CREATING A STUDY ABROAD RE-ENTRY PROGRAM
AT BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

A CREATIVE PROJECT
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IN
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ABSTRACT

Title: Creating a Study Abroad Re-entry Program at Ball State University

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The purpose of this creative project was to create a re-entry seminar for Ball State University students to go through upon their return from any sort of study abroad experience. Through the seminar, students would be able to reflect on their experiences, share their observations, form productive thoughts about their learning, and understand how to apply what they learned during their time abroad to their futures. The re-entry seminar would be a supplemental retreat in addition to the pre-departure orientation students go through before leaving the country. Providing the opportunity for students to connect with professionals who understand reverse culture shock and re-entry fatigue, as well as introducing them to peers who also studied abroad, prepares them for the rest of their academic careers. It also allows students a formal way of processing their experiences abroad so they gain the most learning possible and can be better prepared to market themselves when they begin job searching.

Upon returning from a short-term or long-term study abroad experience, students are not always aware of how impactful their experience could be on their lives. Without having the support of professionals and peers to help them actually process through their experiences, students often lose a lot of the learning that could be harvested from such an
immersive learning adventure. By providing a re-entry seminar to help students think through how much they have grown and changed as well as offering guidance from career center professionals, students returning from study abroad experiences will be ready to complete their final years of college and will thrive when it comes time to search for jobs. After the initial re-entry seminar, students will not only be armed with the resources to succeed through the rest of their college careers, but they will also have a cohort of peers who they can relate to and will serve as a support network as they re-enter life in the United States at their home institutions.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions in the United States have been formally sending students abroad since the 1920s, and there are reports of students traveling internationally for educational purposes as early as the 1880s (Hoffa, 2000). While some of the early college presidents, provosts, and deans understood the value of immersive, experiential learning and supported study abroad efforts at their institutions, others have continuously questioned the value of study abroad experiences for students. Modern study abroad efforts have transitioned through many different types of programming to what they are today: primarily short-term faculty led programs, semester or academic year-long exchanges with an institution of higher learning in another country, or medium length programs held in another country, but led by the home institution faculty.

In an effort to help students navigate the murky waters of studying abroad, most colleges and universities have a small office staffed with one or more professionals to serve as experts on the different programs available to students. These study abroad staff members not only help students navigate the programs available to them, they coach students through the application process, provide them information about visas and other necessary documentation, and often facilitate pre-departure orientation programs to help
students understand the kinds of cultural changes they may face upon arrival in their study abroad destinations. As the limited staff in these study abroad offices must spend so much time preparing students to go abroad, very few efforts have been made to assist students with the process of re-entering a home country and institution after spending time studying elsewhere.

Much research has been done to highlight negative effects of reverse culture shock on students when they return from study abroad experiences. Research on experiential learning also shows that some sort of reflection and processing is necessary to fully embrace all the learning that happens from an immersive experience. As a way to combat the negative effects of reverse culture shock and to promote a higher level of immersive learning, some institutions have developed re-entry programs for their students to go through when they return to their home universities. These programs need to be adapted to meet the needs of particular study abroad programs and different types of colleges and universities, but can make a tremendous difference in students’ perceptions of their study abroad experiences.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this creative project was to create a re-entry seminar for Ball State University students to go through upon their return from any sort of study abroad experience. Through the seminar, students would be able to reflect on their experiences, share their observations, form productive thoughts about their learning, and understand how to apply what they learned during their time abroad to their futures. The re-entry seminar would be a supplemental retreat in addition to the pre-departure orientation students go through before leaving the country. Providing the opportunity for students to
connect with professionals who understand reverse culture shock and re-entry fatigue, as well as introducing them to peers who also studied abroad, prepares them for the rest of their academic careers. It also allows students a formal way of processing their experiences abroad so they gain the most learning possible and can be better prepared to market themselves when they begin job searching.

**Significance of the Study**

This creative project was created to help students who decide to study abroad make the most of their experience by properly processing their time abroad and also learning how to articulate what they learned and gained from the experience, especially in relation to their job searches. Students who study abroad often return to their home campuses with a sense of daze and confusion because of the many changes around them. After having such an intense immersive experience, life back at home has continued to stay the same, but has changed at the same time. Nobody seems to want to hear these students talk about their experiences because they tend to drone on and on. Where they may have been excited to return to their “normal” lives, many of these students often pull away from others and do not fully process their study abroad experiences because they do not know how. By providing a re-entry seminar to students shortly after they return from their study abroad immersion, they will have a safe place to talk about their experiences. They will be coached and supported by professionals to really think about what they learned, and they will learn how to use their study abroad experiences to help them in their job search. Also as a result of this re-entry seminar, students will make connections with others who are experiencing re-entry as well, forming a support network at their home institution.
Scope and Limitations

The re-entry seminar for students returning from study abroad experiences was created to provide an opportunity for students to process all they learned and how they changed while living abroad and to also help them learn to market their experiences. The seminar was created to be non-imposing on the demands of students’ lives by being scheduled for part of a Saturday or Sunday afternoon near the start of the semester at an on-campus location.

