



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: STUDENTS' PERCEIVED PREFERENCES, BARRIERS, AND BENEFITS

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INTRODUCTION

- Participation in study abroad programs has increased over the past decade, offering students opportunities to immerse in foreign languages, cultures, and lifestyles, on a global level (Clark, Flaherty, & Wright, 2009).
- Research suggests that benefits may include increased social proficiency, intercultural awareness, and openness to intercultural communication (Clark, Flaherty & Wright, 2009).
- Short or long term study abroad programs may also affect students' interest in interdisciplinary study, and perceptions of globalization (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005).

NEED FOR THE STUDY

- The University of Arkansas established a campus wide goal of 25% international program (IP) participation by 2020.
- Prior to 2012, only 3% of students enrolled in the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences had participated in international program opportunities.

PURPOSE

- Considering the previously low participation rates in international programs, Bumpers college has sought to continuously assess student needs over the past four years.
- Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative study was to better understand student needs as a means of increasing participation rates.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Study abroad programs are viewed as a mechanism for cultivating global awareness and competency (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2008).
- The college choice theory, proffers three decision making stages associated with choosing a program include the intent to study abroad, the search for a program, and the selection of and departure for a location (Salisbury et al., 2008).
- From a student perspective, perceived benefits may include: exposure to a different culture, listing participation on resume or CV, and the opportunity to study subjects not available locally (Doyle et al., 2010).
- Financial concerns are considered to be the most common barrier to student participation in IPs, as well as lack of knowledge about programming, and confidence navigating a foreign landscape (Doyle et al., 2010).

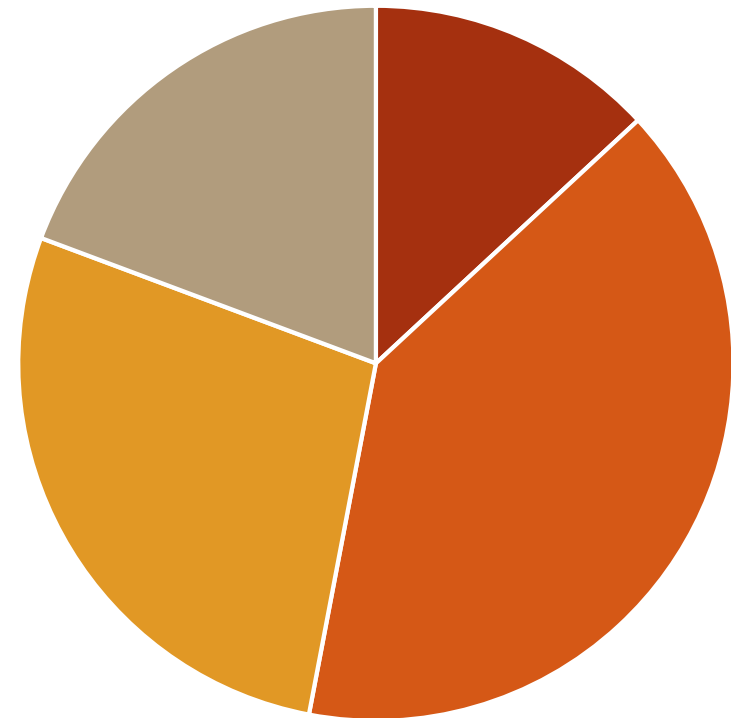
METHODOLOGY

- Random stratified sample of courses by academic department drawn from Bumpers College large enrollment fall 2016 courses ($N = 29$)
- 15 courses selected ($n = 1,165$)
- Survey consists of 34 questions
 - 6 point Likert-type scales
 - Multiple choice
 - Open-ended responses
- The instrument was assessed for face and content validity by the Bumpers College International Programs faculty committee, comprised of a representative from each academic unit in the College.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

- Participants included:
 - 39.9% sophomores
 - 27.7% juniors
 - 19.3% seniors, and
 - 13.1% freshmen.

Participant Classification



■ Freshmen ■ Sophomores ■ Juniors ■ Seniors

RESULTS

- The majority of student participants expressed an interest in participating in an IP (71.8%).
- Most students who were interested in participating in IP opportunities reported a preference for traveling among European countries.
- Italy was the most selected country ($n = 417$).
- Students reported a willingness to participate in IP experiences as a resume builder, noted an increased engagement with peers, and the ability to pursue opportunities they wouldn't otherwise be able to experience.
- Students perceived cost of the programs, and funding concerns to be a considerable barrier to participating in IPs, as well as a lack of time due to school or work.

