DEVELOPING A STUDY ABROAD STUDENT ORGANIZATION

A CREATIVE PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

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MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY 2010
This study encompassed a comprehensive overview of the context and significance of a study abroad peer mentor organization. The evidence suggests peer mentoring can play an important role as a student progresses towards a college degree. The peer mentor organization featured in this paper will allow past study abroad participants to share their experiences with prospective study abroad participants. This would provide students with the opportunity to reflect and make meaning of their experience abroad. The creative project can be utilized and adapted by study abroad coordinators who would like to implement this type of initiative in their office.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE PROJECT

This creative project was designed for the Study Abroad Office at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. However, the project will serve as a tool for study abroad coordinators at any institution who are looking for ways to engage students who have studied abroad with the marketing of programs to students who are interested in studying abroad. This project will also be able to be modified to meet the needs of an institution that would like to create this type of a program. The creative project encompassed the foundations for establishing a mentor organization along with additional items that can be used by the student mentors. The project will feature a possible constitution for officers which will include by-laws, a proposal to submit to the student government association for funding approval, programmatic suggestions for the mentors to use in the promotion of study abroad programs, and items which can be used by the organization.

The purpose of this project is to provide students who have studied abroad with the opportunity to share their experiences with other students who are interested in going abroad. This program will indirectly result in the promotion of the study abroad office because the students will be to share their experiences abroad along with the benefits of going abroad. Most importantly, the project will allow the students to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. At the request of the study abroad coordinator at West Chester University, the project will also provide students with resources that will allow
students to be able to market themselves and their study abroad experience in job search materials. To ensure students are able to market their experience, it is recommended the Office of Study Abroad partners with the Career Center at West Chester University to develop a workshop for students who have studied abroad. This workshop will cover how to market and make meaning of a study abroad experience during an interview with potential employers.

The creative project has significant meaning because research shows there are many benefits of peer mentor programs. This paper contains a literature review of the definitions of peer mentoring, collaborative learning, and relational knowing. The review also examines what the research has found as necessary characteristics of successful peer mentor programs and how students learn from becoming a mentor. The research supports the hypothesis that both the mentor and mentee benefit from a peer mentor relationship. The second portion of the literature review is related to the re-entry of students who have studied abroad. The research indicates students often feel “reverse culture shock” upon re-entering their home institution and communities. The research shows students are able to gain meaning of their experience when given the opportunity to share their experiences with others. The project will be beneficial for students who have studied abroad and the prospective study abroad students.

The limitations to this project include the project creator’s geographic distance to the study abroad office for which this project is being developed. The study abroad coordinator expressed interest and has provided the project creator with additional information necessary for the completion of the project. The project creator participated in a study abroad program recognized by West Chester University in January of 2007.
which may cause limitations in the creation of this project because policies and
procedures have changed. To prevent these limitations from impeding on the success of
this project, the study abroad coordinator at West Chester University has been included in
the creation of this project.

This creative project is organized utilizing chapters with subheadings. The first
chapter focuses on the introduction to the entire creative project. Chapter one includes
the purpose statement, significance of the study, and limitations to the study. Chapter two
contains a review of current literature which supports the need of the creative project.
The review highlights the effectiveness of mentoring, theory related to mentoring, the
importance of re-entry programs for students who have studied abroad, and ways to
engage students as mentors for students who would like to study abroad. The conclusion
of chapter two combines the importance of re-entry programs with peer mentoring which
illustrates the need for the creative project. Chapter three contains the creative project
which includes a possible constitution with by-laws for the officers of the organization to
use, a proposal to submit to the student government association so the organization could
receive funding and become a recognized student organization, programmatic
suggestions for the organization and the study abroad office, and a hand-out of ways
students can market themselves during a job search after completing a semester abroad.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Research conducted by scholars contributed to findings that students who have studied abroad may benefit by participating in a peer mentor organization. Likewise, the research surrounding the benefits of peer mentoring supported the notion that prospective study abroad students may benefit from the connections and relationships they will build with their peer mentor. The research strongly supported college-aged students benefitted greatly when they were mentored by an individual who was about their same age, someone who understood what they may be feeling, and someone who could be looked up to as a role model. The findings have proven a mentor was able to gain life experiences from the partnership because he or she learned by teaching their mentee. It was important for colleges and universities to provide peer mentoring programs to their students to allow students to become engaged. When students are engaged and invested in their institution they will most likely be retained by the college or university.

In a study abroad office, a study abroad coordinator has the ability facilitate the connections between past study abroad participants and prospective students inquiring about a study abroad experience. The past study abroad participant would serve as a mentor and the prospective student would serve as the mentee. There was limited information regarding peer mentor programs designed specifically for a study abroad office, however, the project creator drew solid conclusions based on the research
available. The project creator was unable to find a specific study which contained quantitative evidence which suggested students who participated in a study abroad peer mentor program were more likely to study abroad, but the project creator was able to gain valuable information from individuals in the field who have successfully facilitated a similar program within their study abroad office. The individuals provided the project creator with insight on the benefits, challenges, and successes of a peer mentor program within a study abroad office.