Due to the re-entry seminar not being a requirement for students who study abroad at Ball State University, the participation levels could be low. The interest could be there, but students may be afraid of all the seminar could entail if they have not heard about it prior to their departure. Levels of participation could also be affected by how much time passes between when students return from their experiences and the date of the seminar. Low numbers of participants could negatively impact the success of the seminar because the cohort experience of sharing with and learning from colleagues would not be feasible with fewer than five attendees. If students who study abroad do not process their feelings and understand what they learned, they are less likely to re-enter their campus lives fully and may not succeed at marketing their study abroad experiences.

Definition

Study abroad: A term to describe the act of a student pursuing educational opportunities in a country other than one’s own. This term is often referred to as studying overseas.
Organization of the Paper

This paper is organized in four chapters. This first chapter addressed the statement of purpose, the significance of the study, the scope and limitations of this study, and the organization of the paper. The second chapter will review the existing literature related to experiential learning, the history of study abroad in the United States, mental impacts of study abroad, and examples of current re-entry programs and materials in use throughout the United States. Chapter three will consist of a description of the methodology used throughout the creation of the re-entry seminar for students returning from study abroad programs. Chapter four will cover all the details about how the re-entry program will be implemented on Ball State University’s campus.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Summary of the Project

During their college years, many students study abroad with hopes of expanding their worldview, increasing the number of countries they have visited, learning a new language, studying a topic of interest from a new perspective, or making new friends. University faculty and staff regularly encourage students to take advantage of the study abroad opportunities offered. Students who do embark upon study abroad experiences often attend pre-departure orientation programs to better understand the culture in which they will be immersed. This helps students prepare for the possible culture shock they may experience once they arrive in their new location of study. While preparation before entering a new culture is important, preparation to re-enter one’s home culture is also important. Postsecondary institutions that send students abroad should help students maximize their study abroad experiences, which can begin with a re-entry orientation. A four-hour study abroad re-entry retreat is suggested, as it would help re-entering students share their own personal experiences, discuss and prepare for the reverse culture shock they may experience, and learn how to fully market their time abroad.
Experiential Education

“The fact that, in experiential learning, learning is an unstructured side effect of activities may (at least partly) explain the observed variety in the nature and quality of student learning outcomes” (Niemantsverdriet, Van Der Vleuten, Majoor, & Scherpbier, 2006, p. 105). Three separate models of the experiential learning process reveal the importance of not only having personal experiences but also incorporating a way to process them to complete the learning. The Lewinian Model of Experiential Learning (1946) focused on two aspects, the here-and-now concrete experience as well as the feedback processes. This model essentially used a “loop” to describe what happens in experiential learning. The loop begins with a concrete experience that is followed by observations and reflections about the experience. The next part of the loop is the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations based on observations and reflections, which then leads to the last part of the loop, testing implications of those concepts in new situations (Kolb, 1984). In this Lewinian model, a new concrete experience is the result of testing what one has learned in a new situation, and then the cycle repeats itself (Lewin, 1946). When the cycle repeats itself, new experiences are had, and learners understand them differently, often more comprehensively, than the first time.

John Dewey (1938) presented a second model of experiential learning that was eerily similar to the Lewinian model. The biggest difference between the two models was that Dewey made “more explicit the developmental nature of learning implied in Lewin’s conception of it as a feedback process by describing how learning transforms the impulses, feelings, and desires of concrete experience into higher-order purposeful action” (Kolb, 1984, p. 22). One notable aspect of Dewey’s model is what would be the
second step in Lewin’s (1946) loop, observations and reflections. Dewey (1938) incorporated knowledge of what happened in similar situations in the past into his model, writing that the knowledge could be “obtained partly by recollection and partly from the information, advice, and warning of those who have had a wider experience” (p. 69). The idea of incorporating knowledge from one’s past into present experiences is exactly what experiential learning attempts to achieve, a deeper level of understanding about some type of learning.

