

# **Senior Seminar & Study Abroad**

**Two possible paths for one  
Integrative Experience requirement**

**CAA Proposal  
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**Eastern Illinois University**

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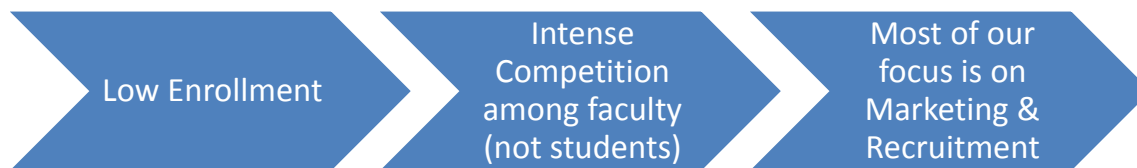
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## The Problem

Study Abroad has been consistently identified as a Presidential and a Provost Priority since 2008 (Presidential Initiative 2008, Strategic Plan 2012, Provost’s Management Focus 2008-2011, Integrative Learning Initiative 2010). However, only an average of 300 students study abroad per year. The President and Provost have increased funding for study abroad with an investment in scholarships, but a key factor that remains unchanged is the fact that Study Abroad is not among the curricular choices that students have to make in order to complete a degree. Currently, even with a five-year emphasis on study abroad and an emphasis on Integrative Learning, EIU’s academic councils have not created academic pathways in which students are called to make a conscious decision about studying abroad, as an integrated part of their undergraduate preparation.

In spite of extensive promotion and repeated inclusion of Study Abroad as a priority in university goals, there seems to be a certain level of contradiction at work. We want students to study abroad, because of the great value it provides academically, personally, professionally, but we do not think it’s important enough to be included in university-wide degree requirements. When messages are mixed, they don’t work well. What we need are clear and unified values that align academic and administrative goals. Otherwise, we inadvertently create a culture like this:



**Low Enrollment** – Many faculty-led programs do not receive an adequate number of students and are cancelled. Some semester-long programs also need to receive a larger number of students to be sustainable as do certain equity exchange programs. Adequate enrollment levels insure the success of a program in two ways. First, the greater the number of students who participate, the more likely study abroad is to be viewed by other students as a desirable academic and personal pursuit. Second, the more students participating in a given program the more cost effective and affordable the program becomes. This second result is particularly pertinent to faculty-led programs.

**Intense Competition among Faculty** – Faculty directing programs do everything they can to get their minimum number of students. In doing so, they feel obligated to advocate for students who are on academic and/or disciplinary probation. These efforts diminish the quality of our programming. To increase numbers, faculty also feel compelled to get their study abroad course articulated as a Senior Seminar among other choices. Although various Study Abroad programs have been approved to count as substitutions for Senior Seminars, the approval practice has not been consistent. Those with pre-approved senior-seminar substitutions have a “competitive advantage” over those who don’t, without clear rationale.

**Most of our focus is on Marketing & Recruitment** – Because our struggle is to make Study Abroad a viable and affordable academic alternative, administration and faculty have been unable to give full focus to the central mission of study abroad which is “to foster affordable, high quality international academic opportunities that enable students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for leadership in an interdependent world.” What we would like to do is move the study-abroad culture from an emphasis on “marketing and recruitment” to the broad-based “learning objectives and outcomes” which will set students apart from other college graduates and give them a cutting-edge in today’s competitive job market. Studies show that attending college abroad can have a positive impact on career goals, marketable skills, and employability (source: The ROI of Study Abroad).

## **Solution (Proposal)**

### **Change the Requirements for the Bachelor’s Degree from A to B.**

- A.** Successfully complete the General Education Requirements detailed in the “General Education” section, including the senior seminar.
- B.** Successfully complete the General Education Requirements detailed in the “General Education” section, including the Integrative Experience requirement [senior seminar OR Study Abroad plus STA 4000 (1-0-1)].

Students are required to complete three semester hours in the Integrative Experience requirement.

