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Journal of Studies in International Education 2005; 9; 42
DOI: 10.1177/1028315304271480

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Wine Is for Drinking, Water Is for Washing: Student Opinions About International Exchange Programs

Hubert B. Van Hoof
Marja J. Verbeeten

This article reports on a study done among students who participated in student exchange programs, both in the United States and other parts of the world, between January 2001 and May 2003. Issues such as why students decide to study abroad, why they select a certain institution, how their home institution compares to a partner institution abroad, and what they consider to be the relevance of their international experience were investigated. Students agreed with the literature on the topic to a large extent and were very positive about the experience. Some interesting differences of opinion between incoming (to United States) and outgoing (from United States) students were observed.

Keywords: *study abroad; exchange programs; international education*

When Penny Barend, a 3rd-year hospitality management student at Northern Arizona University, arrived in Italy for a year of studies at the American International University in Florence, she did so with an open mind. Peers, parents, and professors had told her that this was going to be the best experience of her life and that living and studying in Italy were going to be very different from living and studying in Arizona. Different, she had been told, is not better or worse—it is just different.

When she sat down for dinner with her host family on her very first night, she asked for some water with her meal, a common request in the United States. Yet, the response she got from a 75-year-old Italian was not what she had expected: “Wine is for drinking, water is for washing,” he said. With this, she was welcomed to the world of living and studying abroad, and this incident stuck with her and became the theme of her valedictorian speech at her graduation cere-

Journal of Studies in International Education, Vol. 9 No. 1, Spring 2005 42-61
DOI: 10.1177/1028315304271480
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mony 3 years later. She will always look upon a glass of water in a different light, as will many who heard her speech.

Over the years, we have published several articles on the benefits of students living, working, and studying abroad (Van Hoof, 1999a, 2000, 2001) and have related these experiences to the benefits of international education as identified in the literature on the topic. The most common benefit identified is the student's exposure to different social and cultural environments (Arndt, 1984; Calleja, 1995; Lamey, 1990; Saliba, 1995; Swanson, 1969). Also mentioned is the fact that living in another culture changes one's stereotypes of other nationalities (Stangor, Jonas, Stroebe, & Hewstone, 1994) and that it presents one with an alternative view of the world (Remy, Nathan, Becker, & Torney, 1975). Students acquire a "new-found recognition of the extent to which their own cultural values and norms differ from those of their counterparts in their host country" (Roberts, 1998, p. 65). That this does not necessarily lead to a truly global perspective is lamented by some (Anderson, 1990; Van Spaandonck, 1995) but is to be expected, given the age and maturity levels of the students. Yet, it has also been found that students who participate in exchange programs tend to be a little more mature than their peers who did not study abroad (Frisch, 1990).

The literature has highlighted the role of these international programs in shaping a rounded, culturally sensitive individual, which happens to be one of the guiding principles of higher education around the world. As Vestal (1994) states, "These programs are commonly based on the conviction that quality education must reflect and encompass knowledge of diverse societies and cultures as well as the realities of global interdependence" (p. 15). As such, they fit in well with the drive to internationalize, which dominates university campuses across the globe nowadays (Barnett & Wu, 1995; Lawson, White, & Dimitriadis, 1998; Van Hoof, 1996). A concrete example of this drive to internationalize is Harvard University, where students are now expected to have a passport (which is still not common in the United States), and where internationalization has been made one of the cornerstones of curricular developments at the university.

It is safe to assume that the most important benefits of international education have been identified and that, as De Wit (1997) stated some 6 years ago, the time is ripe to move from the descriptive phase to a more analytical phase in the study of international education. In 1999, we analyzed the opinions of U.S. industry recruiters concerning a student's international experience and found that they did not value the international experience very highly (Van Hoof, 1999b). This article reports on a study done among students who participated in exchange programs. The intent of the study was to compare student opinions about international exchange programs to those expressed in the literature and to investigate what students saw as the biggest benefits and challenges of the experience,

why they decided to go abroad, how the education they received abroad compared to that at their home institutions, and what, in their minds, the relevance of the experience was to their personal and professional development.

