FROM FRINGE TO CORE:
ALIGNING FIRST-YEAR EDUCATION ABROAD WITH INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

CIEE Conference
Thursday, November 21, 2013
Introductions

• University of Minnesota
  • Ms. Sarah Tschida

• Michigan State University
  • Dr. James M. Lucas
    Assistant Dean, Global Ed. & Curriculum, Undergraduate Education
  • Dr. Inge Steglitz
    Assistant Director for Academic Relations, Office of Study Abroad
  • Mr. Peter Mayer
    Research Assistant, Undergraduate Education
Session Overview

• Overview of program models at UMN and MSU
• Efforts to connect first-year study abroad programming to broader institutional priorities
• Learning Outcome Activity
• Discussion
Opening question….  

What are some ways that campuses integrate learning abroad programming efforts with broader campus priorities?
Freshman Seminars

• Semester courses
• 1900-level
• Taught by full professor
• Enroll a maximum of 20 students
• No pre-requisites
• 3 credits
• Most fulfill a liberal education requirement
Embedded Program Model

On-campus pre-departure classes during fall or spring semester

On-campus re-entry classes during spring semester

Winter or Spring Break

Learning Abroad
Developing a Model

- Researched models nationally
- Task force of campus stakeholders
  - Learning Abroad Center
  - Office of Admissions
  - Office of Undergraduate Education
  - Associate & Assistant Deans
  - Collegiate learning abroad professionals
  - Freshman Seminar professors who have also taught abroad
Aligning with Institutional Priorities

- On-campus Freshman Seminar model
- Student development and learning outcomes
- University Mission
- Community building
- Retention and graduation rates
Benefits & Challenges

- Name recognition
- Visibility
- Administrative
- Existing structure
- Perceptions of university priorities
- Funding
- Re-envisioning goals
MSU MODEL
FSA Program History & Staffing

• Based on the on-campus seminar model (UGS 101)
  • Faculty teach a seminar on a topic of interest; transition is embedded, not explicit
  • Running since 2003, starting in Quebec and Mexico
  • Goal for about 10 stable summer programs with a capacity of about 300 students

• Staffing model:
  • 2 faculty teaching about 10 – 15 students each
  • 1 – 2 support staff helping with student development, logistics, finances, and health and safety
  • Matrix model for putting the teams together
  • Evolved away from a focus on tenure-track faculty only, but still prioritize those in tenure system or with terminal degree
Program Structure & Academics

- 2 – 3 day orientation
- 10 – 14 days abroad
- Required fall re-entry
- Average day:
  - 2 – 3 hours in class
  - 3 – 5 hours in field visit
  - Structured and unstructured free time (depending on the program location and format)
- 2 credit*, graded course
- Instructors design a class that:
  - Is developmentally appropriate for first-year students
  - Is interdisciplinary and engaging
  - Is active and experiential
  - Makes use of the host locale and culture
## Sample 2013 Seminar Offerings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Seminar Offerings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Race and Identity in Brazil</td>
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<td>The Development Question: Challenges and Success of Brazil</td>
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<td>Cuba (winter)</td>
<td>Urban Sustainability in Michigan and Cuba</td>
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<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Irish Institutions of Freedom</td>
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<td>Myth, Tragedy, and Power: The Irish Experience in Literature and Film</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>Healthy Italia</td>
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<td>The Renaissance of Science</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
<td>A Day in the Life: Popular Culture, School, and Media in Japan</td>
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<td>Health, Medicine and the Culture of Japan: Are They Related?</td>
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<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Climate Change, Zombies, &amp; You: Environmental Problems &amp; Science Fiction</td>
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<td>Hobbits vs. Dwarves: Environmental Values, Issues, and Practice in New Zealand</td>
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MSU REFORM EFFORTS
Learning Outcomes & Curricular Integration

• Connecting to institutional learning outcomes
  • http://undergrad.msu.edu/learning
  • http://undergrad.msu.edu/programs/ise

• Curriculum integration efforts
  • Area studies and global majors, minors, and specializations
  • College-based first-year seminars
  • Topical specializations & minors