This literature review covered sources from 1962-2009. The more recent publications highlighted the importance and benefits of peer learning. The older sources focused on the necessity to provide students with the opportunity to attend re-entry workshops upon returning from their study abroad experience. The majority of the sources used in this literature review were found on EBSCOHost. Combinations of the following key words were searched: study abroad, students, higher education, peer, mentor, learning, challenges, leadership, mentoring, re-entry, culture, shock, and reflection. The combined searches yielded over fifty possible articles and 18 sources were used in this review. The Google search engine was also utilized and several scholarly articles were cited. Additional information was gathered through informal conversations with current international educators and their ideas were cited in this review. All of the literature reviewed provided the project creator with insight on the development of this project.

**Overview of the topic**

Terrion and Leonard (2007) noted mentors are utilized in higher education to improve student retention, academic achievement, and to enhance the educational
experience of the mentor and the mentee. To provide students with outside of the classroom learning opportunities, service offices on campuses have designed programs which provide students with the opportunity to participate in a structured peer mentor program. Kram (1983) determined peer mentoring allowed qualified individuals to provide support and guidance for individuals seeking support as they navigated through their collegiate education. It is important the mentor had a clear understanding of their relationship with the mentee to provide the most use information and to build the most impactful relationship. Young, Alvermann, Kaste, Henderson, and Many (2004) found friendship played an integral part within the evolution of a mentoring relationship. The amount of time a mentor was willing to contribute to their relationship played a role in the effectiveness a mentoring relationship. Tindal (1995) found it was imperative the mentor recognized the amount of time and resources he or she must contribute to develop a mentor-mentee relationship. The research suggested mentors who were properly trained and directed by a supervisor would develop the skills needed to effectively provide the support and service their mentee desired.

Peer mentoring in a collegiate setting was based on the model that the person with more experience served as the mentor and the less experienced person sought support from the mentor. Kram and Isabella (1985) found the mentor served a task-related or a career related function. Terrion and Leonard (2007) noted mentor programs could be utilized by university officials to improve retention rates and mentoring programs could work to provide students with career related experience. In the collegiate setting it was important the mentor had some university experience to draw upon to best suit the mentee. It was also important the mentor had the time they needed to commit to the
relationship, had mutual experiences and desires, and possessed some amount of self-motivation.

The work of prominent student development theorists was reviewed. Baxter-Magolda (1992), Chickering (1969), Perry (1968), and Kohlberg (1972) believed students developed and changed throughout their years. Their research stated all students developed in a collegiate environment. Baxter-Mogalda (1992) found students intellectually developed by participating in structured academic and co-curricular initiatives. Chickering (1969) examined identity development which occurred as individuals achieved identity through experience. He concluded development as a life-long process which included a culmination of events throughout one’s life. Perry (1968) stated college students experienced cognitive development as they faced real-life challenges without clear, simple solutions. He believed their development could be halted or reversed if the cognitive challenges the student was presented with were too great. Kohlberg (1972) developed stages of moral development, which he believed occurred when individuals were faced with challenges surrounding obedience, punishment, social order, and morality. McKeown (2009) defined study abroad as an academic experience an individual chose to participate in during their college career. Study abroad programs vary in length from one week to one full year of academic study and occurred when the student physically left the United States to pursue college study and to gain cultural understanding in a different country. A study abroad experience has the potential to challenge students in multiple ways.

Swinger (1985) said individuals who studied abroad gained political awareness, intercultural understanding, and developed recognition of worldwide homogenization.
However, McKeown (2009) stated it was difficult to pinpoint the direct impact a study abroad experience had on an individual student’s cognitive development. McKeown referred to a notion developed by Carlson, Burn, Useem, and Yachimowicz (1990) that a student who completed a study abroad experience had a greater ability to understand complexities which was a sign of intellectual growth and development. It was noted the structure of the program, location, and the support services provided in the country abroad played a role in the overall quality of a study abroad experience. All of the variables mentioned have the potential to impact the level of intellectual development a student may gain by participating in a study abroad experience.

With it being known that a study abroad experience has the ability to engage students in a cultural exchange during their years of college, many universities are encouraged their students to go abroad at some point during their college career. Martin and Rohrlich (1991) examined the relationship between study abroad expectations and student characteristics. They found students who were interested in studying abroad often recognized challenges they faced when they arrived in a new country. They found the students involved in their study had realistic expectations and had carefully weighed their goals before participating in a study abroad excursion. However, the authors noted some students had unrealistic expectations of the experiences they will have when they study abroad.

Theory in relation to mentoring and studying abroad

Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, and Minark (1993) explored relational knowing and discovered knowledge was acquired through relationships and it was influenced by social contexts. Young et al. (2004) found relational knowing allowed mentors and mentees to
listen and learn from one another. They concluded relational knowing proved the importance of a shared knowledge and understanding of each other’s beliefs and life experiences. Kram (1983) defined mentoring in the workplace as the relationship between two people where the mentor embarked on a journey to teach the junior employee about his or her new job. It was evident there was a difference between a mentor-mentee relationship and the supervisor-subordinate relationship. Topping (2005) a more traditional approach and defined the mentor-mentee relationship in an academic setting. He defined mentoring as an as a relationship with encouragement and support. The mentor was someone who was more experienced in the content area being explored. Topping claimed a mentor-mentee’s relationship included role modeling, promotion of goals, encouragement, counseling, and joint decision making.