METHOD AND DATA COLLECTION

The survey that provided the data for the study was conducted during the months of March, April, and May 2003 among 1,487 undergraduate students in the database of the International Office at Northern Arizona University. These students had studied abroad during the period of January 2001 to May 2003, were either incoming (to the United States) or outgoing (from the United States), and represented numerous majors and disciplines, as well as various age levels.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed to gain insights into the perceptions of students about their study abroad experiences. As stated earlier, its intent was to determine whether students corroborated the opinions expressed in the literature on international education. The payoffs of international education as identified in the literature can be summarized as follows: (a) exposure to different social and cultural environments; (b) changing of stereotypes that might exist; and (c) students become more mature because they live in other cultures and become well-rounded, culturally sensitive adults. Questions such as, "Why did you decide to study abroad as an exchange student?" "What do you consider the greatest benefit of studying abroad?" and "What do you consider the greatest challenge of studying abroad?" for instance, directly addressed some of these issues (see Appendix).

Of secondary relevance was the fact that this survey provided the administrators and educators at this particular university with valuable information about their own performance in educating and taking care of international students, as well as with information about their exchange partners.

It was decided to use a Web-based survey format in this study. The primary reason for doing so was that it could be distributed to a large target audience at a much lower cost and more quickly than a traditional survey (Couper, 2000; Schonland & Williams, 1996). Moreover, data collection and conversion could be done automatically, and the target audience could be encouraged by means of a personal e-mail message. Its most important benefits, though, were the convenience for both the respondents and the researchers and the fact that it was felt that respondents in this particular age group would be more likely to respond to an electronic format than to any of the more traditional survey tools.

An important concern about Web surveys is their low response rate, especially when sent out to the general population (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998; Tse, 1998). Yet, in this case, the population under study was relatively small, and its members could be reached at their personal e-mail addresses. It was expected that these students would be interested in sharing their opinions about their semester abroad experiences, which was supported by the relatively high response rate obtained.

The questionnaire was a four-page, self-administered instrument (see Appendix). It was estimated that it would take respondents about 10 minutes to complete. Most of the questions were closed-ended, requiring a choice from a number of alternatives presented.

In the first part of the survey, respondents were asked to provide demographic information. They were asked to provide information about their gender, their country of origin, the country where they had studied abroad, the institution they had studied at, their academic status (freshman, sophomore, etc.), their majors at their home institution and at their exchange institution, and how long they had studied abroad.

The second part of the survey was divided into six sections and examined the students' perceptions about their international studies and experiences. In the first section, two questions asked them what their reasons were for studying abroad and why they had selected the institution in particular. They were asked to compare their exchange programs to their home institutions by means of rating them on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The questions looked at (a) academic level of difficulty, (b) care for their general needs as students, (c) housing arrangements, and (d) overall levels of organization and structure at the exchange institution.

The third section examined what they liked most and least about their exchange institution and what they perceived to be the main difference between studying at home and abroad. Three questions (once again on a 5-point scale) in the fourth section then asked them to rate the relevance of their semester abroad to future job opportunities, their academic program at home, and their own personal development.

The fifth section contained four questions. The first two asked the respondents if they would study abroad again at the same institution and if they would study abroad again at another institution. Then they rated the overall quality of the academic program abroad and how they felt about the overall experience. The final section then asked them to describe what they felt were the greatest benefits and challenges of studying abroad and what advice they would give to students who were also considering studying abroad. This was done in an open-ended format.

Sample Design, Data Collection, and Limitations

Sample design. As stated earlier, all 1,487 undergraduate students who were in the database of the International Office at Northern Arizona University were selected to participate in this study for the following reasons:

1. The database was readily available and up-to-date at the university's International Office, with e-mail addresses of all the respondents being part of the database;
2. The International Office was very willing to participate in the study, as they would obtain valuable information about their own performance at the university they represented;
3. The students' interest in the topic and their willingness to complete the survey were expected to be high, due to the nature of the experience;
4. Respondents could be contacted easily by means of e-mail.

