

# Study Abroad Perspectives on Institutional Operations

Christie Boronico, University of New Haven  
Jess Boronico, New York Institute of Technology

## Abstract

*The twenty-first century has brought about an increased emphasis on the contributions in higher education by way of study abroad programs. This paper introduces components of these contributions as they apply within the context of the University of New Haven (UNH). As a private institution of higher education, UNH faces challenges not unlike its peer institutions concerning innovative and value-adding curricular and co-curricular initiatives that impact on issues related to revenue generation and cash-flow, capacity planning and resident hall availability, and overall academic high quality. These issues are discussed within the framework of study abroad programs and their benefits.*

## 1. Introduction:

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Universities have explored supplementing their academic programs with study abroad experiences. Early programs required multilingual expertise and were primarily seen as an option for the cultural immersion of foreign language students until the later part of the century when business schools began to internationalize their programs through recruitment of international students and exchange programs abroad (Hoffa, 2000). Since that time, Study Abroad has been growing as institutions recognize the importance of international education in today's global society. Specifically, the Institute of International Education reported a recent annual growth rate of eight (8) percent in American students studying abroad, with a total of 241,791 (a 150% increase) participants over the past ten years (Bhandari and Chow, 2009).

As evidenced by the aforementioned data, Study Abroad is fast becoming a critical component in higher education in America, with recognition that the experience results in intellectual, global/cultural, and personal growth for its participants (McKeown, 2009). A recent study of individuals having studied abroad between 1950 and 1999, conducted by the International Education of Students (IES), clearly demonstrated that the study abroad experience is reflected upon as a life changing experience and continues to impact on personal and cultural development following the experience. In fact, The United States Senate is currently considering a bill passed in June 2009 by the House of Representatives, and supported by many (e.g. Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities) which "aims to make study abroad in high-quality programs in diverse locations around the world the routine, rather than the exception, for American college students" (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, 2005). The bill's goals include helping 1 million undergraduates study abroad annually within 10 years, expanding study abroad opportunities for underrepresented students while simultaneously increasing the number of students that study abroad in non-traditional destinations. Moreover, a recent article in the Chicago Tribune (Ivey, 2005) suggests that "Giving more American college students an international education is key to addressing the United States' increasing security and diplomacy challenges in the Middle East and economic challenges from China and India."

The May 2009 Open Doors Report (Institute of International Education, 2009) found that eighty-three (83) percent of institutions surveyed indicated that they were actively trying to send a greater number of students abroad, although only forty (40) percent had actually set targets for increasing study abroad enrollment. The study also found that the greatest areas predicted for growth were, in rank order, short term programs sponsored by the home university/semester programs abroad, and short term programs offered by third party providers, and full year programs. Anticipated growth rates for these three stylized programs are 53.7, 34.7, and 6 percent, respectively. In

addition, recent studies from AY07-08 suggest that the four countries US students chose to study in most were the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and France. Overall, sixty-one (61) percent of US students studying abroad went to Europe. In that same academic year, the number of students that chose to study abroad in China increased by nineteen (19) percent. As noted earlier, the total number of US students studying abroad during AY07-08 was approximately 250,000, validated as an increase of over 8% from the previous academic year (Institute of International Education: Open Doors, 2009a). In light of these trends, UNH developed their strategic plan to include a strategic initiative to strengthen experiential education including Study Abroad programs. Specific targets were set related to office development, program development and student participation.

UNH has also implemented a broad promotional, orientation and training program that has resulted in successful multiple summer-session faculty-led Study-Abroad opportunities across disciplines, which is somewhat contrary to findings of the Institute of International Education (IIE) White paper on Expanding Capacity and Diversity in Study Abroad, Meeting America's Global Education Challenge (2009b), which indicates that forty-eight (48) percent of survey participants felt that there was not enough interest on the part of faculty in integrating study abroad into their program. Although three years ago only one UNH faculty member led a study abroad program (summer 2006), through the College of Business, with eight UNH students studying in Eastern Asia, more recently there were fifteen proposals for faculty led study abroad trips submitted for the summer of 2009, including nine successful launches involving eighty four students. Currently there are twenty-four faculty led Study Abroad proposals for the summer of 2010. Hence our findings suggest that both UNH faculty and their students are willing to participate in summer Study Abroad options, which in turn contributes to a positive impact on summer enrollment and affordability, reduced length of stay to degree completion, increased recruitment, and consistent housing capacity. These are discussed in subsequent sections.

