

Final Report: International Transformation Learning Experiences

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This report consists of a brief narrative summary and a comprehensive appendix that includes all committee findings and recommendations.

I. Defining an International Transformational Learning Opportunity

International Transformational Learning Opportunities (ITLOs) may take varied forms. However, they share certain critical characteristics. These traits include taking place abroad, and being *explicitly oriented toward learning*. Thus, examples of ITLOs include, but are not limited to, classroom study abroad at a foreign-located institute, college or university for a period ranging from one month to one year; field-based study abroad with a UNF faculty member; internship or practicum abroad; or research involving international travel. Examples of non-ITLOs are on-campus international activities and vacations abroad. Learning must be intentional, which implies that ITLOs are structured with respect to learning objectives and the various activities that lead to students achieving them. Significant interaction with host country culture and people appears to be an essential contributor to the transformative nature of an ITLO.

II. Student Transformations

ITLOs provide several opportunities for transforming students. Perhaps most critically, the experience abroad thrusts students far outside their comfort zones. Without structure, that experience alone might not be transformational. However, with proper attention to program design, faculty members can help students to re-examine themselves in an environment in which they are less hindered by the familiar, allowing for significant personal growth. As cited in Earnest (2003), according to Matz (1997), “the main benefit of study abroad is an increased maturity and a broader perspective about the human condition in the world. American students are first confronted with a new sense of history” (p.120). Matz further notes that students learn they lag their foreign colleagues in their discipline studies; realize for the first time how unprepared they are to discuss American policies, economics, history, etc.; learn that other countries and cultures can differ from the US without either side being right or wrong; and see first-hand how differently those in harsh circumstances must live.

Earnest (2003) also reports that, according to a study by Carlson, Burn, Useem and Yachimowicz (1990), students who had studied abroad ranked their experiences high with respect to self-discovery, critical thinking, independence, and intellectual growth.

They also indicated having learned about their own characters. McClure (1997) reports that students studying abroad learn how deeply their own beliefs are rooted in culture and that other cultures generate different beliefs.

Transformation implies a permanent change in perspective. Study abroad delivers. For instance, Duval and Herrin (undated) cites a 1999 study by Wallace (citation missing) that reports that study abroad alumni continued to be influenced by their study abroad experiences a full decade after completing them.

At a recent Honors workshop on study abroad, UNF students reported that their international experiences changed them in the following ways: learning about my own culture, learning about myself, opening up to the possibilities of the world (other cultures and countries), becoming more open to more possibilities, and learning how to adapt to changes.

III. Required Activities

Significant activities and resources are required to support and encourage faculty/staff to develop and offer ITLOs and students to participate in them.

A. Program of Study Considerations. Atop the critical activities list (see Appendix for a complete list) is addressing the number one reason that US students report they do not study abroad—the ability (whether real or perceived) to use study abroad credits in their programs of study, allowing on-time graduation. At UNF, both the reality and the perception must be altered. The committee recommends that the Provost and Deans mandate that all degree programs at all levels (including General Education) must critically evaluate whether an ITLO can fit into the program of study. When the current program does not allow an ITLO, the faculty must revise the program to incorporate such an opportunity. It is extremely unlikely that any program cannot accommodate an ITLO option. UNF should identify a group of faculty that can offer suggestions, either by program or in workshop format. Where it fits with program mission and structure, faculty should also consider whether to require ITLO participation before graduation. The undergraduate majors in international business and international studies already require study abroad, and the BBA in economics will present its intention to do so at the next Academic Program Committee meeting (with the BA in Economics to follow suit after COAS approval).

B. Faculty Incentives. Because faculty must have incentives to create and offer ITLOs, Deans and departments should require the explicit incorporation of ITLO activities into annual performance evaluations and promotion/tenure guidelines. Part of that process might be educating non-ITLO faculty about the nature and rigor of, and the workload associated with creating and offering, ITLOs.