Data collection. On February 26, 2003, a letter signed by both the director of the International Office at Northern Arizona University and the researchers was sent to a pilot group of 60 students. In the letter, the respondents were requested to cooperate and were directed to a Web site that contained the survey. One week later, 40 pilot group respondents had completed the survey. As there were no major adjustments to be made based on the feedback from the pilot group, the letter was then sent to all the remaining students in the database on March 7, 2003, by means of e-mail. On March 24, 2003, a reminder was sent out. The Web site with the survey was kept open until the end of the spring 2003 semester, May 9, 2003. At that time, a total of 353 students had responded to the survey, a 23.74% response. Given the concern that Web surveys generally tend to generate a low response rate, this was deemed very good.

Limitations. The main limitation of this study is the fact that it was based on a database of students at only one university. All outgoing students studied at one of the 10 colleges and schools at Northern Arizona University, and all incoming students came to the university from its established network of partners abroad. Opinions therefore say more about Northern Arizona University and its foreign partners than about other universities, and the results cannot be generalized beyond the scope of the study. Yet, with incoming students coming from 22 different countries, outgoing students going to 23 different countries, and more than 50 different majors represented in the sample, the results can be considered characteristic of some general tendencies and representative of opinions of students worldwide.

This article will first discuss the demographic data and the descriptive results of the analyses. After that, it will look at the outcomes of various comparative analyses and describe whether any observed differences between groups in the descriptive section were significant. Finally, it will summarize some of the predominant opinions about the benefits and challenges of studying abroad and

offer some suggestions for further research. All data analyses were done using SPSS 11.0.

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Demographics

Of the 353 students who responded to the survey, 250 (70.8%) were female and 103 (29.2%) were male. As stated earlier, these students came from 22 different countries, with a large majority coming from the United States (80.7%). Among these outgoing American students, the largest numbers went to such countries as the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia, and Mexico. But there were also students who went to Costa Rica, Chile, Malta, Korea, Japan, Ireland, Italy, Russia, China, and Sweden, for instance.

Among the incoming students, Germany and the Netherlands were most heavily represented in the sample. Examples of other countries represented were the United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico, Spain, France, Czech Republic, China, Malaysia, Bulgaria, Belgium, and the Ukraine. Of course, these countries of origin reflect the international contacts of the university. Yet, they are also indicative of the multitude of nationalities in the sample.

A large majority (93.7%) of the respondents were juniors (3rd year) or seniors (4th year) at their home institutions, reflecting a trend among universities not to send students abroad very early on in their academic careers. The number of majors represented was considerable, with more than 50 distinctly different majors or fields of study being identified. These majors ranged from business and management to art, from chemistry to education, from language to history, and from ceramics to journalism. Most of the respondents had studied abroad for one semester (63.0%), with the remainder either going for two semesters (28.7%) or three or more (8.3%) (see Table 1).

Reasons for Studying Abroad

In the first section of the survey, the respondents were asked why they had decided to study abroad and were requested to rank a number of distinctly different reasons in order of importance. The three most important reasons for studying abroad identified were as follows:

1. It is/was a good opportunity to live in another culture;
2. It is/was a good opportunity to travel;
3. I liked the country my exchange program was located in.

Table 1 Student Demographics (N = 353)

	N	Valid %
Gender		
Male	103	29.2
Female	250	70.8
Incoming/outgoing ^a		
Incoming	32	9.1
Outgoing	321	90.9
Academic status ^a		
Freshman	3	.9
Sophomore	17	5.3
Junior	98	30.5
Senior	203	63.2
Duration ^a		
One semester	213	63.0
Two semesters	97	28.7
Three or more semesters	28	8.3

a. Total N is not 353 because of missing values for the variable.

When asked why they had selected the particular institution abroad, the three most important reasons were as follows:

1. It was available as a partner at my home institution;
2. I liked the country the program was located in;
3. People I know also go/went there.

Assessments: Academics, Care, Housing, and Organization at the Receiving Institution

In four questions, the survey then asked the respondents to rate the academic level of difficulty, care for their needs as a student, housing, and organization/structure at the exchange institution as compared to their home institution. This was done on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being *much worse/much easier*, 3 being *same*, and 5 being *much better/much more difficult*. This scale was primarily used to allow for comparative analysis of opinions later.