A third model of experiential learning was presented by Piaget (1964) in his theory about cognitive development in children. In Piaget’s theory, the key to learning lies in mutual interaction of the process of accommodation, where one takes concepts or schemas and translates them to experience in the world, and the process of assimilation, where one translates events and experiences in the world into existing concepts and schemas. Piaget warned about one of the processes overpowering the other, resulting in either imitation or play, neither of which promotes learning.

The process of cognitive growth from concrete to abstract and from active to reflective is based on this continual transaction between assimilation and accommodation, occurring in successive stages, each of which incorporates what has gone before into a new, higher level of cognitive functioning. (Kolb, 1984, p. 23)

The goal of experiential learning is just as Kolb summarized of Piaget’s theory, taking experiences and fitting them into existing schemas while also learning new concepts and finding ways to translate them into real experiences, therefore moving to a higher level of cognitive functioning. Once a child has moved through all levels of Piaget’s theory of
cognitive development, s/he has achieved a level of logical reasoning where convergent learning occurs and all previous experiences impact his/her way of processing information (Piaget, 1964).

Experiential learning was defined by Kolb (1984) as “a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior” (p. 21). As seen through Lewin (1946), Dewey (1938), and Piaget’s (1964) work, there were common characteristics Kolb drew together to form his theory of experiential learning. The three main ideas in Kolb’s (1984) theory were that learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes, learning is a continuous process grounded in experience, and the process of learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.

In defense of the first idea in his theory, Kolb (1984) argued that “ideas are not fixed and immutable elements of thought but are formed and re-formed through experience” (p. 26), and even wrote, “No two thoughts are ever the same, since experience always intervenes” (p. 26). This concept highlights the invaluable learning that can occur while a person is engaged in an activity. If the activity is something that may not have been done before, great amounts of learning can happen. This main point carries over to Kolb’s second point of learning being a continuous process grounded in experience. If one accepts that learning is not based on outcomes, then one must concede that learning is a continuous process. The interplay between expectation and experience is where the learning actually occurs. To support his last idea about experiential learning, Kolb defined four different kinds of abilities learners must be capable of in order to be effective learners. They must achieve concrete experience abilities, reflective
observation abilities, abstract conceptualization abilities, and active experimentation abilities. Essentially, having these abilities means learners are fully committed to engaging in the process of learning with little or no known bias and will use what they have learned in the past to reflect on current experiences and make decisions or solve problems. “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38).

**Study Abroad – Past and Present**

According to William Hoffa (2000), the one researcher who has completed a thorough study of the history of international study, American students were engaging in summer study experiences outside of the United States as early as the 1880s, which established a foundation for what is accepted in the modern-day world as study abroad. Hoffa’s research showed there were a few efforts from colleges and universities in the late 1800s to send students internationally to gain immersive intercultural learning, but it was not until the 1920s that the conventional start of study abroad efforts in the United States began with American Junior Year Abroad (JYA) programs. The JYA programs allowed American students to attend an institution of higher learning in another country and gain credit toward their degree at their home institution. During the early development of the JYA programs, faculty-led study tours, and summer study programs, a few early college presidents and other administrators understood the value of combining academic learning in a foreign setting. However, many still questioned why institutions of higher learning would want to send their students elsewhere to study, which is a common question still today from administrators at colleges and universities in the United States.
Hoffa’s (2000) research showed that many students reported greater self-awareness, new outlooks on the world, and more objective viewpoints as results of their experiences internationally during the early years of various study abroad programs. They also came back from abroad with substantive knowledge of the languages and cultures in which they lived. As more students continued to take advantage of opportunities to study abroad, the ideal situation of American students sitting in classrooms next to native students were not as realistic as they once were with the incredibly driven original students who went abroad. Few students had the academic background, cultural and historical points of reference, or language proficiency to really thrive in international classrooms. As a result, the “floating university” became a more popular program for American students to utilize for their study abroad aspirations. The floating university brought together a diverse student body who circled the globe on a ship, discussing global issues while cruising, and experiencing the real world when docked. This was said to be much more effective for students as they truly engaged in the experiential learning through this experience by discussing and processing on board the ship with their peers and faculty. It also aligns with Astin’s (1999) student involvement theory, that “the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program” (p. 519). Because students had fully committed themselves to this academic cruise, they had higher levels of learning and development throughout the experience.