### **Administrative Logistics**

After a student successfully completes a study abroad program, and completes 75 hours, he/she may sign up for a one-semester-hour course entitled STA 4000 Study Abroad Capstone

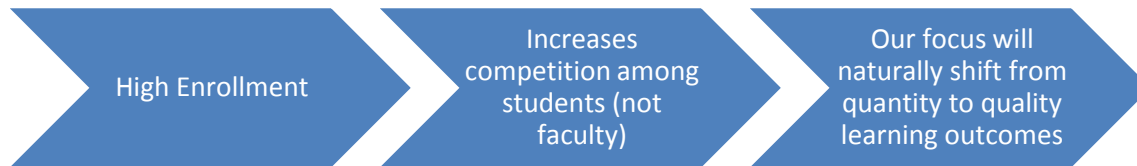
The STA 4000 Study Abroad Capstone will be coordinated through the Office of Study Abroad. Please see the course proposal for details.

### **Objective: Focus on Study Abroad as a Key Learning Experience Integrated into the General Education Curriculum at Eastern Illinois University**

Every student will have to make a conscious decision about participation in study abroad as it relates to their curricular goals and experiences. This integrates study abroad in the University’s core curriculum and will naturally increase interest.

### **Objective: Focus on Quality and Academic Rigor of Study Abroad Programs**

As participation increases, the administration and faculty involved in study abroad will be able to focus less on marketing and recruitment, and more strategically on the academic quality and broad-based learning objectives and outcomes that will set students apart from other college graduates and give them a cutting-edge in today's competitive job market.



## Current University Priorities

This proposal better aligns the undergraduate curriculum to EIU's priorities.

### **Enhance support for excellence in faculty scholarship and teaching, in particular faculty-mentored undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activities.**

It supports faculty-led study abroad programs, by helping them obtain a sufficient number of highly qualified students for programs. It will also assist programs that include faculty travel like Harlaxton College, American College of Thessaloniki, Salzburg College (pending final approval), among others with a sufficient number of qualified students. International education is not only important for students, but also for our faculty.

### **Enhance service and leadership opportunities for students.**

Many of our study abroad programs have service and leadership opportunities built into their structure, in another country/culture. This enhances service and leadership opportunities for students. In the Nation Building in New South Africa programs, students spend a few days with Youth With a Vision (YWAV); they use theater and music to teach AIDS awareness and other issues to their peers and neighbors. In Ecuador, students collaborate with a local NGO who provides tree saplings and boat transportation for them to help repair the ecosystem by planting mangrove trees. Even the Spring Break in Nicaragua program has a service component; our students spend a day in a government run school organizing learning activities for children. Such opportunities for service and leadership exist in almost all of our own programming, plus the added programming available through our partner institutions who also value service and leadership.

### **Enhance fine arts programming and outreach.**

Some of our study abroad programs are renowned for their fine arts courses and culture. By forging strong partnerships and increasing our student enrollments in these programs, our university is enhancing our fine arts programming and international outreach. We have a network

of students and faculty involved in international education around the world. Below are just a few examples:

- Lorenzo de' Medici, The Italian International Institute, with campuses in Florence, Tuscany, Rome, and Venice has completed major restorations around the world (New Delhi cathedral and several convents in collaboration with the sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, various temples in Asia and South America, and the works of famous artists such as Michelangelo, Raphael, Fra Angelico, Donatello, Brunelleschi).
- Veritas University has one of the strongest art programs in all of Latin America, originally founded as a private institution of graphic arts and design. Students can study art and learn Spanish at the same time.
- A summer Paris Study Abroad program combines art history, studio art, and French language. Students write & sketch about Orientalism, Colonialism, the Flâneur, etc. and learn French at the same time.

### **Enhance study abroad opportunities.**

It will allow the university to enhance, refine, and ultimately expand programming, instead of cancelling quality programming due to low enrollment.

### **Enhance honors programs.**

It will encourage more honors students to study abroad, thus enriching the honors college by integrating cultural diversity, international experience, and potential professional development. It will also give the honors program a recruiting tool to attract high caliber students who value cultural diversity and wish to develop global citizenship through EIU's international partner network.

