graduation rate of 56.5% and an average 6-year graduation rate of 60.4% in 2017. Therefore, survey respondents who had participated in a short-term program abroad while in their undergraduate program reported graduation rates that were twice the national average. This supports that participation in short-term study abroad not only improves graduation outcomes but may also result in faster progression through degree requirements.

Generally, survey respondents were very positive about the outcomes from their participation in a short-term study abroad program. The timing of a program was an important motivational factor for students, but it also appeared to be one of the factors that they felt strengthened rather than weakened the outcomes related to their experience. Over 33% of survey respondents identified the timing of their program to be a strength that would lead them to encourage another student to partake in a similar program. One respondent cited the timing of their short-term study abroad program as contributing to their ability to "capitalize on opportunities offered in the fall and spring semesters, including internships, athletics and other jobs." Furthermore, another respondent shared that "having gone on a long-term and short-term [program], the flexibility of the short-term [program] enables possible leadership opportunities on campus." Previous research has also suggested that students who participate in long-term programs do not always use their extra time wisely in an academic sense (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). Short-term programs abroad are often more intensive than longer programs, meaning that an equivalent amount of value could be packed into a shorter overall duration if a student's free time is appropriately structured. These accounts and the supporting survey results suggest that there may be additional tradeoffs between short-term and long-term study abroad programs when considering the opportunity cost of what a student misses on-campus while abroad.

Arguably one of the most important outcomes from a short-term study abroad program is what a student learns through their participation. Over 52% of survey respondents mentioned learning or growing in some capacity in one of the open-ended questions. In the words of one such respondent, short-term study abroad "provides an opportunity to learn that is unlike any other. Getting to travel and meet people unlike [oneself] broadens our worldview and perspectives." This outcome is supported by previous research that suggests a short-term study abroad could be a "paradigm-shifting event" for students and that it enhances learning and one's ability to conduct international business beyond what could be achieved in a traditional classroom in one's home country (Hallows et al., 2011).

Limitations

This research study assuredly has several limitations. First, the sample of individuals who were identified to complete the survey was not random. This means that the knowledge and insights gained through this study may not be generalizable to the larger population of business students throughout the United States. However, results could be possibly be generalized to more similar populations, such as business students at other large, public research institutions within the southeast region. Another limitation was the response rate for the survey. One-hundred sixteen individuals completed the survey out of the 711 that were recruited, equaling a response rate of just over 16%. Furthermore, given the small sample size, there was an insufficient amount of data for statistical measurement and/or statistical significance in the findings. Another limitation of this research stems from the lack of previously published studies on the topic of short-term study abroad for business students. Therefore, relevant data and information were not easily accessible for analysis of and comparison to the findings of this study.

Opportunities for Future Research

Several emergent themes appeared during the research project that could serve as topics for future studies. One of these is the opportunity cost related to short-term study abroad programs as compared to long-term programs. Multiple respondents in this study described appreciating the timing and flexibility of a short-term program abroad because it allowed them to capitalize on opportunities at home or on campus, like internships, athletics, leadership positions and student organizations. There is a deficiency of research on the tradeoffs of study abroad duration and how "harmful" it is to a student to have to give up certain opportunities on campus or at home while abroad. The expectation that business students will complete one or multiple internships during their undergraduate years seems to be becoming more pervasive, as research supports that internship participation results in more favorable employment outcomes (Gault et al., 2010). Therefore, an examination of the opportunity cost and tradeoffs associated with study abroad duration will be an increasingly important issue to examine in the future. This research may need to address whether the completion of a study abroad program could hinder a student's ability to participate in an opportunity like an internship and, if it does, whether completing the study abroad program instead of the internship is in the best interest of the student.

Another opportunity for future research might be to analyze study abroad outcomes based on the type of study abroad programs in which the students participated. This study did not differentiate between faculty-directed, affiliate/program provider or direct enroll programs in the results and conclusions, but rather focused on the duration of the program alone. There is evidence in the results of this study that a more granular examination of how each type of study abroad program – and even the subjects studied abroad – impacts the life and education of a

student could produce new information beyond what was found in this or any previous studies on short-term programs abroad.

Given the current trend, short-term study abroad programs will likely continue to grow in popularity amongst business students in the future. Further research will provide more information on what motivates students to choose a program, how participation impacts them and what outcomes can be expected to result from studying abroad on a program of a shorter duration. Therefore, the value of the short-term program abroad can be customized for specific stated outcomes, assessed and optimized for maximum educational and professional returns.

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Appendix A

Survey

Are you currently a student at the [southeastern public land-grant university]*?

1. I am a current student
2. I am a graduate of the [College of Business]*

What is your sex?