A majority of the respondents (59.0%) felt that the academic level of difficulty of the program abroad was the same (25.5%) or easier (33.5%) as compared to their home institutions, whereas 41.0% felt that academics were more demanding abroad. The mean rating was 3.02, with a standard deviation of 1.05. In terms of the care they received for their needs as students (such as staff avail-

ability, academic advising, and counseling), 39.2% of them rated it as better, 30.0% felt it was the same, and 30.8% felt it was worse than at home, a very even distribution ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.18$).

Housing is always a major concern for students when they go abroad, and not only for them but also, for instance, for their parents. In this case, 45.2% of the respondents felt that their housing arrangements were better than at home, 25.7% felt it was the same, and only 29.2% felt they were worse than at home ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.07$). Finally, when asked how they assessed the overall level of structure and organization at their exchange institution, 26.4% rated it as better, 33.0% felt it was the same, and 42.6% thought it was worse than at home ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.12$) (see Table 2).

Relevance of the Experience

Three questions asked the respondents to rate the relevance of their international experience to future job opportunities, the academic program at their home institution, and their own personal development. It is reasonable to assume that it would be difficult for students at this stage of their lives to assess the relevance of the international experience on future job opportunities and their own personal development accurately. Yet, these questions were included for various reasons. First, the answers to these questions could be used to reinforce opinions expressed in other questions about the importance the study abroad respondents attach to the experience. Second, the answers could also be used to provide some insight into whether young adults think about the consequences of their international experience to their personal and professional lives and place the experience in a much broader perspective. Third, the answers to these questions could be compared to opinions expressed in the literature.

Ratings were on a 5-point scale again, with 1 being *completely irrelevant*, 3 being *relevant*, and 5 being *extremely relevant*. When asked to rate the relevance of the experience to their future job opportunities, 58.1% of the students rated it as very or extremely relevant, 33.1% rated it relevant, and only 8.9% felt it was irrelevant ($M = 3.75$, $SD = .98$). With regard to their academic program at home, the ratings were 48.5% very or extremely relevant, 37.5% relevant, and 14.0% irrelevant ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.06$). Yet, when it came to determining what it had meant to their personal development, the respondents were most enthusiastic: 67.7% considered it extremely relevant, 23.0% felt it was very relevant, and only 2 respondents (.6%) considered it irrelevant. This almost unanimous enthusiasm was reflected in the mean rating of 4.57 and a standard deviation of .69 (see Table 3).

Table 2 Student Assessment of Academic Difficulty, Care, Housing, and Organization: Exchange Institution Compared to Home Institution

Exchange Program Compared to Home	N ^a	Valid %	M/SD
Academic level of difficulty			
Much easier	28	7.9	M: 3.02
Easier	82	24.9	SD: 1.05
Same	84	25.5	
More difficult	124	37.7	
Much more difficult	11	3.3	
Level of care for your general needs			
Much worse	39	11.8	M: 3.08
Worse	63	19.1	SD: 1.18
Same	99	30.0	
Better	91	27.6	
Much better	38	11.5	
Housing arrangements			
Much worse	10	3.1	M: 3.25
Worse	85	26.0	SD: 1.07
Same	84	25.7	
Better	108	33.0	
Much better	40	12.2	
Overall level of organization/structure			
Much worse	42	12.7	M: 2.81
Worse	92	27.9	SD: 1.12
Same	109	33.0	
Better	62	18.8	
Much better	25	7.6	

a. Total N is not 353 because of missing values for the variable.

Would You Do It Again?

Under the heading of “Would you do it again?” the respondents’ opinions and feelings about their semesters abroad were further analyzed. They were asked, if it were possible, whether they would study abroad again at the same institution and at another institution. Moreover, they had the option here to indicate why they would or would not choose to repeat the experience, providing important information on the quality of the programs and the experience to organizers of those programs.