RESULTS

Bumpers College Students' Preferred Countries of Interest (N = 969)

Continent	<i>n</i>
Europe	1,991
Oceania	353
Asia	199
South America	169
Africa	159
North America	107
Caribbean	22

RESULTS

Bumpers College Students' Interest in Europe Programs (n = 1,991)

Europe	n
Italy	417
Spain	288
France	223
UK	209
Greece	159
Ireland	148
Europe	138
Germany	132
Scotland	71
Sweden	43
Switzerland	31
Netherlands	20
Austria	19

RESULTS

Bumpers College Students' Interest in Oceania Programs (n = 352)

Oceania	<i>n</i>
Australia	246
New Zealand	102
Bora Bora	1
Brunei	1
Fiji	1
Nauru	1

RESULTS

Bumpers College Students' Interest in Asia Programs (n = 199)

Asia	<i>n</i>
Japan	48
China	39
India	30
Thailand	25
Asia	10
Vietnam	7
Korea	5
Russia	5
South Korea	5
United Arab Emirates	4

RESULTS

Bumpers College Students' Interest in South America Programs (n = 169)

South America	<i>n</i>
Brazil	62
Argentina	29
Costa Rica	22
South America	21
Chile	10
Peru	10
Colombia	5
Bolivia	4
Ecuador	2
Patagonia	2

RESULTS

Bumpers College Students' Interest in North America Programs (n = 107)

North America	<i>n</i>
Mexico	25
Belize	22
Canada	14
United States	12
Panama	11
Central America	5
Guatemala	5
Honduras	5

RESULTS

Bumpers College Students' Interest in Caribbean Programs (n = 22)

Caribbean	<i>n</i>
Bahamas	4
Caribbean	4
Cuba	3
Jamaica	3
Haiti	2
Puerto Rico	2

RESULTS: PERCEIVED BENEFITS

Bumpers College Students' Perceived Benefits to Participating in IPs (n = 1,163)

Benefit	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Looks good on a resume	1,163	5.46	0.77
Life-changing opportunity	1,163	5.45	0.81
Impact will last a lifetime	1,161	5.41	0.84
Make new friends outside of my comfort zone	1,160	5.31	0.85
Important aspect of personal growth	1,161	5.29	0.89
Sets me apart when applying for grad school/jobs	1,162	5.25	0.91
Change my perspective on life	1,163	5.21	0.96
Positive impact on my future career	1,163	5.20	0.88
Become a more well-rounded citizen	1,163	5.12	0.94
A very effective way to build job skills	1,161	5.12	0.91
Opportunity to work/live abroad after the IP	1,162	5.03	1.02
Enables me to tolerate ambiguity	1,160	5.03	0.95
Learn more about my academic field	1,162	4.96	1.02
Increased employability	1,163	4.92	1.00

Note. Scale used was 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree.

RESULTS: PERCEIVED BARRIERS

Bumpers College Students' Perceived Barriers to Participating in IPs (n = 1,159)

Barrier	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Cost is too high	1,159	4.79	1.12
Too busy with school	1,158	4.35	1.17
Too busy with work	1,154	3.91	1.49
There are not enough funding opportunities for me	1,147	3.80	1.40
Courses offered in IP do not fit into my degree plan	1,148	3.20	1.48
I am not aware of IP opportunities	1,151	3.08	1.40
Lack of support from my parents	1,152	2.66	1.48
Academic department does not encourage IP participation	1,146	2.55	1.31
An IP will not help me academically	1,153	2.25	1.27
I do not want to participate in an IP	1,152	2.18	1.37
An IP will not help me become more employable	1,156	2.15	1.17
An IP will not have an impact on my future career	1,154	2.12	1.21

Note. Scale used was 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree.

CONCLUSIONS

- Most student participants expressed interest in participating in IP experiences.
- European countries were considered the most desirable option, with South America and Asian countries as the second and third preference.
- Students perceived participation as being costly, but a beneficial addition to their resume.
- The high level of interest in programs suggest students are open to the idea of traveling or studying abroad, but may not be pursuing the opportunity.

CONCLUSIONS

- This research supports previous research noting the pros and cons to studying abroad as reported in benefits and barriers (*Danjean, Bunch & Blackburn, 2016; Estes, Hansen & Edgar, 2016*).
- Understanding students' perceived barriers and benefits will enable UA Bumpers College International Program Office to:
 - Modify promotional efforts to target students based on benefit areas and reduce barriers where possible
 - Develop programs in regions and countries of interest
 - Educate students about the variety of program and funding options available, and the associated benefits of participating in IPs
 - Continue efforts to increase number of IP participating students.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Addressing students' monetary concerns and increasing the visibility and accessibility of IP opportunities may help increase participation rates.
- Another viable solution is to offer flexible travel times to engage a greater quantity of students.
- Further assessment of students' needs and perceptions of IPs is recommended as the program grows.



QUESTIONS?