Topping’s study also examined the benefits of peer learning. His research yielded the realization that peer-to-peer helping was qualitatively different from the interactions between a teacher and a student. He developed 13 organizational dimensions of peer learning to consider, but for the nature of this review four have been highlighted. It was crucial to recognize the amount of time the individuals are willing to invest as the mentor and mentee begin to build a relationship. A great amount of time needed to be invested as they are learning and acquiring knowledge. It was imperative to recognize the place where the learning took place. The environment where the mentor and mentee decided to meet impacted the transfer of knowledge and personal experience. The third dimension recognized age-to-age relationship between the peers. Topping suggested for the best results the individuals should be within the same age range and year in school. His fourth dimension was to recognize the characteristics of both the helper and the one being
helped. This was important because the helping peer should be able to recognize the challenges the one being helped was experiencing at that point in his or her life. A peer mentor had the capability to provide the student being helped with a perspective which was different from the help of a professor, parent, and or friend.

Perry (1968) examined intellectual development within the college years and created a nine-position sequence which outlined the progression of development. Dualism was the first position which described students who saw the world as right and wrong, believed there were only good ways and bad ways of doing things, and that authorities were always right or wrong. McKeown (2009) examined how students think dualistically before studying abroad and moved into Perry’s second position of multiplicity after returning from a study abroad experience. He concluded when students are exposed to other ways of thinking they are able to intellectually mature. He found several study participants entered into Perry’s stage of relativism as they returned from a trip abroad because they grew to appreciate the multiple opinions within the diverse group of people they came into contact with while studying abroad. McKeown recognized Perry did not directly focus on study abroad participants, but more generally focused on how students viewed knowledge in general. McKeown’s work found one goal of higher education was to determine which types of experiences enabled a student to cognitively develop his or her mind. The results determined study abroad opportunities provided students with the ability to grow intellectually through experiences abroad.

Baxter Magolda (1985) was another well-known student development theorist who created a model to reflect the stages of student development. Students found in
Baxter Magolda’s earliest stage of absolute knowing believed professors had absolute knowledge and the students’ role was to obtain the knowledge. Another example would be a peer mentoring relationship when a mentee sought knowledge and was under the impression that the mentor had all answers they need about a given subject matter. In the second stage of transitional knowing, the student now knows that this is certain and uncertain truth to all knowledge. As Topping (2005) pointed out, an integral part of peer learning was the conflict and challenge brought on by the peers. In Baxter Magolda’s final stage of contextual knowing, the student became able to think through problems and was able to fully recognize that it was acceptable to recognize other’s opinions. In the area of mentoring this can only be reached when both the mentor and mentee effectively use their communication skills to get their point across. The research of Baxter Magolda (1985) was designed to track students throughout their college experience. She concluded students who were said to be in the transitional and independent knowing stages greatly benefited by participating in study abroad opportunities.

The great amount of literature available proved it was evident that peer mentoring was an effective means of educating college students. The research also suggested study abroad experiences had a direct impact on the intellectual development of college students. Given the call for globalization and the diversification of young adults, more colleges and universities began to see the need to expand their services. It was concluded that students who studied abroad re-entered their home environment and had experienced some type of change, yet there was a lack of research on what triggered the change and why it occurred.
The importance of re-entry programs

According to La Brack (1985) studies regarding re-entry to one’s home country occurred when the study participant had left their homeostatic environment for a period of time and returned to their home cultural networks. Individuals who spent time abroad sometimes experienced re-entry shock as they re-entered their collegiate setting, social groups, and families. Re-entry shock, or more commonly known as reverse culture shock, was often less severe than initial culture shock. In many cases reverse culture shock was upsetting, but was typically less expected by the individual.

In order to develop an understanding of their overall study abroad experience, Smith (1991) found students needed to become aware of the impact their re-entry will have on their communication process. Weinmann and Bragg (1993) noted that it was common for students to experience confusion and difficulty as they adjusted to life after returning from a study abroad experience. They found students struggled as they tried to make meaning of their experience and work to develop a new sense of identity which incorporated their experiences abroad. As a result, Weinmann and Bragg developed a re-entry workshop for students who have studied abroad. With the ongoing process of intercultural learning as the focus of the workshop, the two developed a curriculum which provided study abroad participants with the opportunity to share their experience with others who had similar life changing experiences. Other objectives for the re-entry curriculum included developing a way to reflect on the impact of the experience, discussing ways to articulate the study abroad experience, and ways to develop an understanding of intercultural communication.
Several professionals in the field of international education said in informal conversations that it was important to provide students with the opportunity to share their experiences abroad with the people that are important in their life. However, many agreed study abroad participants may have a difficult time articulating their experiences to their friends and loved, which can cause frustration, misunderstanding, and the feeling of alienation. The educators concluded the study abroad office should provide students with a positive environment which allowed them to share their experiences with others.

The works analyzed in this literature review proved college and university administrators must acknowledge the needs of students prior to, during, and in conclusion to a study abroad experience. The reviewed provided significant reason that students benefitted greatly from a positive, mentoring experience. It was important administrators recognized the challenges students faced upon re-entry and provided them with the opportunity to make meaning of their experience abroad. College administrators can utilize the research available surrounding the topic of peer mentoring and create opportunities for students to share their experiences with prospective study abroad participants. In general, there was a lack of research which provided clear evidence that students who participated in a peer-mentor organizations within a study abroad were more likely to study abroad or more likely to make meaning of their experience. There was a plethora of research available on the impact of peer mentor opportunities and the literature suggested colleges and universities utilized mentor programs to increase student involvement and to prevent student attrition.