Two thirds (61.1%) of the respondents indicated that they would study again at the same institution, and 95.0% of them said that they would study abroad again at another institution—a ringing endorsement, yet more so for the study abroad experience than for the institution they studied at. A sampling of the rea-

Table 3 The Relevance of the Study Abroad Experience

Relevance of Semester Abroad Experience to	N ^a	Valid %	M/SD
Future job opportunities			
Completely irrelevant	4	1.4	M: 3.75
Irrelevant	22	7.4	SD: 0.98
Relevant	98	33.1	
Very relevant	91	30.7	
Extremely relevant	81	27.4	
Academic program at home			
Completely irrelevant	12	4.0	M: 3.52
Irrelevant	30	10.0	SD: 1.06
Relevant	112	37.5	
Very relevant	82	27.4	
Extremely relevant	63	21.1	
Your personal development			
Completely irrelevant	1	.3	M: 4.57
Irrelevant	1	.3	SD: 0.69
Relevant	26	8.7	
Very relevant	69	23.0	
Extremely relevant	203	67.7	

a. Total N is not 353 because of missing values for the variable.

sons for not wanting to go back to the same school includes such comments as “courses are irrelevant,” “been there, done that,” “I got bored there,” “too unorganized,” and “I would like to get a broader perspective and experience something new.”

By the same token, some of the reasons that students overwhelmingly endorsed the experience rather than the individual programs were, “the dynamics of an exchange teach you a lot,” “I realize there are more opportunities now,” and “my personal development was incredible, and I want to see more.”

Overall Ratings

Finally, when it was time to ask for some overall assessments, the respondents looked at the overall quality of the academic program they did abroad, and the overall quality of the experience in general, on a scale where 1 = *very poor*, 3 = *neutral*, and 5 = *outstanding*. As became apparent throughout all of the other questions, the study abroad experience was perceived as having a much larger effect on the students’ personal developments than on their academic careers, as 71.9% of them rated the overall quality of the academic program as good or outstanding ($M = 3.84, SD = .92$). Nearly all of them (96.2%) felt that the quality of

the overall study abroad experience was good or outstanding ($M = 4.65$, $SD = .57$).

COMPARATIVE RESULTS

To determine if any of the observed differences of opinion were significant, t tests were used to compare the groups. The groups compared in this sample were males and females, and incoming versus outgoing students, which was by far the most important comparison.

The Effect of Gender on Perceptions

The study first looked at whether the gender of the respondent had any significant effect on his or her perceptions about the study abroad experience. As there were two groups separated based on the value of a single variable (male-female), and as the level of data provided by the questions using the 5-point Likert-type scale was ordinal, this analysis was done by means of t tests. In all instances, the null hypotheses assumed that the population means were equal, and the alpha level was set at .05.

The study found only one significant difference of opinion between male and female students. It was found that female students rated the level of care for their personal needs as a student at the exchange institution significantly higher than males. With a significance score of .050, the null hypothesis of equality of mean ratings could be rejected. In none of the other questions was there a significant difference of opinions between males and females (see Table 4).

Although hardly any of the differences of opinion were found to be significant, a closer look at the mean ratings of males and females, as expressed in Table 4, shows that in all cases, the female ratings were higher than those of the males, suggesting that female students were generally more appreciative of many of the aspects of the study abroad experience than males.

The Effect of Incoming Versus Outgoing

The obvious and most important comparison this study performed was to look at the differences of opinion between incoming and outgoing students. Once again, t tests were used to determine if any of the differences of opinions were significant. The alpha level was set at .05, and the null hypotheses assumed equality of mean ratings.

In this case, the study noticed several significant differences of opinion between the two groups. First, it was found that incoming students rated the overall quality of the academic programs in the United States significantly lower

Table 4 Effect of Gender on Perceptions

Exchange Program Compared to Home	N^a	M	SD	F	Sig.
Academic level of difficulty					
Male	96	2.93	.976	.698	.404
Female	229	3.07	1.084		
Level of care for your general needs					
Male	96	3.06	1.103	3.862	.050**
Female	230	3.10	1.220		
Housing arrangements					
Male	93	3.12	1.051	.213	.645
Female	230	3.31	1.073		
Overall level of organization/structure					
Male	96	2.75	1.086	.057	.811
Female	230	2.83	1.122		
Relevance of Semester					
Abroad Experience to	N^a	M	SD	F	Sig.
Future job opportunities					
Male	87	3.62	.967	.239	.626
Female	206	3.81	.988		
Academic program at home					
Male	87	3.46	.986	1.376	.242
Female	209	3.53	1.083		
Personal development					
Male	87	4.47	.696	1.795	.181
Female	210	4.61	.692		
Rate the quality of the academic program you did abroad					
Male	84	3.71	.964	1.029	.311
Female	194	3.89	.907		
Rate the quality of the overall experience abroad					
Male	84	4.63	.576	.300	.584
Female	197	4.65	.565		

a. Total N is not 353 because of missing values for the variable.