While IIE research, Meeting America's Global Education Challenge (2009), found that 89% of Study Abroad advisors felt that the greatest challenge to student participation in Study Abroad was the rising cost to participate, a new statutory provision presented by the Department of Education that would allow second Pell Grants to students in a single award year (also known as year-round Pell), as reported by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administration (NASFAA) *News from NAFSA Posted 10/13/09*, may provide needed financial support for student participation in summer faculty led study abroad experiences provided that institutions can demonstrate accelerated student progress toward their degree (HEOA, 2009). These may facilitate and expand opportunities for students to actively participate in these programs.

The manuscript proceeds as follows. Sections 2, 3, and 4 discuss three aforementioned potential value-adding propositions: impact on enrollment, capacity management, and academic quality. Section 5 is by way of conclusions and implications to management.

## **2. Potential Impacts on Enrollment and Market Appeal:**

In 2006 UNH began exploring a Freshman Abroad program with the goal of increasing student opportunities to study abroad and improving the academic performance of the incoming class. Anticipated secondary benefits included increased retention rates and early decision rates with positive impacts on enrollment, as well as relief on capacity required to house new students. A committee composed of the Dean of students, Admissions staff, Faculty and the Study Abroad office was formed.

Anticipated benefits, UNH perspectives, and freshman initiatives were informed by the IIE Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, which reported that only 3.1 % of students studying abroad in AY04-05 were freshmen. Consultation followed with the Center for International Study (CIS: <http://www.studyabroad-cis.com/>), who had recently coordinated a freshman student program with Plymouth State University, providing a best practice framework for UNH to follow. Additional benchmarking and best practices came by way of UNH leadership who had previously worked with Arcadia University, who had also had successfully launched a freshman Study Abroad program. Platforms were developed to include information sessions with faculty at large to discuss the academic merits of study abroad and address the concerns and challenges of sending freshman abroad. These strategies were designed to address Inside Higher Education (Redden, 2007) reports that nationally only a handful of institutions offered an option of freshman abroad, with small numbers of students reported as participating.

To meet these challenges, UNH conducted feasibility studies which resulted in a finding that the UNH student is willing to include a Study Abroad experience in their academic program, with fifty-eight (58) percent of the 2007 incoming freshman class indicating that they intended to study abroad. This was in contrast to less than ten (10) percent of the graduating class actually studying abroad. This disparity suggests that Study Abroad options may impact positively on the attractiveness of UNH as a first-choice option for incoming students. Hence UNH intends to provide this opportunity to students by moving toward international tracks (in each major) that help students and their parents understand how and when study abroad (not only limited to the freshman study abroad program) may be integrated into the academic program, with the intent of utilizing “globally minded” faculty to select required coursework that is most appropriate to teaching and learning abroad. Additionally, UNH is now considering expanding its options to a three year degree program that clearly defines study abroad options available by major in the summer sessions (Anticipated impacts of this structure are discussed in the following section).

The University of New Haven implemented its Freshman Abroad program in the fall of 2007, admitting twenty students to begin their first year in college abroad with a London partner. Additionally there were 68 students on the wait list for this experience. The fall of 2009 Freshman Abroad program had 50 students participating in study abroad experiences their first semester in Italy and London, with over 200 potential students on the waiting list for this program. UNH is currently offering seats for it’s freshman abroad program to entice early decision and has filled the available seats abroad a year in advance of the 2010 freshman class arriving on campus. While retention rates are just below that of the on campus students, we hope to see increases with retention of this population through altering admissions criteria. To date UNH is pleased with the outcomes of the Study Abroad on enrollment and participation and encourages other schools to consider these options.