With the current focus on globalization and international education, it was expected more research will be done on the benefits of studying abroad. There was also a
lack of assessment on how students cognitively developed by participating in a short, two
week program versus a semester or full year study abroad experience. Many of the
authors cited in this review felt it was difficult to assess the level of student development
because study abroad programs incorporate various components and are not easy to
compare. The authors cited also felt there was an immediate need to provide support to
their students prior to, during, and after the students returned home from a study abroad
experience.

The project creator reviewed the available literature, drew conclusions, and
developed a study abroad student organization which had a mentor component. Chapter
two demonstrates a need for a study abroad mentor organization and Chapter three will
outline the organization in great detail.
CHAPTER THREE: A STUDY ABROAD MENTOR ORGANIZATION

Baxter-Magdola’s (1992) research concluded students developed and progressed into a higher level of intellectual thinking after studying abroad. Many colleges and universities incorporated diversity and the ability to consider multiple viewpoints into their mission statements and learning objectives. University administrators recognized the need to provide their students with the opportunity to participate in study abroad experiences during their college career and in response have created study offices and offices of international education. Study abroad offices played the important role of providing the students with the opportunity to study in different environment, to learn about other cultures by living with the country’s natives, and to immerse a student into a country to become fluent in another language.

Study abroad advisors from various institutions have informally provided the project’s creator with ideas and suggestions to create a study abroad mentor organization which is beneficial to the study abroad office, past and prospective study abroad participants, and the university. This project is meant to be adapted and applied to meet the needs of any study abroad office. It is recommended a study abroad coordinator serve as the advisor to the student-led organization to provide support and guidance for the student leaders. It is recognized this program will consume the time of the advisor during the implementation phase, but over time it will be proven to be worth the time invested.
The project creator hopes this organization will allow past study abroad participants to become invested within the study abroad office. The project creator believes this organization will provide students with the opportunity to mentor and serve other members of the student body. The peer mentors will also serve as a marketing agent and will support the mission of the study abroad office. The leadership opportunities will also develop the mentor’s communication skills, confidence, and ability to develop meaningful relationships with other students.

Funding plays an integral part in the creation, development, and continuation of an on-campus organization. Some study abroad offices have the ability to fund an organization through money allocated from the study abroad office’s budget. Given the current economy, it may be difficult for a study abroad advisor to propose an office initiative that would cost a unit any amount of money. The project creator suggests study abroad advisors research the campus’s student government association’s website to find out how to establish a student organization on campus. Once the individual is able to determine the process for creating the organization, the study abroad advisor can recruit possible organizational leaders. On most college campuses the students are required to create the organization under the guidance of the advisor, but the advisor can generate the initial idea of creating a study abroad organization and contact prospective members who may be interested helping organize this student led group. It is common for a few students to reconnect with their study abroad advisor after returning from a semester abroad. The study abroad advisor can suggest the students stay involved with the office by forming a new student organization.
As stated earlier in this project, the project is specifically designed for the study abroad office at West Chester University, but it can be adapted and modified to meet the needs of any study abroad office. At West Chester University of Pennsylvania the students who are interested in forming a new organization on campus are required to meet with the Director of Student Leadership and Involvement. The director will provide the students with information regarding the policies and procedures for developing a new student organization. After the meeting the students will then fill out the request to organize form, select an advisor, and develop a constitution which must include a set of by-laws for the organization that models the master template of campus organization constitution. Refer to Appendix I for detailed information about the student recognition process. The process outlined in Appendix I may be similar at your institution. The master by-laws template is given to the students during the initial meeting with the Director of Student Leadership and Involvement. Refer to Appendix II for the constitution and bylaws for the proposed study abroad student mentor organization at West Chester University. If an institution does not require the by-laws to follow a specific template, please adapt the by-laws in Appendix II to meet the needs of any given office.

Once the constitution and by-laws are complete it must be submitted to the Student Government Association (SGA) parliamentarian for review and full consideration. The SGA parliamentarian must be provided with five copies of the by-laws, the Request for Funding form (Appendix III), the name of the organization’s representative who can be reached to answer questions concerning the organization and the by-laws, and a list of proposed club members with student ID numbers. According to
West Chester University’s Ram’s Eye View, a handbook developed by the university stated, “upon approval of the By-Law Review Committee, the by-laws will be submitted to the SGA Senate for approval or rejection. If the by-laws are approved by the Senate, they are automatically forwarded to the Vice President for Student Affairs, the president of the University, and the SSI Board of Directors. If the presence of the organization is contrary to the mission of the University or presents undue hardship and/or liability to the University and Student Services, Inc., then any of the above have the power to reject the by-laws regardless of SGA Senate action. After the by-laws are accepted, the organization is placed on probation for one calendar year. At the end of the probation period, barring any problems, the organization will be formally recognized by the SGA Senate. The organization is also responsible for filling out the WCU Student Organization Registration Form, which is kept on file in the Office of Student Leadership and Involvement. This form must be updated by May 1 of each year to maintain the student organization’s official status.”

It is important for the organization’s advisor to meet with the student leaders as they are developing the constitution and submitting it for approval. An institution may have specific responsibilities the advisor must follow while overseeing the student organization. It is important the advisor research the institutions guidelines for advising a student organization. Below is a list of the responsibilities an advisor must follow at West Chester University. This is meant to give the study abroad coordinators an idea of what possible responsibilities they may have should they decide to develop a study abroad student organization. It is the project creator’s goal that once the mentor
organization is established and a core group of leaders is selected; this organization can run smoothly under limited guidance from the study abroad advisor.