For a number of years the floating university, JYA, faculty-led, and summer programs were the options for any students interested in expanding their formal education
outside the borders of the United States. By the mid-1960s two distinct approaches to study abroad were widely accepted at institutions of higher learning throughout the country. These were the ideals of emeritus professor at Middlebury College, Stephen Freeman, and professor of history at Antioch College, Irwin Abrams (Hoffa, 2000). Hoffa reported that Freeman believed study abroad was largely a singular activity centered around language and cultural immersion, whereas Abrams believed study abroad could be a part of students’ general education and could help them further their international understanding. In response to the two strong views about study abroad, administrators at colleges and universities throughout the United States chose to align with Freeman or Abram’s understandings of study abroad, and provided programs to their students based on their beliefs. When exploring the types of programs offered at different schools today, there is still a differentiation between language and cultural immersion programs and those intended to help students complete their general education while expanding their worldview.

In today’s world of higher education, offices of study abroad across the nation are highly understaffed and continuously have to prove their worth to administration to receive even small amounts of funding (Kirkwood, personal communication, September 5, 2012). However, the demand from students for services provided by these offices is high. According to NAFSA (2013), in the 2010-2011 academic year 273,996 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit. Of those students, nearly 55% of them study somewhere in Europe, almost 15% study in Latin America, and the next highest percentage of students, nearly 12%, go to Asia. The rest go to Africa, Oceania, Middle East, North America, and multiple other regions, gaining a variety of global perspectives.
According to the same NAFSA reports, it is most common for students in business and management, the humanities, and health sciences to spend time studying abroad. Some of this could be a result of the global perspective they receive from international scholars in their fields. Those in business and management often study abroad to gain a greater ability to work in the growing global marketplace. “As businesses globalize and the demand for employees prepared for international assignments steadily increases, training programs designed to enhance and support students’ goals to develop their cross-cultural skills may be useful in maximizing these skills” (Kitsantas, 2004, para. 26).

Because study abroad opportunities are highly utilized by students in higher education, more and more programs continue to be formed. It is up to each individual institution which types of programs they offer to their students, which can meet a variety of needs. Most programs vary by the amount of structure and guidance they offer to students, from very scheduled all-inclusive programs to those in which students must make travel and housing arrangements on their own (Ball State University, 2013). Some programs are more like the floating universities where students from the United States spend time together processing their experiences, while others are like the original “transfer student” programs where American students study at international universities next to native students. Each experience can be worthwhile, as long as students understand their intentions behind selecting a specific program and are given the appropriate support to reflect on and process their time abroad. The experiential learning Kolb (1984) wrote about cannot happen within study abroad experiences without the proper mechanisms and support in place to transform the experiences into learning.
Study abroad programs provide opportunities for learning that are critical to the education of American college students and over the long term, to the ability of the United States to lead responsibly, collaborate abroad, and compete effectively in the global arena. Such learning includes foreign language skills, cross cultural understanding, and an appreciation of our diverse and interconnected world—essential tools of citizenship and leadership in the 21st Century. (NAFSA, 2008, p. 1)

**Psychological Impacts of Study Abroad**

“‘Culture shock’ is the expression generally associated with the frustrations that occur when persons have difficulty functioning in a different culture or when persons are exposed to individuals from another culture” (Schnitt, 1996, para. 1). Traditionally culture shock is said to take place in four stages that unfold over varying lengths of time (Brown & Holloway, 2008). There is the honeymoon phase, when an individual is so excited and thrilled to be in the new location that nothing can damper his or her spirits. The second phase is one of crisis where a specific event or situation becomes a significant obstacle. The third phase is resolution, which begins when the individual develops a means for dealing with the obstacle that caused crisis. The last phase, stabilization, occurs when earlier confusion is resolved and a more balanced perspective or outlook is achieved. According to Schnell (1996), the key to dealing with culture shock is to recognize the phases of the shock as they are being experienced. At many postsecondary institutions that sponsor study abroad programs and assist students in going abroad, they offer pre-departure orientation sessions to help students understand the culture shock they may experience upon arrival in their new destination. These
orientation programs typically consist of education about the phases of culture shock
students may encounter, strategies to help work through each phase, and information
about the culture in which students will be immersing themselves so they are prepared for
what may come.