C. On-Campus Promotion of ITLOs. Creating incentives to offer ITLOs is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for increasing student ITLO participation. UNF must also

ensure that students know about the ITLOs that are available. Marketing efforts must focus on the development of a culture in which all students consider study abroad as a feasible, desirable activity from their first day at UNF. Marketing materials, such as targeted websites (see www.unf.edu/coggin/intlbus/studyabroad/ for an example that has worked at UNF), brochures and handouts are critical. The International Center participates in New Parent Day sessions, Orientations, and the newest Week of Welcome (WOW) activity, but materials could be developed that promote ITLOs even before students and parents come on campus, perhaps through targeted mailings.

D. Faculty/Staff Personal Involvement in ITLOs. However, cultural change requires more than merely creating materials—faculty and staff must become advocates for ITLOs. All advisors should be encouraged to participate in an ITLO. Ideally, they would participate in all activities in which students participate, in order to understand fully how the experience is transformational. Having had a personal transformation, the advisors would be much more likely to advocate enthusiastically to students. Selected faculty should also be offered such experiences, perhaps through the offering of a faculty-only study abroad.

E. Dissemination of Best Practices. The committee noted that UNF best practices for supporting ITLOs should be disseminated. Examples include the Honors Program’s innovative approaches to study abroad (e.g., city-as-text), the Nursing Program’s offering of short-term study abroad courses within a very tightly controlled nursing curriculum, and the Coggin College’s success in student participation in study abroad (website marketing; dedicated staff member for study abroad; cultural transformation that ensures that all students seriously consider study abroad; exchange partnerships; and the creation of an empowered, financially-supported study abroad champion with full, explicit dean’s support).

IV. Financial Resources

Many of the activities listed above require minimal resources to accomplish. In particular, strong and explicit administrative commitment to ITLOs at all levels will lay the foundation for cultural change and increased faculty commitment to ITLOs. However, some financial resources are also necessary.

Committee members expressed reservations about their ability to identify accurately a comprehensive budget for achieving the desired increase in ITLO offerings. Therefore, the dollar figures cited below should be viewed as guidelines. The committee recommends that further study be conducted to arrive at accurate costs.

Moreover, there remains some disagreement within the committee about the importance of each line item in the budget. Therefore, budget items are presented in two sections. The following paragraph describes each budget item with unanimous committee support, while the second paragraph describes the other items, explaining differences of opinion.

A. Budget Items with Unanimous Support. First, ITLOs are likely to be the most expensive TLO experiences. In order to be true to the vision of “No one like you, no place like this,” UNF must ensure that no student is unable to participate in an ITLO because of his/her financial situation. Therefore, UNF must raise significant new scholarship funds dedicated to study abroad. Second, the Vice President for Student and International Affairs currently allocates \$20,000 toward competitive travel grants for faculty to develop ITLOs. Even without the emphasis on ITLOs in recent years, the amount sought has exceeded the funds available. A significant increase in this amount is necessary to allow faculty to visit the sites of their future study abroad programs or to travel to foreign institutions to negotiate exchange agreements. Third, faculty champions in each discipline are essential to ensuring that ITLO offerings increase. A one-course release per year is recommended to compensate champions for their efforts. Fourth, program promotion will be an essential part of the campaign to increase student participation in ITLOs. Because advisors see individual students and make recommendations regarding which courses they take, ensuring that advisors fully understand ITLO experiences is critical to that effort. Since few advisors have had any international experiences, allowing them to participate in ITLO experiences is necessary for them to market ITLOs effectively to students. Also, program promotion requires both the production of hard-copy materials (e.g., posters, flyers, handouts) for students and the creation and maintenance (i.e., currency) of a one-stop website listing all ITLOs. In summary, committee members were unanimous in supporting these budget items.