According to the electronic version of Ram’s Eye View, “the role of the faculty or staff advisor is important to the success of a campus organization. Some of the responsibilities may include, but not be limited to:

1. Familiarity with all applicable University regulations, as well as any applicable federal, state, or local laws and ordinances in order to provide advice to student members.
2. Regularly attending general organization meetings and committee meetings of the organization.
3. Helping to organize fair election of officers.
4. Assisting in the installation and training of new officers in order to provide guidance and continuity.
5. Assisting in the administration of organizational financial affairs. Special attention should be given to the monitoring of all organizational bank accounts per the SSI Financial Guidelines on expenditures.
6. Assisting in planning special programs and special events.
7. Meeting regularly with organizational officers to discuss goals and direction of the group.
8. Assisting with the recruitment and selection of new members and overseeing the process by which students become full members.
9. Being available to members wishing assistance or counsel.
10. Assisting in establishing procedures for discipline or even expelling members for just cause, if necessary.
11. Ensuring accurate registration of the organization with the Office of Student Leadership and Involvement by May 1 of each year.
12. Work with members who might be struggling academically and provide them with information concerning the academic support systems that are available.”

A student organization of this nature would not be possible without the help from past study abroad participants. The project creator recommends the advisor begins to discuss the idea of the peer mentor organization with students as they prepare to depart for their semester abroad. The study abroad advisors can market this to students as a way to share their study abroad experience with other students once they return from their semester abroad. Advisors can speak to the impact they will be able to have on the
students who are just beginning the study abroad application process or the influence they will have on the students who are merely considering a studying abroad opportunity. A study abroad advisor can also utilize their list-serves and make contact with past study abroad students who are still on campus. This type of program would be appealing to past participants because it will provide them with the opportunity to personally share their experiences about their trip abroad with another student who is about to embark on their own journey. The research included previously in the literature review concluded knowledge is acquired through relationships with others. It can be concluded prospective students will naturally build relationships with individuals who have already experienced events that may be causing anxiety for an individual who may be considering going abroad.

Once the organization has developed a foundation which consists of three to six students who have studied abroad the group can begin seeking mentoring opportunities. With little concrete research available, the project creator is basing the following suggestions regarding how to incorporate peer mentors into the study abroad organization on the successes and challenges study abroad advisors of similar student organizations have faced. The advisor will continue to meet with students who are interested in studying abroad as usual. The advisor will meet with the members of the student organization to discuss their role in mentoring prospective study abroad students. It is recommended the advisor will address appropriate ways to disseminate information from mentor to mentee.

It is recommended the advisor create a handout or a direct website link to the study abroad office’s page which contains the contact information for the members of the
organization who would like be able to be contacted by prospective group members. Appendix IV provides a sample hand-out which can be distributed to students. If a prospective study abroad student meets with the advisor and indicates he or she is interested in study abroad for one semester somewhere in France, the advisor would then share the necessary resources with the student about planning a study abroad experience and would also provide the prospective participant with the contact information for the students who are members of the organization who studied about in France. The student would then be able to contact the students on the list who have studied abroad in France to gain the students perspective on the school they attended, city they lived in, and experience he or she had. The mentor will be able to share valuable, first-hand information to the prospective student. The mentor should share additional information with the mentee to consider before the student chooses a specific study abroad location. The information coming from the past participants is realistic, valuable, and relevant because the student is providing information based on firsthand accounts, while the study abroad advisor is only able to provide the student with the information they have gathered from the brochure or website.

It may take a few semesters to build a solid foundation for the organization, but the project creator urges advisors to remain patient and enthusiastic. The students who join the organization can assist the study abroad office in the recruitment of study abroad participants. In small study abroad offices, one individual may be responsible for the advising, marketing, assessment and support for the entire office. If the advisor is willing to take on the additional responsibility of advising the mentor organization, he or she may find relief in utilizing past study abroad participants in the marketing and promotion of
the study abroad organization. With an organization with 25-30 participants the advisor would be able to recruit members to assist with classroom presentation, study abroad fairs, new student orientation, and some simple student advising. Past study abroad participants have the potential to become thriving student leaders on any campus. Literature shows their recent experience abroad increases intellectual development and some believe students return with a passion to inform others about the potential opportunities students have to study abroad. The project creator seems like it would be logical to embrace the student’s passion and provide them with the opportunity to develop public speaking and communication skills by allowing them to assist with marketing presentations.

This student organization would also serve as re-entry tool for the study abroad office. As mentioned earlier in the literature review portion of this paper, students sometimes experience reverse culture shock as they re-enter their home environment. The peer mentor organization would gather students who have experienced life abroad would bring other individuals who may have shared similar experiences while studying abroad. The students returning from abroad would be given the opportunity to share their experiences with other organization members who are interested in learning about other countries and cultures. By creating this welcoming environment for students as they return from abroad the study abroad office may be able to alleviate reverse culture shock among the students they provide services for.