**3. Potential Impacts on Capacity Management:**

The University has recently committed and directed significant capital investment towards the development of additional residence halls. This is in response to ongoing enrollment gains that include increasing rates of student applicants from states outside of Connecticut. As physical space is limited, the University is now considering how it might utilize accelerated academic programs, including study abroad programs with decreased time to completion for degree attainment, to increase effective capacity. One vehicle that has been introduced as a contributor to this objective is a three-year study-abroad “international program track” (IPT) for select academic majors.

Under this track, four-year students (including resident hall and commuter students) may enroll, prior to freshman year, in the IPT that includes two study-abroad experiences during each of the first two summers enrolled in the University. When coupled with appropriate intersession courses, the degree map has an expected completion date of three years. The benefit to capacity planning derives from the expanded ability for the University to house additional resident hall students for each incoming freshman class during the fall and spring semesters due to the credit hour enrollments during the off-peak seasons (summer and intersession), the former of which are spent studying in two alternative global cultures. Intersession courses are run at the University during off-peak season where resident hall capacity is not binding. A fundamental analysis demonstrates the baseline impact of the IPT innovation:

Let  $X$  = resident hall capacity;

Let  $Y$  = amount of resident hall capacity allocated to each freshman class under IPT; and

Let  $k \in [0,1]$  represent the percentage of incoming freshman that enroll into IPT.

A few simplifying assumptions are made for the purpose of clarity:

1. The University chooses to allocate resident hall capacity uniformly between all classes of students. That is,  $X/4$  beds are typically allocated to freshman each year;
2. Overall demand for resident halls exceeds capacity;
3. The expected completion time for degree completion is four and three years under normal circumstances and the IPT scenarios, respectively;
4.  $k$  is fixed and does not vary over time.

Relaxation of these assumptions is not considered here but left as an implication to future research.

Under IPT the number of resident hall seniors decreases from  $X/4$  to  $(1-k)Y$ . This is due to  $kY$  ITP students completing their degree within three years. When considered together with the freshman, sophomore, and junior resident hall capacity allocated to these classes, totaling  $3Y$ , the overall total demand for resident hall occupancy during the fall or spring semesters, at any time in steady-state, equals  $Y(4-k)$ . Equating this to the total capacity of the resident halls ( $X$ ), the number of incoming freshman that can be allocated to the resident halls ( $Y$ ) under IPT obtains:

$$Y = \frac{4}{4-k} > \frac{X}{4} \quad \forall k > 0 \tag{1}$$

Hence any non-zero enrollment into IPT increases the number of freshman, annually, that can be placed into the fixed resident hall capacity. The percentage increase in the number of freshman that can be accommodated by way of IPT is easily calculated and equals:

$$\text{Percentage Increase} = \frac{4}{4-k} - 1 \tag{2}$$

It is observed that the increase is zero when  $k=0$ , and that the maximum impact on capacity obtains at  $k=1$  and equals thirty-three (33) percent. The convexity (easily verified) of the impact curve (capacity increase versus enrollment percentage into IPT) supports increasing incremental benefits to capacity as  $k$  increases. Hence incremental increases in enrollment into IPT results in an added capacity benefit, at an increasing rate, for the fixed-capacity resident halls. The impact curve is presented below, in Figure 1:

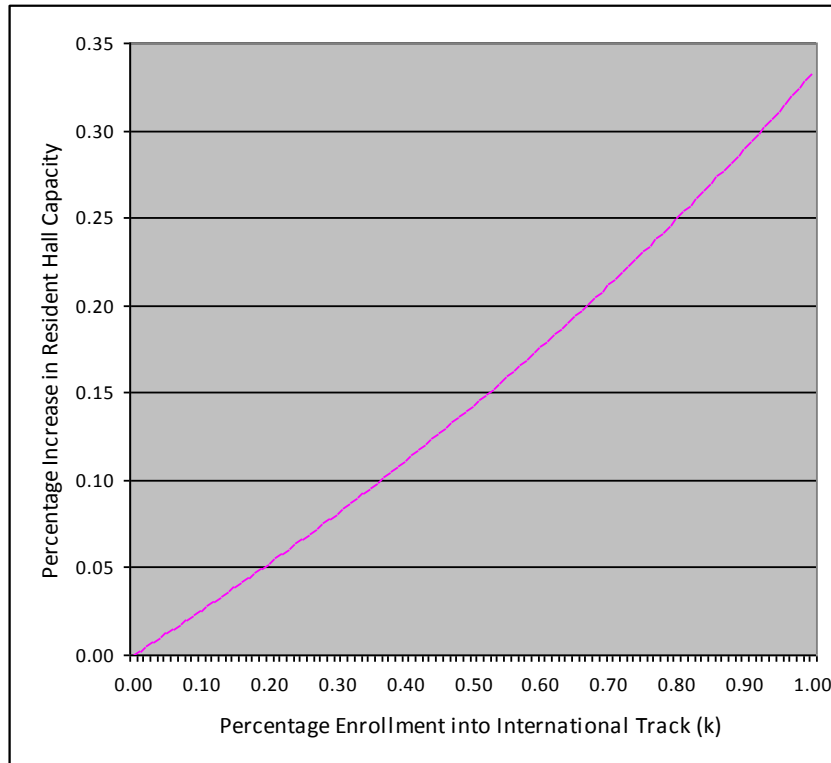


Figure 1: Impact of Enrollment into International Track on resident Hall Capacity

A more detailed analysis of the derived formulas (1) and (2) are provided in Appendix A.

The results of this preliminary analysis demonstrate that IPT provides the University with an opportunity to increase opportunities for residence hall placement under fixed capacity constraints, which is a University objective. As a simple numerical example of this impact, if the resident hall capacity is 2000 students, and if  $k=.25$  (twenty-five percent of student enroll into IPT), the University is able to increase expected freshman placement into the resident halls from 500 to 534 (Equation 1), representing an increase of seven (7) percent (Equation 2).

Additional studies concerning study abroad elasticity of demand, impacts on revenue management, tuition models for study abroad, and other pricing and related factors are beyond the scope of this manuscript and are left as extensions to the basic research presented here. One final note is that IPT maintains operation of the resident hall at full capacity during peak seasons (fall and spring) but also adds incremental resident hall revenue by way of intersession courses offered to the IPT students as a part of the degree map.

#### **4. Potential Impacts on Academic Quality:**

The IIE Open Doors report demonstrates that short term study abroad has grown rapidly in recent years (55.4 percent of Americans studying in other countries are for experiences of eight weeks or less). Many professionals, concerned about the academic quality of these short term experiences, have looked for guidance on establishing standards of practice related to quality. This guidance is informed by standards released by the Forum on Education Abroad, an organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission, outlining and defining nine standards of practice to be addressed when creating quality short term study abroad experiences (Forum on Education Abroad, 2008-2009). Additional studies cite results of increased academic quality by way of study abroad, including these programs' positive impact on student sensitivity of and towards other cultures (Altbach and Teichler, 2001)

The UNH short term faculty led study abroad experiences being developed meet the strategic plan's initiative to "Prepare students to be successful in the challenges of our global economy and society by providing them with a multitude of curricular and co-curricular international opportunities, experiences and learning" (Initiative 2, page 31), which identifies an increase in student participation as a scorecard indicator of student success.

In addition to potential impacts on enrollment and market appeal, and capacity management, Study Abroad impacts on the academic content of courses experienced abroad on student cross cultural skills and global understandings. This is by way of encouraging American students to view the world from different perspectives resulting in higher levels of international and cross cultural interest compared to students who do not participate in study abroad programs (Carlson & Wideman, 1988).