One impact of study abroad which is often overlooked is the re-entry shock
students experience upon their return to the United States. CEA Global Education (2013)
defined re-entry shock as “the reverse culture shock people go through when returning
home after an extended stay abroad” (para. 2). In reference to students’ experiences upon
re-entry to their host culture, the Center for the Study of Languages and Cultures (2008),
known as the CSLC, at the University of Notre Dame wrote, “Many students return from
study abroad with reverse culture shock and difficulty identifying how to maintain their
new language proficiency as well as how the larger study abroad experience can be most
successfully integrated into their personal, academic, and professional lives” (para. 1).
Numerous other sources cite the struggles students encounter upon their return to the
United States after a study abroad experience. Untreated, the re-entry shock can cause
students to withdraw from their surroundings and to not be as successful at their
academic programs as they once were. The confusion caused by re-entry shock can be
unsettling because students are often not aware other students are experiencing the same
symptoms. Without the appropriate preparation for re-entry or the proper support when
students return, they may not fully value the learning they gained from their study abroad
experiences, and they may not persist to graduation at their home institutions. It is for
this reason re-entry orientation programs are highly useful for students to participate in
when they return from international study.
Re-entry Orientation Programs

As research continues to show the negative effects of re-entry shock (Brown & Holloway, 2008; CEA Global Education, 2013; CSLC, 2008; Schnell, 1996), a number of institutions have created seminars and programs for students to participate in when they return from a study abroad experience (CSLC, 2008; Marquette University, 2012; St. Norbert College, 2012). Many of these programs combine the pre-departure orientation offered in their offices with support while students are abroad, and a follow-up retreat upon students’ return to the United States. This method helps prepare students for re-entry before they begin the process of re-entry shock, and is most ideal. Because many of the study abroad offices are understaffed, this ideal method is not always possible.

Other options of programs make students aware before they go abroad that there will be some form of follow-up coursework required when they return to the United States. At the University of Notre Dame in the CLSC (2008), students take a course to maintain and continue their language skills when they return, and are also offered other structured opportunities to share their experiences and expertise. St. Norbert College (2013) requires returned students to submit a program evaluation and re-entry survey following their experience abroad. They then take the information from the re-entry surveys to organize a re-entry event for all students who qualify as recent study abroad returnees. The event allows students to share a free meal, talk with others about their experiences, and to get tips on readjustment and how they can continue the learning they began while abroad. Since St. Norbert requires students to complete the evaluation and survey, the students know this event exists and are more likely to participate. St. Norbert also has a system for returned students to mentor other students preparing to go abroad.
through sharing their testimonials and tips on the St. Norbert’s study abroad website. A third example of a re-entry program currently in play is at Marquette University (2013). The program at Marquette is a returnee series of sessions to discuss everything from navigating re-entry and reverse culture shock to heading overseas again post-graduation. Though this program is a collaboration between the Office of International Education and other relevant campus offices, it is designed to meet the needs of students who have spent at least a semester abroad, so those who participated in shorter-term experiences will not benefit from the series. These three schools exemplify a variety of program aspects that can be implemented on any campus that sends students to study abroad.

For students who study abroad independently from their institution of higher learning, other resources are also available for them to avoid the negative effects of re-entry shock. For example, the CEA Global Education (2013) organization has a whole website dedication to identifying whether or not an individual is experiencing re-entry shock and with resources to help alleviate the shock. Dr. Bruce La Brack (2003) has worked collaboratively with a number of other individuals and institutions to provide an online resource with three modules for students to utilize before and after their study abroad experiences. The modules spend a lot of time focusing on aspects of intercultural communication and adjustment models to help prepare students for what they may encounter during their international experience. The last module provides a bibliography of resources for students to further investigate on their own if they need it and are interested.

The research shows that many institutions have already begun the implementation of re-entry and return orientation programs for students to go through upon the
conclusion of their study abroad experiences. While there is not one universal model of a re-entry program, some best practices have emerged to best meet the needs of students after their intense study abroad experiences. In order to learn as much as possible from their experiences and to feel reconnected to their home campuses, students can truly benefit from these study abroad re-entry seminars. Greater amounts of student learning and personal development occur when students feel connected and involved at their home institutions (Astin, 1999). Re-entry orientation programs are one way to help this happen.