An additional way this organization can serve as a tool to provide support for students who have studied abroad is to incorporate a re-entry workshop which will provide the students with information on how to leverage their study abroad experience.
The project creator gathered information utilized by the international educators who incorporate how to leverage a study abroad experience in a resume or interview with a prospective employer (Reister, Stockwell, & McDiarmid, 2009). Research has proven an increase in intellectual development and an increase in world perspectives among study abroad participants. It is recommended the study abroad office creates a partnership with the campus career center to develop a re-entry workshop for students. The student organization will allow the office to keep better records of past participants. It is believed that some of the organization members may still want to be involved upon graduation. A re-entry workshop developed by the study abroad office and the career center would allow past organization members to participate in a panel discussion within the “Marketing You” re-entry workshop. The past members would be able to share their personal experiences of how they leveraged their study abroad experience in a resume or during an interview. This would provide the workshop participants with the confidence that their study abroad experience was a worthwhile endeavor. Appendix V includes a possible handout to be provided to students who participate in the “Marketing You” re-entry workshop.

The project creator believes the organization will continue to gain membership as more students return from studying abroad. Additional programs that can be supported by this student mentor organization include in-class presentations, study abroad information nights, study abroad fairs during the fall and spring semesters, peer mentoring which will be ongoing, information tables to advertise study abroad opportunities in the student union, and possible fundraising events that could support an existent study abroad scholarship program or one that could be established by an
individual within the study abroad office. Other programs may also include the co-sponsoring of cultural events on campus with other student organizations and activities with international students studying on campus.

The project outlined items to consider when developing a study abroad organization within a study abroad office. This project can become an initiative within a study abroad office of almost any size. This type of organization has the potential to provide continued support and contact with study abroad participants after they return from a study abroad experience. It is the project creator’s goal that information found in this paper be utilized and adapted to fit the needs of any study abroad office. In the future, possible research can be done which will specifically identify whether or not a study abroad student organization actually increases the number of students who decide to participate in a study abroad experience. The field of international education continues to grow and as practitioners it is important to conduct research and assessment to analyze the effectiveness of study abroad initiatives.
REFERENCES


Appendix I: Student Organization Recognition Process at West Chester University

Student Organization Recognition Process
(Updated from Ram’s Eye View Student Handbook, page 25)

Step One:

Meet with Charlie Warner, the Director of Student Leadership & Involvement, in Sykes Student Union 238, 610-436-2117. E-mail: cwarner@wcupa.edu.

At this meeting, you will be given the (a) Green Request to Organize Form, (b) Student Government Association by-law guidelines, (c) a sample SGA by-law, and the (d) SGA Funding Request Form.

Step Two:

Fill out the Request to Organize Form fully and get a full-time faculty or staff member to sign off as the interim advisor.

Turn that form into Charlie Warner in Sykes Student Union 238.

Remember, that form gives you some privileges:

1. You may book University space to hold up to three organizational meetings in Sykes Student Union (based on availability).
2. 100 copies of one colored flyer for each of the three organizational meetings will be available if you drop off the original flyer to Charlie Warner in Sykes Student Union 238. We have a 24 hour turn-around time on flyers but, in most cases, you can get the flyers immediately.
3. Charlie Warner will also make copies of other already recognized student organization by-laws for you to use as a guide, if requested. This service is only provided to student groups that turn in their Green Request to Organize Form.

Charlie Warner will then, in turn, acknowledge receipt of that letter via mail with instructions on how to book University space, as well as, to alert Student Government Association of your existence as a forming club.

Step Three:

After group’s first meeting, begin to write your by-laws based on what you have decided as a group. Remember, we have provided you the SGA By-law Guidelines for a reason – SGA expects to see references from everything listed on that hand-out in your organization’s by-laws.
Once you have completed your by-laws, please remember you need to, in packet form, turn in the following, to the SGA Parliamentarian:

1. Six copies of your proposed by-laws
2. A membership roster of current students attending WCU and their student ID numbers. PLEASE NOTE: A group must have at least seven undergraduate students listed to be considered for recognition.
3. Funding Request Form (handed to you in your initial meeting)

Step Four:

Seal and Address your packet of information and drop it off to the SGA Parliamentarian either via:

1. the SGA mailbox, or
2. the SGA Office, 217 Sykes Student Union

Important information regarding your SGA link:
- Office hours of the Parliamentarian are posted on the front door to the SGA office (217 Sykes Student Union) or
- He/She can be reached by e-mailing or
- He/she can be reached by phone call 610-436-2956.

Step Five:

The SGA Parliamentarian will then take your packet of information to the By-Law Review Committee, which will in turn, review your material, and possibly invite a representative into their meeting to speak on behalf of the proposed student organization. After hearing about your organization, and analyzing your proposed by-laws, the By-Law Review Committee will either approve or disapprove you moving forward.

A. If the SGA By-Law Review Committee passes your proposed by-laws, you automatically are sent to the floor of the Student Government Association (SGA) for approval.

B. If the SGA By-Law Review Committee does not pass your proposed by-laws, you need to take their suggestions, implement them into a new version of the proposed by-laws, and re-submit.

C. Please note that the ultimate approval is in your hands as an organizing group. If you make those proposed changes quickly, you might be able to get right back into the “approval” process. If you take too long, you will be placed into the queue and that could mean a delay in approval.
Once approval is given by the General Assembly of the Student Government Association, you are considered a recognized student organization on a one year probation.