### **Integrative Learning.**

Integrative Learning is intimately related to Study Abroad in that it is by definition a significant life learning experience outside the classroom, with ample opportunity for guided reflection. What makes study abroad so integrative is that it enables students to tie their academic, personal, and professional lives into a holistic, transformative university experience (as stated on the Integrative Learning website). Students who study abroad do so through a guided and "intentional" selection process to find the right program fit for their individualized career goals.

Study Abroad helps students connect theory to practice. Students are learning in the US classroom (theories, data, and research) and then going outside of the US classroom to compliment that knowledge with a different type of experience.

The addition of STA 4000 and particularly the reflective element associated with it are designed to more readily assure that integrative learning is a significant part of the Study Abroad process.

## Five-year Strategic Plan for Eastern Illinois University

The 2012 Five-year Strategic Plan developed through campus-wide discussion during the past year identified the following Goals and Actions:

- Develop and expand national and international partnerships so that students and faculty have the widest exposure possible to a globally diverse community.
- Increase participation in National Student Exchange and study abroad, expand participation in faculty exchange programs, and develop new partnerships with other universities worldwide.

**Importance of Study Abroad** (data source is the ROI of Studying Abroad, [http://www.coursehero.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/11.12.28\\_ROI\\_Abroad.png](http://www.coursehero.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/11.12.28_ROI_Abroad.png))

**Rick Steves: Study abroad is necessity, not luxury**

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/story/2012-01-18/study-abroad-global-economy-travel/52650834/1> - “Even in challenging economic times, making sure that study abroad is part of our college students' education is a vital investment. If we want a new generation of leaders and innovators who can be effective in an ever more globalized world, sending our students overseas is not a luxury. It's a necessity.”

**Academic Outcomes of Study Abroad, Inside Higher Education, 2010**

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/07/13/abroad> - “In 2000, researchers began an ambitious effort to document the academic outcomes of study abroad across the 35-institution University System of Georgia. Ten years later, they’ve found that students who study abroad have improved academic performance upon returning to their home campus, higher graduation rates, and improved knowledge of cultural practices and context compared to students in control groups. They’ve also found that studying abroad helps, rather than hinders, academic performance of at-risk students.” This is the GLOSSARI project-- the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative

**The ROI of Studying Abroad** <http://holykaw.alltop.com/the-roi-of-studying-abroad-infographic>

- The first and primary impact that studying abroad has on the lives of students is that it changes and broadens their post-college career goals.
- Students who studied abroad are more likely to have valuable qualities, skills, and experiences that can enhance their resume: foreign language competency, internationally related coursework, international work or internship experience, and international travel.
- Skills obtained by studying abroad are included among the top 4 most important employee traits.
- Studies show a whopping 73% of employers cited study abroad as important when evaluating the resumes of a job candidate for a junior-level position.
- For those students with aspirations of working in another country, 8 in 10 HR executives say that study abroad experience was an important factor for overseas job placement within their companies.

- Over 90% of employers believe that students who have studied abroad are likely to possess other highly desirable skills including: cross-cultural communication, independence, cultural awareness, maturity, flexibility
- Even the most impressive resume only serves as a way to land an interview, and it is that crucial first meeting that determines whether or not a candidate is hireable. During the interview process, students who have studied abroad can start compelling conversations about their experiences, showcasing the breadth of their perspective and highlighting their impressive credentials.
- Research shows that studying abroad gives students additional qualifications that can improve their chances of landing a position. Some universities have shown that graduates land better jobs and have an average of 5K larger starting salaries.

### **Education Abroad Is More Important Than Ever for U.S. Students**

<https://chronicle.com/article/Education-Abroad-Is-More/49023/>

### **A Global Education: No Longer Optional**

<http://www.connectingourworld.org/get-involved/campaigns/a-global-education-no-longer-optional/>

## **Undergraduate Goals, Learning Outcomes, and Assessment**

Currently, the University uses Senior Seminar as a way to assess four undergraduate learning goals. While most Senior Seminars include a substantial writing component, Study Abroad programs may expect only limited writing. The emphasis is on the first-hand “integrative learning” experience, but this doesn’t mean we cannot add it in. As previously stated STA 4000 would be designed to include both writing and speaking components.