• Integrative studies (general education)
College Partnerships

• As a small effort, the FSA programs have sought to partner with other units to:
  • Sponsor programs
  • Conduct site visits
  • Support existing partnerships
  • Support university research and funding priorities
  • “Train” and recruit program leaders
Institutional Assessment Priorities

• Evidence how FSAs help with key benchmarks
  • Retention and Persistence
  • Time to Degree
  • Academic Success
  • Intercultural & Global Learning
  • Analytical Thinking & Integrative Reasoning

• Doing institutional data mining
  • Office of Study Abroad enrollments and database
  • Institutional student information system data
  • Comparisons of participants and non-participants, accounting for academic, high school, SES, and other variables
Programmatic Assessment

- **Student**
  - Program Evaluations (yearly)
  - Instructional Rating Forms (yearly)
  - Pre/Post Program Surveys (yearly)
    - Global Learning Outcomes
    - Student Qualitative Assessment/Self-Reports
  - Focus groups & surveys (periodic)
  - Evaluation of student work (periodic)
  - Debriefing and reentry sessions (yearly)

- **Faculty and staff**
  - Surveys (yearly)
  - Focus Groups (yearly)
  - Advisory Group (periodic)
Outcomes

Qualitative
- Making friends and developing a peer network
- Connecting with faculty and staff
- Personal management
- Academic confidence and college transition
- Improved global interests

Quantitative
- Improved first-semester GPA
- Reduced attrition from MSU
- Improved 4/4.5 year graduation rates
- 50%+ go again
Assessment Findings

• 90%+ satisfaction and positive referral of program
• Major marketing sources:
  • Email
  • Campus visits and tours
  • Academic advisors/orientation
• Issues to address: too much work/readings, weather, lack of field experience integration, team/cohort issues
What were the reasons you decided to participate in a first-year seminar? (check all that apply)

- Help with my transition to college: 25
- Learn to be more independent: 25
- Gain or improve college-level study skills: 18
- Wanted to make new friends: 30
- Interested in the content or topic: 31
- Wanted to travel: 23
- Wanted to learn about another culture/language: 23
- Wanted to experiment with a major or area of interest: 7
- Wanted to have fun: 30
- Wanted to earn some credit before starting school: 24
Help with my transition to college
Learn to be more independent
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Wanted to experiment with a major or area of interest
Wanted to have fun
Wanted to earn some credit before starting school
Other

Please rank your top three reasons listed above.
What were the reasons you did not participate on a first-year seminar?

- Did not have the money: 106
- Needed to work: 74
- Already had summer travel plans: 61
- Was not qualified: 2
- Did not have a passport: 27
- Did not feel like dealing with the application: 34
- Did not feel like participating: 30
- Did not know about the opportunity in time to sign-up: 3
- Concerned about safety and security: 45
- Did not know anyone else participating: 39
- Not interested: 25
- Did not see the value in taking the course: 31
- Topics did not interest me: 31
Faculty Development

• Based on program feedback
• Required faculty development seminars and resources
  • Backward course design
  • Experiential teaching and learning
  • Student development
  • Working with first-year students
  • Handling student discipline issues
• Created an online support site
Influencing Other Efforts

- Development of the FSA programs have influenced other programming at the institution:
  - Development of Freshman Seminars Away
  - Begin to rethink all EA programs from a developmental perspective
  - More closely align all EA programs with institutional learning goals
  - Enhanced focus on learning outcomes vis-à-vis program design
  - Faculty development for EA workshop series with Faculty & Organizational Development
  - Development of special version of existing “Unpacking your Study Abroad Experience” workshops – Unpacking your Freshman Seminar Abroad
FSA Administration within the Office of Study Abroad

• 2003: separate administrative structure and processes
• 2013: “mainstreamed” into the overall EA program administrative structure and processes
What are the national and institutional priorities that influence your work on your campus?

What role does the learning abroad office have in terms of intersecting with these priorities? Do you articulate them clearly, build them into your administrative processes, and/or use them to guide assessment efforts?

Based on the national and institutional priorities for your context, what are some efforts you can do at the individual program or course level to make learning abroad opportunities align better, or more intentionally, with these priorities?

How are you assessing your programs and student learning? Does the assessment effort help you answer the question, “after participating in this program (course), students can demonstrate the stated outcome?”