*NOTE: You do have the opportunity to submit a proposed funding budget to be accessed following a successful conclusion of your organization’s probationary year. (If requested)*

*Updated: January 22, 2010*
Appendix II: Constitution and By-laws for a Study Abroad Organization

THE BYLAWS OF THE STUDY ABROAD AMBASSADORS (SAA) OF WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

Article I: NAME

Section A:
The name of this organization shall be Study Abroad Ambassadors (SAA).

Article II: PURPOSE

Section A:
The purpose of this organization is to provide students who have studied abroad with the opportunity to share their experiences with other students who are interested in going abroad. The organizations will also provide students with resources that will allow students to be able to market themselves and their study abroad experience in an interview setting.

Article III: MEMBERSHIP

Section A:
Any West Chester University undergraduate student may become a member of Study Abroad Ambassadors provided that they have paid in full their Student Activities Fee.

Section B:
Members in good standing shall be defined as: any member that has attended at least four meetings per each academic semester. These individuals will be the voting members.

Article IV: OFFICERS AND DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section A:
The officers of Study Abroad Ambassadors shall be:
President
Vice-President
Treasurer
Secretary
Marketing and Public Relations
Mentor chair person
Programming, fundraising, and scholarship chair person
Add others as deemed necessary by the officers and the advisor

Section B:
The duties of the President shall be:
i. to chair all meetings.
ii. to be a non-voting member; will vote only in the case of a tie.
iii. to be the direct liaison between the executive board and the advisor
iv. to oversee all functions of the organization

Section C:
The duties of the Vice-President shall be:
i. to be the head of committee chairs.
ii. to preside over meetings in the absence of the President.
iii. will be a voting member of Study Abroad Ambassadors
iv. to oversee the mentoring partnerships
v. to evaluate the mentoring partnerships and to keep records of the students who participate in the mentoring program.

Section D:
The duties of the Treasurer shall be:
i. to manage the monies of Study Abroad Ambassadors.
ii. to attend the annual SGA budgeting seminar meeting, held in November of each year.
iii. to be a voting member of the Study Abroad Ambassadors.
iv. to preside over meetings in the absence of the President and Vice President.
v. to deposit all monies raised through fundraising efforts
vi. to ensure all money in the form of scholarship for study abroad participants is distributed.

Section E:
The duties of the Secretary shall be:
i. to take and report all minutes from Study Abroad Ambassadors meetings.
ii. to be a voting member of the Study Abroad Ambassadors.
iii. to maintain current and past membership
iv. to preside over meetings in the absence of the President, Vice President and Treasurer.

Section F:
The duties of the Marketing and Public Relations chair person shall be:
i. to take and report all minutes from Study Abroad Ambassadors meetings.
ii. to be a voting member of the Study Abroad Ambassadors.
iii. to create advertisements and public relations efforts for the organization.
iv. to develop a brand or logo and marketing materials to be used in future programs and publications.
v. to positively represent the organization based on its goals and mission.

Section G:
The duties of mentor chair person shall be:
  i. to be a liaison between the mentors and the Study Aboard Advisor.
  ii. to keep the mentor contact handout up to date with contact information
  iii. to actively promote the mentor relationships between past study abroad participants and the prospective study aboard participants.
  iv. to be a voting member of the Study Abroad Ambassadors.

Section H:
The duties of the programming, fundraising, and scholarship chair personal shall be:
  i. to respond to inquiries about classroom presentations
  ii. to be a voting member of the Study Abroad Ambassadors.
  iii. to plan fundraising events each semester for the support of scholarships.
  iv. organize the marketing efforts of scholarship advertising with advisor.

Section I:
All officers will have a minimum GPA of 2.0 at the time of election and through their term of office.
  i. Term of office shall be one academic year, unless otherwise specified.

Article V: ELECTIONS

Section A:
The election process will take place mid-April of each year and as positions become vacant.

Section B:
Any member in good standing as defined in Article III, Section B, may be nominated for office. Nominations must be made by members in good standing.

Section C:
There will be a minimum of two weeks between nominations and election of officers.
Section D:
Voting will be done by secret ballot. Ballots will be counted by an uninvolved third party.

Section E:
Vacancies will be filled by current members of Study Abroad Ambassadors. Nominations will be made at the next regular meeting, or at an emergency meeting; the general election process outlined in these bylaws will be followed.

Article VI: REMOVAL

Section A:
Any officer is eligible for removal/impeachment. An officer may be removed for one or more of the following reasons:
   i. Verifiable nonfeasance, misfeasance or malfeasance of the duties of an officer or those duties as specified for that individual office.
   ii. Failure to meet the qualifications for the office as specified.
   iii. Malfeasance of student funds.
   iv. Failure to attend the majority of meetings in one semester.