Additional secondary academic impacts come by way of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, Employer Attitudes toward Study Abroad (Trooboff, VandeBerg and Rayman, 2006) who researched the extent to which Study Abroad increases prospects for employability following graduation across over one dozen criteria. Findings indicated that employers did value Study Abroad when hiring recent college and university graduates and this value was increased if the experience supported language acquisition. What is striking about the ratings are that those factors that had the greatest impact on employability were skills drawn from the intercultural/global criteria (three of the four highest ranked). These rankings offer convincing evidence that employers do value the sorts of intercultural/global competence skills that study abroad professionals typically associate with student learning abroad.

Finally, an employer attitude study conducted by the aforementioned authors also showed that employers placed the highest value on student academic major when hiring. This is addressed in the UNH philosophy of Study Abroad through its academic tracks where the study abroad experience includes coursework in the major field of study hence linking the globalization with the major. For example, Criminal Justice students study History of the mafia in Italy or comparative justice in London and Prison systems of Russia; Music Sound Recording students study the History of the Beatles in London; College of Business students study International Business practices of

China. Moreover, the proposed three year degree international track degree programs specifically address the strategic plan initiatives to “provide support for the integration of international and multicultural perspectives throughout the curriculum and institution”; as well as “Increasing faculty and student participation in, and opportunities for national and international exchanges.” In this way UNH considers academic quality when designing its Study Abroad programs.

## **5. Conclusions:**

The University of New Haven strives to be a leader in experiential education which includes study abroad opportunities for its students. Providing a clear guide to prospective students on how they can achieve these experiences through a pre-determined course of study will impact on success in sustainable student and faculty participation into study abroad as a learning experience. Additional trends include the challenge to globalize curriculum, ensuring that graduates are ready to contribute to strengthening the economy in a global environment. The University of New Haven is embracing this challenge with innovative programs in Freshman Abroad, short-term faculty led study abroad opportunities, and international tracks that directly contribute to a students understanding of global issues in their major field of study.

This manuscript has provided some preliminary positive impacts strengthened by Study Abroad: Enrollment linked to the cultural experience and the three year degree programs with international tracks; the capacity management and resource allocation issues faced by numerous institutions with fixed capacity, and faculty led short term study abroad programs that directly contribute to major learning objectives. However, there exist implications for future research, including study abroad experiences that are increasingly affordable for students and higher education through three year degree options, innovations in incorporating global experiences that directly impact on learning objectives of major subject areas, the metric-based impact of short term study abroad experiences on student employability, and personal and academic outcomes of participation in short term study abroad.

In summary, The University of New Haven prides itself on being a leader in experiential education. The UNH Center for Experiential Education, established for the purpose of integrating experiential education into the UNH degree programs, has strengthened Study Abroad as one of the four areas within UNH’s definition of experiential education, along with Faculty Mentored Undergraduate Research, Academic Service-Learning, and Work Integrated Learning. New students look for opportunities to experience the world, faculty look for innovative ways to globalize the curriculum and employers look for new graduates to help them stay competitive in a shrinking global market. In that spirit UNH is attempting to be a leader in furthering the efforts of higher education to meet the expectations of constituents they serve through Study Abroad experiences in an increasingly global learning environment.

FRESHMAN  
COHORT 1  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 2  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 3  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 4  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 5  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 6

Year 1					Year 2					Year 3					Year 4					Year 5								
Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2				
X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4											
					X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4				X/4		X/4					
									X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4		
														X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4		
																			X/4		X/4			X/4		X/4		

CAPACITY IS X BEDS; TOTAL CAPACITY USED =

X 0 X 0 0 X 0 X 0 0

FRESHMAN  
COHORT 1  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 2  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 3  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 4  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 5  
FRESHMAN  
COHORT 6