**Significant at the .05 level.

than students who had studied outside of the United States (F prob. = .005). Second, incoming students rated the quality of the housing arrangements in the United States significantly higher than their peers who had studied outside of the United States (F prob. = .004). And finally, incoming students rated the rele-

vance of their semester abroad experience to their academic program at home significantly higher than their peers from the United States who had left the country ($F \text{ prob.} = .17$) (see Table 5). The latter was somewhat surprising, given that incoming students had rated the quality of the academic program significantly lower at an earlier stage.

CONCLUSION

The study of international education has started to move from a purely theoretical and conceptual approach to a more analytical approach, a sign that international education has not only gained importance as a field of study but also has become an important part of many university curricula all over the world. As more and more institutions have begun to mandate an international experience in the degree programs of their students, be it in the form of a semester of studies or an industry internship, more quantitative and qualitative research is needed to improve the quality of the programs offered and to test the validity of the assumptions on which those programs are built. It is no longer sufficient for educators to say that the international study experience is invaluable and necessary in the education of our students because they think it is so. These opinions have to be backed up with hard facts, and we have to move away from mere anecdotal evidence.

There is a wealth of information that needs to be explored empirically, and this study is only at the very tip of that iceberg. It is important for the study of international education to start analyzing the perceptions of the students involved in such programs, not only to corroborate predominant ideas about the benefits and challenges of international education but also for purely practical reasons. The practitioners in the field, those who administer international programs and maintain international relationships on behalf of their universities, need to know what students think about their product offerings. They need to be aware of consumer sentiments when they market and sell these programs to future respondents and in making modifications to existing programs, and those decisions need to be based on facts.

The results of this study can be used in several ways. They can be used not only as a means to test the validity of our theoretical assumptions about international education, a means to determine whether student perceptions agree with the literature. It can also be a practical tool in the day-to-day administration of the exchange programs. Whereas the results of this study will be of particular interest to the International Office at Northern Arizona University, the results of further research and similar studies at other institutions can benefit practitioners worldwide.

Table 5 Effect of Incoming and Outgoing Status on Perceptions

Exchange Program Compared to Home	N^a	M	SD	F	Sig.
Academic level of difficulty					
In	26	2.65	1.129	.128	.721
Out	203	3.06	1.039		
Level of care for your general needs					
In	26	3.08	1.093	.491	.484
Out	304	3.08	1.191		
Housing arrangements					
In	25	3.32	.802	8.392	.004***
Out	302	3.25	1.088		
Overall level of organization/structure					
In	26	2.46	.905	1.227	.269
Out	304	2.84	1.128		
Relevance of Semester Abroad Experience to	N^a	M	SD	F	Sig.
Future job opportunities					
In	23	3.87	1.180	.304	.582
Out	273	3.74	.966		
Academic program at home					
In	23	3.57	1.343	5.748	.017**
Out	276	3.51	1.032		
Personal development					
In	24	4.67	.868	.406	.525
Out	276	4.57	.676		
Rate the quality of the academic program you did abroad					
In	23	3.39	1.196	8.059	.005***
Out	258	3.88	.888		
Rate the quality of the overall experience abroad					
In	23	4.74	.449	2.802	.095
Out	261	4.64	.575		

a. Total N is not 353 because of missing values for the variable.

Significant at the .05 level. * Significant at the .01 level.

This study found that students generally corroborate what the literature on the topic has identified as being the most important benefits of international education. They felt that an international education first and foremost benefited them personally and that it helped them in becoming more mature and worldly adults, compassionate in the face of cultural difference, and able to live and work in environments that are dissimilar to what they are used to at home. As might have been expected, their interest in studying abroad was piqued more by the location of their host institution and by the ability to travel and see something of the world than by academics.