**Summary**

Study abroad in the United States has gone through many transitions since its inception in the 1800s. Experiential learning is cited to be one of the main reasons institutions of higher learning send students abroad. However, students returning from study abroad programs will need more attention and resources available to them than what is provided now to combat the negative psychological effects that result from re-entering their home cultures. Students study abroad for a variety of reasons, but without the appropriate support and follow-up, they do not get as much learning from their experiences as one would hope. A re-entry orientation seminar can be utilized as a resource to reconnect students to their home campus, build a peer-support group, and to maximize the amount of learning that occurs through the immersive experiential learning programs known as study abroad. It is important for all institutions of higher education that support study abroad efforts to examine re-entry models in existence and to implement adapted versions on their own campuses. Not only is it essential for study abroad professionals to be aware of student needs before they go abroad, but
professionals must also understand the student struggles that arise after their return from study abroad experiences.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this creative project was to create a re-entry seminar for Ball State University students to go through upon their return from any sort of study abroad experience. Through the seminar, students would be able to reflect on their experiences, share their observations, form productive thoughts about their learning, and understand how to apply what they learned during their time abroad to their futures. The re-entry seminar would be a supplemental retreat in addition to the pre-departure orientation students go through before leaving the country. Providing the opportunity for students to connect with professionals who understand reverse culture shock and re-entry fatigue, as well as introducing them to peers who also studied abroad, prepares them for the rest of their academic careers. It also allows students a formal way of processing their experiences abroad so they gain the most learning possible and can be better prepared to market themselves when they begin job searching.

Methodology

A literature review was conducted to gain a better understanding of experiential learning, the history behind study abroad in the United States, culture shock and reverse culture shock, and current methods of re-entry counseling already being used. The
literature review was based on journal articles and books by student development theorists and authors knowledgeable about study abroad in the United States. Websites of various institutions of higher education were also reviewed to gain an understanding of programs and practices in place to address the needs of students returning from study abroad experiences. Next, websites from national organizations related to study abroad were examined to evaluate the resources they provide and recommend for students returning from time abroad. Research from Ball State University’s Office of Study Abroad was completed to assess the pre-departure orientation they currently provide to students and to compile information for the development of a specific re-entry seminar that would build on what the office already provides.

**Design of the Project**

A re-entry seminar specifically for students who have recently returned from college study abroad experiences was created to supplement the pre-departure orientation already offered at Ball State University. The program was designed to help students process through their thoughts and expectations before they left to go abroad, to think through how they were challenged and how they might have changed during their time abroad, to explore their thoughts and feelings since they returned from their study abroad experience, and to understand how to market themselves in relation to their study abroad experiences when they begin the job search. Another hope was that students would form support systems for themselves by meeting peers who had also returned from studying abroad at a similar time. The seminar would consist of a four-hour session during one afternoon on a weekend.
After some initial ice breakers and activities to help the participants warm up to one another, the first part of the re-entry seminar consists of a time for the attendees to show an important artifact (which could include an article of clothing, pictures, jewelry, etc.) from their time abroad. This will allow participants to share their stories and to get back in the mindset of how they felt while they were abroad. By allowing enough time for each participant to be heard while sharing their artifacts, the goal is for the students to begin feeling as though the room is a safe space to talk openly about their own biases and experiences, whether they are good or bad. A common occurrence for students who return from studying abroad is that people ask, “How was your trip?” Few people actually stop to hear the students share that their experiences were much more than a simple trip or vacation. This part of the seminar was designed to help students overcome the fear of not being heard and understood.

The second piece of this seminar is for participants to take an adapted version of the “Evaluating Your Study Abroad Experience” quiz found in the “Back in the USA” workbook published by NAFSA: Association of International Educators (Kepets, 1999). Ideally the Office of Study Abroad would have enough funds to provide each student with a workbook during the pre-departure orientation so they could work through some of the activities during their time abroad. The workbooks can be purchased from NAFSA in bulk for a reasonable price. However, if the office did not have the funds to provide the workbooks for students during pre-departure orientation, then an adapted version of the quiz would be provided for participants in the seminar to take. The facilitators would be responsible for setting the tone that the participants do not need to rush through the quiz. This part of the seminar can take plenty of time because it is where students really
begin processing through their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and more from when they were abroad and since they have returned to the United States. After all attendees have completed the quiz, the facilitators will break them into smaller groups to discuss how they felt while working through their study abroad experiences in that format. This will again be an unrushed process so the participants can truly share and understand what the study abroad experience meant to them.

The third phase of the seminar is to bring everyone back into a large group and to have an open conversation about American values and how they may have been challenged since the students have returned to the United States. NAFSA provides a wonderful chart titled “Values Americans Live By” that can be used as a starting point for the discussion (Kepets, 1999). Because students will have studied in a variety of locations, they may have individual stories to share about how they felt when they arrived in their host country and then how they felt once they returned to the United States. Facilitators will keep this conversation focused on values and help students to identify how, why, and how much their own values have shifted as a result of their study abroad experiences.