1. Male
2. Female
3. I prefer not to respond

Did you participate in a short-term study abroad program (8 weeks or less in duration) during your time at the [southeastern public land-grant university]*?

1. Yes
2. No

Did you participate in a long-term study abroad program (8 weeks or more in duration) during your time at the [southeastern public land-grant university]*?

1. Yes
2. No

The next series of questions will ask you to recall all of the short-term (8 weeks or less) study abroad programs you completed during your undergraduate education.

How Many Short-Term Study Abroad Programs Did You Participate In? (8 weeks or less)

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. More than 5 _____

Please answer the following questions for the most recent short-term program you attended:

Which Type of Program Was Your Most Recent Short-Term Experience?

1. Faculty-Directed
2. Affiliate Program Provider (CIEE, ISA, USAC, IES, etc.)
3. Direct Enroll/University Partner

On which continent did your most recent short-term program take place?

1. Europe
2. Asia
3. Africa
4. South America
5. North America
6. Australia
7. Antarctica

What was your classification when you went on your most recent short-term program?

1. Freshman
2. Sophomore
3. Junior
4. Senior

Academic Term of Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. Fall
2. Spring
3. Summer
4. Mini-Term
5. December

Year of Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. 2015
2. 2016
3. 2017
4. 2018
5. 2019
6. 2020

Please answer the following questions for the second most recent short-term program you attended:

Which Type of Program Was Your Second Most Recent Short-Term Experience?

1. Faculty-Directed
2. Affiliate Program Provider (CIEE, ISA, USAC, IES, etc.)
3. Direct Enroll/University Partner

On which continent did your second most recent short-term program take place?

1. Europe
2. Asia
3. Africa
4. South America
5. North America
6. Australia
7. Antarctica

What was your classification when you went on your second most recent short-term program?

1. Freshman
2. Sophomore
3. Junior
4. Senior

Academic Term of Second Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. Fall
2. Spring
3. Summer
4. Mini-Term
5. December

Year of Second Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. 2015
2. 2016

3. 2017
4. 2018
5. 2019
6. 2020

Please answer the following questions for the third most recent short-term program you attended:

Which Type of Program Was Your Third Most Recent Short-Term Experience?

1. Faculty-Directed
2. Affiliate Program Provider (CIEE, ISA, USAC, IES, etc.)
3. Direct Enroll/University Partner

On which continent did your third most recent short-term program take place?

1. Europe
2. Asia
3. Africa
4. South America
5. North America
6. Australia
7. Antarctica

What was your classification when you went on your third most recent short-term program?

1. Freshman
2. Sophomore
3. Junior
4. Senior

Academic Term of Third Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. Fall
2. Spring
3. Summer
4. Mini-Term
5. December

Year of Third Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. 2015
2. 2016
3. 2017
4. 2018
5. 2019
6. 2020

Please answer the following questions for the fourth most recent short-term program you attended:

Which Type of Program Was Your Fourth Most Recent Short-Term Experience?

1. Faculty-Directed
2. Affiliate Program Provider (CIEE, ISA, USAC, IES, etc.)
3. Direct Enroll/University Partner

On which continent did your fourth most recent short-term program take place?

1. Europe
2. Asia
3. Africa
4. South America
5. North America
6. Australia
7. Antarctica

What was your classification when you went on your fourth most recent short-term program?

1. Freshman
2. Sophomore
3. Junior
4. Senior

Academic Term of Fourth Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. Fall
2. Spring
3. Summer
4. Mini-Term

5. December

Year of Fourth Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. 2015
2. 2016
3. 2017
4. 2018
5. 2019
6. 2020

Please answer the following questions for the fifth most recent short-term program you attended:

Which Type of Program Was Your Fifth Most Recent Short-Term Experience?

1. Faculty-Directed
2. Affiliate Program Provider (CIEE, ISA, USAC, IES, etc.)
3. Direct Enroll/University Partner

On which continent did your fifth most recent short-term program take place?

1. Europe
2. Asia
3. Africa
4. South America
5. North America
6. Australia
7. Antarctica

What was your classification when you went on your fifth most recent short-term program?

1. Freshman
2. Sophomore
3. Junior
4. Senior

Academic Term of Fifth Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. Fall

2. Spring
3. Summer
4. Mini-Term
5. December

Year of Fifth Most Recent Short-Term Program

1. 2015
2. 2016
3. 2017
4. 2018
5. 2019
6. 2020

Why did you select a short-term program(s) (8 weeks or less in duration)?