Year 1					Year 2					Year 3					Year 4					Year 5								
Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Interse sion	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2				
Y	kY	Y	kY	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY	kY	Y		Y			(1- k)Y		(1- k)Y											
					Y	kY	Y	kY	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY	kY	Y		Y				(1- k)Y		(1- k)Y					
									Y	kY	Y	kY	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY	Y		Y			
														Y	kY	Y	kY	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY
																			Y	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY	Y	kY

(4- 2kY (4- 2kY 2kY (4- 2kY (4- 2kY 2kY

k)Y                      k)Y                      k)Y                      k)Y

LET X=108 beds; let k=.4; Solving for Y yields  $Y=108/(4-.4)=108/3.6=30$ . Note if k=0, annual enrollment cap would be  $108/4=27$ ; actual enrollment increase percent of  $3/27=.11$  or 11%.

	Year 1					Year 2					Year 3					Year 4					Year 5									
	Fall	Intersession	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Intersession	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Intersession	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Intersession	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2	Fall	Intersession	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2					
FRESHMAN COHORT 1	30	12	30	12	12	30	12	30	12	12	30		25			18		18												
FRESHMAN COHORT 2						30	12	30	12	12	30	12	30	12	12	30		30			18		18							
FRESHMAN COHORT 3											30	12	30	12	12	30	12	30	12	12	30		30							
FRESHMAN COHORT 4																30	12	30	12	12	30	12	30	12	12					
FRESHMAN COHORT 5																					30	12	30	12	12					
FRESHMAN COHORT 6																														
APPENDIX	A:                      DETAIL					SUPPORTING					EQUATIONS					108	24	108	24	24	AND					108	24	108	24	24
																(1)					(2)									

**References**

1. Bhandari R. and Chow P. (2009) Open Doors 2009: Report on International Educational Exchange (New York: Institute of International Education)
2. Carlson, J. S. & Wideman, K. F. (1988) "The effects of study abroad during college on attitudes towards other cultures," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 12(1), 1- 18.
3. Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (2005) Global Competence and National Needs, One Million Americans Studying Abroad.  
<http://durbin.senate.gov/showRelease.cfm?releaseId=313050>
4. Forum on Education Abroad (2009/2009) Standards of Good Practice For Short-Term Education Abroad Programs;, Pennsylvania: Dickinson College. [www.forumea.org](http://www.forumea.org)
5. HEOA: Year Round Pell Grant, section 401(b)(5)(A) Effective date: July 1, 2009, pp. 103-104.
6. Hoffa, W. W. (2000) A History of US Study Abroad: Beginnings to 1965 (A special publication of *Frontiers: the Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* and The Forum on Education Abroad), *Journal of Study Abroad*.
7. Institute of International Education Open Doors (2009): <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/page/150808/>
8. Institute of International Education Network (2009a): Open Doors, *Online Fast Facts*.  
[http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/file\\_depot/0-10000000/0-10000/3390/folder/78747/Fast+Facts+2009.pdf](http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/file_depot/0-10000000/0-10000/3390/folder/78747/Fast+Facts+2009.pdf)
9. Institute of International Education (2009b) Meeting America's Global Study Abroad White Paper Series: Education Challenge, Issue 6 (May)
10. Ivey, S. (2005) "Report: Study abroad will help address security, diplomacy issues," Chicago Tribune ( November 13).
11. McKeown, J. S (2009) The First Time Effect: The Impact of Study Abroad on College Student Intellectual Development, (New York: State University of New York Press).
12. Redden, E. (2007) "Freshman Year Abroad," *Inside Higher Education*, (October 23).
13. Redden, E. (2009) "Standards for short Term Study Abroad," *Inside Higher Education*, (January 30).
14. Altbach, P. G., and Teichler, U. (2001) "Internationalization and exchanges in a globalized University," *Journal of Studies in International Education*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 5-25.  
<http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/5/1/5>
15. Trooboff, S., VandeBerg, M. and Rayman, J. (2006) *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* Employer Attitudes toward Study Abroad.