The next phase of the re-entry seminar is for students to work on case studies in small groups. At this point in the seminar students will have shared some of their own experiences, identified some of the challenges they faced and overcame, and discussed values and how they can sometimes conflict with different cultures. The reasoning behind asking participants to engage in conversation around case studies is to encourage them to apply some of what they have learned through the day to other situations and scenarios. Depending on the amount of time, facilitators will allow each small group to
work through one or two case studies and to share their solutions with the large group. If participants are still engaged and there is time, each small group can create their own case study, which can then be passed around so each group works through another group’s case study. The idea behind sharing self-created case studies is for the students to understand how much they have actually learned and to appreciate the competence they have while facing challenging situations.

One of the last phases of the re-entry seminar is a session presented by staff from the university’s career center. This part of the seminar will help students to evaluate the important pieces of their study abroad experiences so they understand how to document it on the resume and speak to it in interviews. Each student’s major and/or career path determine which parts of the study abroad experiences are helpful to them, so the professional staff member from career services will give students the necessary tools to identify what is important. Prior to the seminar it could be helpful to tell students to bring their resumes so they can make notes to adjust later.

The very last part of the four-hour re-entry seminar is a time of answering questions, sharing comments or concerns, and doing one final activity. The activity can be something very small if there is very little time left, such as sharing your favorite moment of the day with a neighbor. If more time is available, it could be something more involved, such as creating a drawing or image to illustrate what participants have learned throughout the day. This would not only allow artistic talent to come out, but it would provide the students with something meaningful to take home. Whether it is a large or small scale activity, this time is important for seminar participants to identify one thing they learned through the day so they can continue to ponder it when they leave.
Summary

The re-entry seminar for students who have recently returned from study abroad experiences is a resource offered to help students take full advantage of the learning that happened while they were abroad and to understand how to speak to their learning when facing the difficult task of finding a job. The four-hour re-entry seminar will help build connections between students who are experiencing similar transitions to life back in the United States while also providing them the tools to fully process their experiences. The guidance provided to students from the career center will give seminar participants a leg up against peers who may apply for similar positions but not know how to market themselves. This re-entry program will improve the overall quality of study abroad services offered because students will not feel left alone when they return to their home campuses following a study abroad experience.
CHAPTER FOUR
CREATING A STUDY ABROAD RE-ENTRY PROGRAM AT BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

Project Summary

During their college years, many students study abroad with hopes of expanding their worldview, increasing the number of countries they have visited, learning a new language, studying a topic of interest from a new perspective, or making new friends. University faculty and staff encourage students to take advantage of study abroad opportunities offered at their institutions. Students who do embark upon study abroad experiences often go through pre-departure orientation programs to better understand the culture in which they will be immersed. This helps students prepare for the possible culture shock they may experience once they arrive in their new location of study. While preparation before entering a new culture is important, preparation to re-enter one’s home culture is also important. Postsecondary institutions that send students abroad should help students maximize their study abroad experiences, and this can begin with a re-entry orientation program. A four-hour study abroad re-entry retreat is suggested, as it would help re-entering students to share their own personal experiences, discuss and prepare for the reverse culture shock they may experience, and learn how to fully market their time abroad. This retreat would be facilitated by professionals from the Office of Study Abroad at Ball State University.
The project contains the following items:

- Recommended Timeline of Events, page 27.
- Study Abroad Re-entry Seminar: Participant Schedule, page 29.
- Sample Electronic Invitation to Prospective Participants, page 33.
- Example Email to Career Center, page 34.
- Example Email to RSVP’d Participants, page 35.
- Adapted “Evaluating Your Study Abroad Experience” Quiz, page 36.
- “Values Americans Live By” Chart, page 40.
- Follow-up Survey and Evaluation, page 41.
Recommended Timeline of Events

Fall/Spring Semester:

July/December

- Mid-Month: Email all students who have been abroad in the past six months offering encouragement and support and reminding them of the opportunity to sign up for the re-entry seminar when they return.

- Establish date for the program with Office of Study Abroad and group of facilitators. Preferable dates would be near the end of August/January or start of September/February.
  - Reserve the appropriate space through the University.
  - Contact Career Center to enlist their assistance for the last part of the seminar.

August/January

- Beginning of Month: Email invitation to all students who have been abroad in the past six months. Include an RSVP date for two weeks from the date the invitation was sent.

- Second week of Month: Send second email invitation to the same student group, including the RSVP date that will be one week from this date.

- Third week of Month: Collect RSVPs and email all re-entry seminar attendees more information about the seminar, telling them to bring an artifact for show-and-tell as well as their resume.