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
The timing worked well with my degree plan	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Financial commitment	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The timing was the best fit for other on-campus commitments	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I saw the program advertised in flyers/emails/classroom presentation(s)	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The specific course(s) I took were attractive	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The specific course(s) I took were necessary	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The specific location was desirable	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Faculty leading the program	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I had to go as a part of my degree or other cohort	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I knew someone who was going or had gone on this same program	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Family encouragement	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Friend encouragement	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Social Media	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Are there any other reasons not provided in the last question that influenced your decision to

select a short-term program (8 weeks or less?)

How did the following factors influence your decision to not choose a longer program? (full semester, academic year, calendar year)

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
The timing with my degree plan did not allow it	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Perceived financial commitment	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The timing with other on-campus commitments was undesirable	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I was not aware of longer programs	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The courses offered were not attractive	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The courses offered were not necessary	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The specific locations were not desirable	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Language or cultural barriers	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It would require too much time away from campus, family, and/or friends	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I didn't know anyone else going	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Family discouragement	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Work or internship required me to stay on campus / in the country	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Personal safety	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Friend discouragement	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Are there any other reasons not provided in the last question that influenced your decision to not select a longer program?

Why did you choose to participate in a long-term study abroad program? (full semester, academic year, calendar year)

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
The timing with my degree plan allowed it	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The perceived financial commitment was acceptable	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The timing with other on-campus commitments was satisfactory	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I was not aware of short-term programs at the time I made a decision to go on a long-term program	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The courses offered were attractive	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The courses offered were necessary	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
The specific locations were desirable	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
More extensive language and/or cultural immersion	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It offered me time away from campus, family, and/or friends	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I knew someone else going	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Family encouragement	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It was a requirement for a cohort or program that I belong to	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Are there any other reasons not provided in the last question that influenced your decision to select a long-term program?

How did your short-term program(s) abroad impact you during your time in college? Or, if you're a current student, how is your short-term program(s) impacting you now?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I was able to apply the learning in the classroom	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I was able to use the learning in a project, paper or presentation	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It increased my teamwork skills	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I felt more able to adapt to a new environment	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It increased my confidence to be independent after graduation	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It enhanced my problem-solving skills when faced with real-world issues	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I formed significant relationships with faculty and/or peers	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It solidified or changed my major selection	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It accelerated my progression towards graduation	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It increased my language skills	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It wasn't impactful	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Are there any other ways your short-term program(s) impacted your time in college that are not provided in the last question?

How did your short-term program(s) abroad impact you after you graduated from college?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
It influenced how far away from home I was willing to work or move after graduation	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It influenced the company I chose to work	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

for					
It positioned me to take on global or international work assignments/projects	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It sparked my passion for international travel	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It influenced my decision to seek an international or global position (even if the position has not yet been obtained)	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I used it as a leverage point in salary negotiation	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I believe it was a consideration by my employer in my hiring	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Are there any other ways your short-term program(s) impacted you after graduation that are not provided in the last question?

Undergraduate GPA (current if still a student, or at the time of graduation if an alumni). As a reminder, all responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

1. 2.50 - 2.75
2. 2.76 - 3.00
3. 3.01 - 3.25
4. 3.26 - 3.50
5. 3.51 - 3.75
6. 3.76 - 4.00

How many semesters were you an undergraduate student prior to graduation? Do not include summer terms.

1. 8 or less
2. 9-10
3. 11-12
4. 13 or more

How many semesters do you project you will need to complete your degree? Do not include summer terms.

1. 8 or less
2. 9-10
3. 11-12
4. 13 or more

Extracurricular or co-curricular activities in college (select all that apply)

1. Internship(s)
2. Part-time employment
3. Full-time employment
4. Greek life (fraternity or sorority)
5. Athletics
6. Student organizations
7. Volunteering
8. Honors Program(s)

Would you recommend a short-term program to another student?

1. Yes
2. No

Why or why not?

*The names of the southeastern public land-grant university and College of Business have been redacted to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the research study.

Appendix B

Coding themes by question:

Question 39: Are there any other reasons not provided in the last question that influenced your decision to select a short-term program (8 weeks or less?)	Question 41: Are there any other reasons not provided in the last question that influenced your decision to not select a longer program?	Question 45: Are there any other ways your short-term program(s) impacted your time in college that are not provided in the last question?	Question 53: Why or why not? (Would you recommend a short-term program to another student)
Honors	Timing	Communication	Timing
Origin	Future	Relationships	Positive
School Break	Responsibility	Prepared	Best
Credit	None	Best	Great
Timing		Learning	Fun
Program Curriculum		Expanding	Learning
Location		Honors credit	Organization
Language		None	Cost
Opportunity			Wanting more
Resume			Relationships
Expansion			Challenging
Internship			Credit
Cost			Rewarding
Family			Amazing
Learning			Enjoy
Relationships			None
Faculty Encouragement			
Scholarship			
Involvement			
None			