Not only does this proposal offer the university an additional way to foster the four undergraduate goals, it broadens our assessment data. For example, if we compare seniors who complete the senior seminar course to students at all levels who have studied abroad, what will we find in terms of global citizenship, writing, speaking, and critical thinking? We can also compare seniors (senior seminar) to seniors (study abroad) and see if the data are different.

We could easily build assessment instrumentation into STA 4000 Study Abroad Capstone. For example, in the area of global competence/citizenship, there are several instruments in which the University can invest for assessment purposes:

- Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) <http://idiinventory.com/>
- GPI (Global Perspectives Inventory) <https://gpi.central.edu/>
- Forum BEVI Project <http://www.forumea.org/research-bevi-project.cfm>

We could also develop our own, similar to the GLOSSARI project, the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative, but designed to capture the undergraduate learning goals. <http://glossari.uga.edu/>



### **EIU graduates will demonstrate the ability to write effectively**

Writing is a part of most academic experiences including senior seminars and study abroad. However, the nature of the writing involved is not necessarily intensive or of a reflective nature. For this reason, we have included a Study Abroad Capstone course, with a writing component.

### **EIU graduates will demonstrate the ability to speak effectively**

While speaking is a part of almost any experience, senior seminar and study abroad, it has been shown that learning a foreign language helps enhance oral communication skills in one's native language as well. For this reason, study abroad experiences involving language learning and exposure to languages other than English are expressly encouraged. For many good reasons, such language experience is not, however, part of every valid study abroad experience. For this reason we propose that a speaking component be built into STA 4000 Study Abroad Capstone.

### **EIU graduates will demonstrate the ability to think critically**

Studies show that study abroad develops critical thinking skills. One example is outlined in the article, **Be a Better Manager: Live Abroad**, **Harvard Business Review**, September 2010 (<http://hbr.org/2010/09/be-a-better-manager-live-abroad/ar/1>)

STA 4000 will further cultivate critical thinking by helping students to integrate their study abroad experience with their academic, personal and professional goals. On a practical level this experience will better prepare them to frame their resume and link their college degree and study abroad experience during the interview process.

### **EIU graduates will demonstrate the ability to function as responsible global citizens**

Building "global" competence and "global" citizenship is an important and worthy goal. It is very unlikely that an on-campus course can do this with the same force or vigor as study abroad.

This discussion was part of the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act, which was approved by the United States House of Representatives. The long-term goal of this initiative is that within ten years one million US college students will study abroad in any given year. The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute hosts a compelling video of the late Paul Simon speaking about the importance of study abroad and his dreams for this act: <http://paulsimoninstitute.org>

**Global Citizenship – What are we talking about and why does it matter?** A new article by Madeleine Green, one of NAFSA's Senior Fellows for Internationalization <http://www.nafsa.org/about/default.aspx?id=30005>

## **Likely Effects**

Move study abroad from intense competition among faculty to a competitive academic and integrative learning experience for students.

Codify an inconsistent university-wide approval process of substituting senior seminar for some study abroad programs and not others.

Help students make better study abroad choices.

Give the study abroad experience more value and balance in the administrative and academic cultures of the institution.

Assure that the best students have an opportunity to have and consider an international education experience as part of their college degree, through a competitive application process.

Attract high caliber students to the institution by meeting the desires of top high school graduates.

Contribute to the field of international education in a meaningful way, by encouraging the growth of academic culture in programming and a focus on learning objectives/outcomes.

Position EIU as one of the top public master's institutions in the nation for the number of students who study abroad, upon reaching our goal.

## **TO BE EFFECTIVE**

Fall, 2012 – For catalog, making students going abroad in the Fall eligible

Spring, 2013 – STA4000 to be offered first time