

University of Minnesota Freshman Learning Abroad Opportunities

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In winter, 2010, Martha Johnson, director of the Learning Abroad Center, put together a small group to look at the possibility of developing a program explicitly for new first year, first time students. She asked Laura Coffin Koch and Sheila Collins to co-chair the group. The group consisted of about 10 faculty and staff from various departments and administrative units on the twin cities campus.

Members reviewed current models of freshman abroad programming at other institutions and brainstormed about models that would work on the twin cities campus as well as challenges we need to take into consideration. Student engagement on campus, diversity, recruitment, and financing were explored and discussed with representatives from various offices on campus.

The committee feels most comfortable recommending the LAC begin freshman programming with a short-term faculty led model. This is due to student development considerations, academic oversight, potential parental concerns, and finances.

The University of Minnesota has offered special courses targeting freshman for a number of years. The Freshman Seminars are designed specifically to enhance first-year experiences and each seminar is taught by a faculty member and is limited to 20 students. Freshman Seminars allow first-year students to interact in a smaller setting, connect with a faculty member, and become involved in a unique area of study. Working off of this very successful on-campus model the committee considered how this might work on an international level.

Lists of Global Seminar and Custom leaders were cross-referenced with Freshman Seminar faculty. Laura and Sheila met with a select group of faculty that have had experience in both and asked for their feedback about how the LAC might develop a freshman seminar abroad program, and how faculty might be recruited. Specific areas of discussion included timing of the program, stand-alone verses embedded, what components should be in each program, staffing needs, and curriculum.

The Freshman Seminar curriculum is designed to complement the student development and learning outcomes of this student group.

The committee identified the following models for further consideration:

1. Summer between high school and first year – 2 or 3 week international experience.

2. Fall semester - one hour per week during the semester and 2 week international experience between the end of December and MLK holiday.
3. Between semesters – three week stand alone international experience (similar to what the LAC currently offers but would be only for first year students).
4. Spring semester – two hours per week during the semester and a 1 week international experience during spring break.

Additional recommendations include:

1. Enrollment would be limited to 20 students per seminar.
2. Programs would be led by a “regular” faculty member – for the pilot, preferably faculty members would be those faculty who have taught both freshman seminars and global or custom seminars. There are 8 such faculty.
3. Adviser or other student services staff member would participate in an administrative and support role. An upper division peer mentor could participate and fulfill this role.
5. Seminars would have the 19xx numbers to indicate they are freshman seminars.
6. Special attention would be dedicated to the development of courses which would attract underrepresented populations including students of color, male students, transfer students, etc.
7. The LAC will need to work with colleges/departments to get buy-in:
Why is this important for students?
What are the learning outcomes of an international experience?
8. The LAC will need to work with the offices of admissions and financial aid to understand the availability of financial aid on incoming students.
9. The LAC will want to work with various units on campus, including central administration, to create scholarship opportunities.
10. Targeting the PSEO students in recruitment.
11. Develop and administer a questionnaire for freshmen to solicit opinions on course content, locations, and timing.

Freshman Abroad Models 10/10

CONSIDERATIONS

- Length/Timing
 - Before fall semester
 - Michigan State, St. John's University
 - During fall semester or first academic year
 - Skidmore, NYU, Syracuse, Florida State, Mississippi, University of New Haven, Plymouth State University, Arcadia
 - "Gap year" options
 - Princeton, CIEE
- Credit or Non-Credit
- University-Based, Faculty-Led, Study Center, Hybrid

PROGRAM SUMMARIES

- Michigan State University – Freshman Seminars Abroad
 - 1-3 weeks during summer before first year
 - Taken by MSU faculty member
 - Provide elective credit that may fulfill requirements depending on students' fields of study
 - Similar to U of M Global Seminar
 - <http://undergrad.msu.edu/seminars.html>
- Ohio State University – Freshmen Programs
 - Classes on campus followed by 1-2 weeks abroad
 - Programs are themed and targeted to specific groups of freshmen
 - <http://oia.osu.edu/pdf/countries/Bahamas-MinorityAffairs.pdf>
 - <http://oia.osu.edu/pdf/countries/England-LondonHonors.pdf>
 - <http://oia.osu.edu/pdf/countries/Ecuador-CFAESfreshmen.pdf>
- St. John's University – Freshman Passport
 - 2 weeks at Rome or Paris center combined with on-campus coursework
 - Can go prior to fall semester, during winter break, or May term
 - http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/international/globalstudies/programs/freshman_passport
- Skidmore College – Skidmore in London
 - First semester of college spent in London
 - Cohort of 30-40 students goes with two Skidmore faculty members
 - http://www.skidmore.edu/administration/int-programs/london_freshman/index.htm

- New York University – Freshman Programs Abroad
 - First academic year spent at NYU center in London, Paris, or Florence
 - <http://www.nyu.edu/studyabroad/freshmen.programs/lsp.html>
- Syracuse University – Discovery Florence
 - First semester of college spent at Syracuse Florence center
 - <http://www.syr.edu/futurestudents/undergraduate/discflorence/index.html>
- Florida State University – First Year Abroad
 - First academic year spent at FSU center in London, Florence, Panama City, or Valencia
 - <https://international.fsu.edu/Types/FYA/FYA.aspx>
- University of Mississippi – Freshman Year Abroad
 - First academic year spent at University of Edinburgh in Scotland or American College of Thessaloniki in Greece
 - http://www.outreach.olemiss.edu/study_abroad/programs/freshman_year_abroad.html
- University of New Haven – Freshman Study Abroad
 - First semester spent at Roehampton University in London
 - <http://www.newhaven.edu/exped/studyabroad/29284/>
- Plymouth State University – Freshman Abroad Program
 - First semester spent at University of Limerick in Ireland
 - <http://www.plymouth.edu/career/international/limerick.html>
- Arcadia University – First Year Study Abroad Experience
 - First semester spent in London, England or Stirling, Scotland
 - <http://www.arcadia.edu/academic/default.aspx?id=3031>
- Arcadia University – London/Scotland/Spain Preview
 - Faculty-led spring break programs for two credits each
 - <http://www.arcadia.edu/academic/default.aspx?id=1483>
- Princeton University – Bridge Year Program
 - Nine-month volunteer program to Ghana, India, Peru, or Serbia before freshman year
 - <http://www.princeton.edu/bridgeyear/>
- Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) – Gap Year Programs
 - Volunteer and language immersion for summer, semester, or full academic year prior to freshman year
 - <http://www.ciee.org/hsabroad/gap/index.html>

OTHER RESOURCES

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/10/23/freshmen>

<http://www.ciee.org/study/advisors/gap.aspx>

<http://media.www.jhunewsletter.com/media/storage/paper932/news/2008/03/06/NewsFeatures/Princeton.Starts.Study.Aboard.Program.For.GapYear.Freshmen-3256548.shtml>

http://www.princeton.edu/bridgeyear/documents/Bridge_Year_Program.pdf