Incoming students placed a little more emphasis on the academic aspects of an international education than outgoing students, it seemed, and they were more critical of their exchange institution in that regard. Yet, at the same time they were significantly more impressed with the structure and housing arrangements at their U.S. exchange university, as compared to what they experienced at their home institutions.

When asked what they saw as the greatest benefits of studying abroad, by far the most common comments were that it had brought them a greater understanding of other cultures, that it had helped them appreciate their own culture more, that it enabled them to learn more about themselves, and that it had enriched them personally. The words and ideas that came up most often in the many challenges that were described were sentiments like “adapting,” “adjusting,” “being away from home,” “breaking stereotypes,” “culture shock,” “language barrier,” “managing,” “staying patient,” and “trying to assimilate.” Yet, even though these were seen as challenges, they are, in many ways, not negatives at all and valuable to the development of the student, both personally and academically.

In terms of what advice they would give to students considering going abroad, the most common answers were along the lines of “Do it!”; “You’ll regret it if you don’t!”; “Experience as much as possible”; and “Keep an open mind.” What better endorsement for international education than that? We are doing the right thing in enabling students to live, work, and study in other cultures and societies and in helping them understand what water and wine are really for, and our students agree with us wholeheartedly.

- It was available as a partner of my home institution
 I could not go anywhere else
 It was a cheap alternative
 Other (please specify)
3. How would you assess the academic level of difficulty of the exchange program you participate(d) in, as compared to that of your home institution?
- | | | | | |
|-------------|--------|------|----------------|---------------------|
| Much Easier | Easier | Same | More Difficult | Much More Difficult |
|-------------|--------|------|----------------|---------------------|
4. How would you assess the level of care for your general needs as a student (academic advising, housing, availability of staff, for instance) at your exchange institution as compared to your home institution?
- | | | | | |
|-----------|------|------|--------|-------------|
| Much Less | Less | Same | Better | Much Better |
|-----------|------|------|--------|-------------|
5. How would you assess the housing arrangements at your exchange institution as compared to those at your home institution?
- | | | | | |
|------------|-------|------|--------|-------------|
| Much Worse | Worse | Same | Better | Much Better |
|------------|-------|------|--------|-------------|
6. How would you assess the overall level of organization and structure at your exchange institution, as compared to that at your home institution?
- | | | | | |
|------------|-------|------|--------|-------------|
| Much Worse | Worse | Same | Better | Much Better |
|------------|-------|------|--------|-------------|
7. In general, what do/did you like best about your exchange institution?
8. In general, what do/did you like least about your exchange institution?
9. What was the main difference between studying at your home institution and studying at your exchange institution?
10. How would you assess the relevance of your semester abroad to your future job opportunities?
- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Completely Irrelevant | Irrelevant | Relevant | Very Relevant | Extremely Relevant |
|-----------------------|------------|----------|---------------|--------------------|
11. How would you assess the relevance of your semester abroad to your academic program at your home institution?
- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Completely Irrelevant | Irrelevant | Relevant | Very Relevant | Extremely Relevant |
|-----------------------|------------|----------|---------------|--------------------|
12. How would you assess the relevance of your semester abroad to your personal development?
- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Completely Irrelevant | Irrelevant | Relevant | Very Relevant | Extremely Relevant |
|-----------------------|------------|----------|---------------|--------------------|
13. If it were possible, would you study abroad again at the same institution?
- | | | |
|-----|----|------|
| Yes | No | Why? |
|-----|----|------|
14. If it were possible, would you study abroad again at another institution?
- | | | |
|-----|----|------|
| Yes | No | Why? |
|-----|----|------|
15. How would you rate the overall quality of the academic program you did abroad?
- | | | | | |
|-----------|------|---------|------|-------------|
| Very Poor | Poor | Neutral | Good | Outstanding |
|-----------|------|---------|------|-------------|

16. How would you rate the quality of the overall experience abroad?
- Very Poor Poor Neutral Good Outstanding
17. What do/did you consider to be the greatest benefit of studying abroad?
18. What do/did you consider to be the greatest challenge of studying abroad?
19. What advice would you give to students who are considering studying abroad?

Thank You!

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