<i>Funded Activity</i>	<i>Annual Amount</i>
Scholarships (spendable dollars: \$1000/student for 1000 students/year)	\$1,000,000
Increased funding (above the current base of \$20,000) for ITLO development (e.g., travel grants to set up exchanges and study abroad programs)	\$30,000
Course releases for faculty champions (adjunct replacement @ \$2500/course: 1/year/champion in each dept., assuming 30 departments)	\$75,000
Funds to support advisor & other staff participation in ITLO (5/year @ \$2500/person)	\$12,500
Material creation & production	\$5,000
Website support, if not provided from another source	\$5,000

B. Budget Items with Limited Support. Committee members agreed that setting up the travel logistics associated with ITLOs is a time-consuming task that most faculty would prefer to delegate. However, members differed in their desire to have a university travel agent dedicated to facilitating study abroad travel. In some cases, it might be easy to for a general travel agent to help (e.g., programs in Europe), whereas in others, a travel agent specializing in a particular location (e.g., visiting Mayan ruins in Guatemala) is necessary. Members’ opinions also varied regarding the efficacy of faculty-only study abroad programs. On the one hand, departments that are not very internationally-oriented might find such activities extremely useful in increasing faculty buy-in and support for

ITLO development and offering. For instance, the Coggin College used that model to jump-start enthusiasm for its internationalization efforts in the mid-1990s. On the other hand, faculty-only study abroad programs might have limited impact on departments that are already internationally-oriented. The following table summarizes.

<i>Funded Activity</i>	<i>Annual Amount</i>
Increased administrative support for ITLO logistics, e.g., on-campus travel agent dedicated to assisting faculty with logistical arrangements for ITLOs or secretary dedicated to assisting faculty with setting up program logistics	\$30,000-\$40,000
Funds to support faculty-only study abroad (10 faculty/year @ \$2500/person)	\$25,000

The committee further recognizes that immediate funding of all activities is likely to be infeasible. However, adequate funding of ITLO development, offering, and marketing must be provided over the next five years if ITLOs are to proliferate.

V. Summary

ITLOs are arguably the most transformative of the TLOs that UNF can offer. UNF must make a significant, targeted effort in order to dramatically increase the number of students participating in ITLOs. Fortunately, the know-how already exists in selected programs on campus. Disseminating that knowledge and providing an appropriate set of incentives and adequate funding will accomplish that goal.

Selected References

Carlson, J.S., Burn, B.B., Eseem, J. and Yachimowicz, D. (1990) *Study Abroad: The Experience of American Undergraduates*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Duval, Jeanne-Marie and Carl A. Herrin (unknown date) "Outcomes and Impacts of Study Abroad," in a report for the Lincoln Fellowships Commission. pp.D1-D6.

Earnest, Garee W. (2003). "Study Abroad: A Powerful New Approach for Developing Leadership Capacities." *Journal of Leadership Education* 2 (2) Winter. pp.46-56.

Matz, C. (1997). "Study Abroad in Higher Education Today." In L.B. Welch, B.J. Cleckley and M. McClure (eds.) *Strategies for Promoting Pluralism in Education and the Workplace* (Westport, CT: Praeger). pp.115-124.

Appendix

Comprehensive Findings and Recommendations of the Committee

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a detailed record of the issues that the committee deemed relevant for ITLOs.

Examples of International Transformational Learning Opportunities (ITLOs)

- Study abroad for a semester or more
 - At a UNF exchange partner
 - Direct enrollment at a foreign institution
 - “Island Program,” in which a group of US students studies at a US site abroad
- Short study program at a foreign institution
- Study a foreign language abroad
- Brief study abroad program led by a US professor (one or more weeks)
- Internship or practicum abroad
- Research project involving international travel (with a faculty member)

ITLOs take many forms. However, in order for an activity to be an ITLO, it must:

- Be *International*, i.e., include a significant component that occurs outside US borders
 - E.g., Activities taking place exclusively on campus are important, but are not ITLOs
- Lead to *Learning*
 - Learning must be intentional—the primary goal of the activity
 - A qualified faculty member must provide leadership
 - Structure that leads to learning
 - Explicit learning objectives
 - Structured (i.e., well-conceived) program, e.g.,
 - Classroom-based
 - Targeted site visits (discipline or cultural/historical)
 - Opportunities for significant interaction between UNF students and host country culture and people (e.g., matching UNF students with local students)
 - Provide significant opportunities for students to interact directly with local residents

Ways in which ITLO activities are transformational:

- Students face situations far outside their comfort zones
- Students have a first-hand experience in being a minority
- Students learn that the rest of the world can differ significantly and in myriad ways from the US
- Students understand how their intended profession differs in other countries
- Students obtain deeper self-awareness and self-understanding

- Students learn to communicate effectively in difficult situations
- Students learn how much their culture has shaped them, and are better able to understand and appreciate those who have lived within alternative cultural contexts
- Lessons learned during study abroad have permanent effects on students

What activities and resources are necessary to increase the number and quality of ITLOs at UNF?

- Activities
 - Educate students about ITLOs
 - Clarify that one or more type of ITLO can be used for credit toward graduation for every degree program
 - Review, and if necessary amend, all programs of study to ensure that ITLOs can count toward graduation (the literature is unanimous that the primary reason that American students do not study abroad is that it either does not fit in their programs of study and/or they do not understand how it can fit)
 - General Education curriculum
 - Undergraduate majors
 - Upper-division cultural diversity requirements
 - Graduate programs
 - A group of faculty with experience in integrating ITLOs in program of study should be formed to offer workshops in how to do so
 - Create materials for advisors and students to make explicit how an ITLO fits into each program (Coggin has examples for both short-term faculty-led programs and semester exchange programs)
 - Websites (e.g., www.unf.edu/coggin/intlbus/)
 - Brochures for advisors
 - Handouts for classes
 - Create a culture in which it is encouraged for each class to allow one ITLO leader to present his/her ITLO to students in 5 minutes
 - Encourage departments to consider requiring an ITLO experience (International Business, International Studies, and Economics BBA programs already require an ITLO)
 - Issue a Presidential Statement outlining the transformational nature of ITLOs
 - Reinforce importance of ITLOs in meetings between President/Provost and Deans, Associate Deans and Chairs (e.g., at Presidential or AA Retreats)
 - Issue an analogous Dean's Statement in each college
 - Create an incentive system for faculty and staff to create ITLOs
 - ITLO efforts must count in annual performance evaluations
 - ITLO efforts must count in the promotion and tenure process

- Identify an ITLO faculty champion in each discipline and empower him/her to encourage ITLO development and offering (this model has worked well in Coggin)
 - Explicit, enthusiastic support by the dean and chair are essential
 - Course releases are probably necessary
- Allow and encourage junior faculty to participate/lead ITLOs
 - It is clear that junior faculty are currently warned by senior faculty and chairs not to participate)
- Educate faculty not engaged in ITLOs about
 - The value and rigor inherent in ITLOs, and
 - The amount and quality of work that are necessary for an ITLO to be successful
- Expand college-specific exchange programs to be university-wide and add new exchange partners
 - Pilot programs with interested departments would be an appropriate starting point
- Require all searches, particularly for administrative posts and faculty positions, to list support for ITLOs as a job requirement
- Resources
 - Course releases for faculty champions
 - Partial course releases and/or stipends for faculty developing first-time faculty-led study abroad programs (program development is extremely time-intensive)
 - Addition of a campus travel agent and secretary to help faculty set up the details of ITLOs (the process is very labor-intensive, and the volume of ITLOs already being offered more than justifies these positions)
 - Provide resources to enable faculty, advisors and other staff who interact with students to participate in ITLOs, so that they can explain from first-hand experiences why they are transformational
 - Significant scholarships for ITLO participation (must become an explicit Institutional Advancement priority)
 - Creation of promotional materials and website (including identifying a part-time webmaster)