Section B:
1. Any member in good standing of Study Abroad Ambassadors may file written impeachment charges and submit them to the group’s advisor.
2. The advisor will form an Ad Hoc Committee and select a chairperson for that committee.
3. The Committee will convene within 7 days of the receipt of the charges; any member of the Committee under impeachment charges will be excluded from this meeting.
4. The Committee will revise the charges and give recommendations in writing to the accusers as to the validity of the charges within 7 days of convening to consider the charges.
5. After receiving these recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee it is the option of the accusers to proceed with or to drop the charges. Within 7 days of receiving the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee, the accusers will state their intentions in a letter to the Ad Hoc Committee.
6. The accused will be given a minimum of 48 hours notice, in writing, of the charges and when the impeachment proceedings will take place.
   i. A special meeting will be called to have the impeachment trial.
7. Neither the accusers, nor the accused will preside at the trial; subject to that provision the following will be the rank for determining who will preside:
   a. President
   b. Vice President
c. Treasurer  
d. Secretary  

8. The agenda for trial proceedings will be as follows:  
   a. Call to Order  
   b. Roll Call  
   c. Presentation of charges by the accusers; the accusers will appoint a spokesperson who will be permitted a maximum of 15 minutes speaking time to make the charges.  
   d. The accused will be permitted a maximum of 15 minutes speaking time to answer the charges.  
   e. The floor will then be open for questions and debate.  
   f. At the conclusion of debate, a vote will be taken by secret ballot, with two-thirds (2/3) of the members present voting in the affirmative necessary for removal.  

Article VII: MEETINGS

Section A:  
Meetings will be held weekly during the first and second year of the program. The frequency of the meetings can be reviewed by the officers and the advisor and a vote can occur to change the frequency of the meetings.  

Section B:  
Quorum will be defined as a majority for official business to take place.  

Section C:  
Meetings will be held using Parliamentary Procedure as adapted from the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised.  

Article VIII: COMMITTEES

Section A:  
Committees will be formed as is deemed necessary by the officers of Study Abroad Ambassadors.  

Section B:  
All committees will have Ad Hoc status for one year. If a committee is still in existence after one year, it may be made into a standing committee by amending these bylaws.  

Section C:  
The duties of any committee will be formally outlined by the officers of Study Abroad Ambassadors at the time they recommend the formation of that committee.
Section D:
Committee chairs will be appointed by the officers of Study Abroad Ambassadors.

Article IX: AMENDMENTS

Section A:
These bylaws may be amended as necessary by a 2/3 majority vote of members in good standing, attending the meeting where amendments shall take place.

Section: B:
The process of amending these bylaws shall be as follows:
   i. Amendments to these bylaws will be suggested by the officers of Study Abroad Ambassadors.
   ii. Amendments will be presented at the next regular meeting of Study Abroad Ambassadors. At this time, discussion will take place.
   iii. The language for amendment will be tabled for no less than one week.
   iv. After that period, a vote by secret ballot will take place.

Article X: ANTI-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Section A:
The Study Abroad Ambassadors will not discriminate against sex, race, age, creed, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, military status, socioeconomic status or individuals with disabilities.

Written by: (Hannah Severtson)/February 5th, 2010.
Revised: (please keep track of all revisions by date)
Appendix III: Funding Request Approval Form

Student Government Association
West Chester University

217 Sykes Student Union, West Chester, PA 19383
(610) 436-2956

Funding Request Form

Organization _________________________________________

We will be requesting funding from SGA ______________

Why?

We will NOT be requesting funding from SGA _____________

Why?

Advisor’s Signature ___________________________ Date ______

President’s Signature ___________________________ Date _____
Appendix IV: Mentor Contact Information

**Study Abroad Mentor Contact Information**

Contact any of the students listed below to learn more about their experiences abroad

**Name:** Sally Student  
**Study Abroad Experience:** Madrid, Spain. Home-stay  
**Area of Study:** Double major in Political Science and Spanish  
**Email:** sstudent@xyz.edu

“My experience abroad changed my life! I was able to learn more about Spanish culture and I’m now fluent in Spanish!”

**Name:** Jack Smith  
**Study Abroad Experience:** Victoria, Australia. University of Melbourne. Direct Exchange  
**Area of Study:** Marine Biology  
**Email:** jsmith@xyz.edu

“The classes were fantastic! I had the opportunity to participate in weekly excursions which allowed us to learn about marine life in their natural habitat.”

**Name:** Sarah Johnson  
**Study Abroad Experience:** Beijing Language & Culture University. Study Abroad with AIFS.  
**Area of Study:** Philosophy  
**Email:** sjohnson@xyz.edu

“The excursions planned by the AIFS coordinator were great. It made it easy for all of us to enjoy the trips without the worries and stresses of planning!”
Appendix V: Re-entry Handout

**Leveraging your study abroad experience**

**Study abroad with your career in mind**

- Consider your career goals before studying abroad. Be purposeful in the selection of your program.
- Gain professional (and or volunteer or service) experience while studying abroad.
- Gain cross-cultural experience outside of the classroom.

**Including international experience on your resume**

- If it is a program at a different university, consider listing it in your education section.
  *Veritas University, San Jose, Costa Rica, 2008*
- If it included an internship or work-related experience, include it as a professional experience.
  *Marketing Assistant, Hamley’s Toy, London, England 9/07-12/07*
  *English Teacher, Beijing Elementary, Beijing, China, Spring 2007*
- If your resume includes a section for skills, list specific skills acquired while abroad.
  *Proficient in German, both oral and written*
  *State language proficiency accurately (some, basic, proficient, fluent, native speaker)*
- Customize your resume to fit your individual needs

**Including international experience within your cover letter**

- Relate specific experiences to specific skills you gained and how that can benefit the potential employer.
  *
  *My experiences living in Costa Rica will enhance my ability to communicate and interact effectively with the local Latino population that this position works closely with.*

Adapted from “Leveraging your Study Abroad Experience” By Jill Reister, Cindy Stockwell, and Margaret McDiarmid