- Last week of Month: Assemble packets for seminar attendees and facilitators.
• Last weekend of August/January or first weekend of September/February:
  Facilitate re-entry seminar!

October/March

• Email out a follow-up survey to seminar attendees to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.
Study Abroad Re-entry Seminar

Participant Schedule

- Introductions and Ice Breakers
- My experience and story
- Evaluating my study abroad experience – Quiz time!
  - Let’s talk about values…
- Apply what we’ve learned through case studies
  - What to do with my experience
  - Putting it all together
Study Abroad Re-entry Seminar

Facilitator’s Schedule and Guide

1) Introductions and Ice Breakers (20 minutes?)
   a. Share opening comments:
      i. Happy they could come, this will be a great experience, please be open
to share with everyone in the room, this is a safe space, the process can
be easy or difficult depending on a number of factors we will discuss.
   b. Share the stages of re-entry that they may have already started experiencing or
will soon experience: disengagement, excitement and euphoria about
returning home, dampened euphoria, gradual readjustment to life at home.

2) My Experience and Story (1 hour)
   a. Allow students to share their stories through their artifacts or other creative
ways prepared ahead of time.
      i. Allow participants to take their time, share comments, etc…
      ii. Do not rush through this.
      iii. Help participants process and feel the feelings they had while abroad
or after returning.

3) Evaluating my study abroad experience – Quiz time! (40 minutes)
   a. Share the importance of being honest about experiences while completing the
quiz.
   b. Give participants plenty of time to complete the quiz without rushing them.
c. Tell them about a “break area” they can go to after completing the quiz so they do not distract others who are still working.

d. After the quiz, break into smaller groups (perhaps by type of study abroad program) to talk through.
   i. What was most surprising while completing the quiz?
   ii. Which part was hardest to answer?
   iii. Did you recognize any changes in yourself of which you were not previously aware?
   iv. What else stuck out to you while completing the quiz?

4) Let’s talk about values… (20 minutes)
   a. Project “Values Americans Live By” chart up in front of group.
   b. Discuss:
      i. Where on the continuum of these values do you fit now?
      ii. Would you have put yourself at this same place before you moved overseas?
      iii. How have you seen these values affect your interactions with others?

5) Apply what we’ve learned through case studies (30 minutes)
   a. One or two case studies in groups depending on how much time. (15 minutes?)
   b. “Your study” – In groups, create case studies and then pass to other groups to process. (5 minutes to write, 10 minutes to work through and share?)

6) What to do with my experience (45 minutes?)
   a. Introduce Career Services presenter.
7) Putting it all together (20 minutes)

   a. Answer questions, let participants share comments and concerns, etc…

   b. Allow each person to share their favorite part of the day or something they
      learned throughout the day. If there is plenty of time left, allow them to use
      craft supplies to draw or create something to show what they learned. If time
      is limited, just go around the room letting them share.

Total time: 3½-4 hours
Sample Electronic Invitation to Prospective Participants

Have you studied somewhere AROUND THE WORLD?

You are invited to attend a Study Abroad Re-entry Seminar!
Sponsored by the Office of Study Abroad

~ February 24, 2013 ~
~ 1:00-5:00 PM ~ BSU Alumni Center ~

RSVP to Melissa Webb at mawebb@bsu.edu by 5:00 PM on February 18, 2013!

Share your experiences, hear about others’ experiences, and reflect on how much you have learned, grown, and changed!

Learn how to identify transferrable skills and market your study abroad experience from Career Center professionals!
Example Email to Career Center

Dear University Career Center,

My name is Melissa Webb and I am currently working with the Office of Study Abroad to implement a re-entry seminar for students who have recently returned from studying abroad. The goal of this seminar is to help students process through their experiences to gain as much learning as possible from their time abroad.

Near the end of the four-hour seminar, we were hoping to have a representative from the Career Center come in to speak with the students about marketing their study abroad experiences on their resumes and in interviews. Also, after a study abroad experience, many students express interest in working abroad for their future careers, so any information your office may have on international jobs may also be beneficial.

Would someone from your office be interested and available to assist us with this part of the seminar? Currently the program is planned for February 24, 2013 from 1:00-5:00 PM. The Career Center would begin presenting around 3:45 or 4:00 PM and would have 45 to 60 minutes to work with the students.

We will have a computer and projector and are happy to make any copies your presenter may need. We look forward to hearing from you soon about this possible collaboration!

Thank you so much for your time,
Melissa Webb
Example Email to RSVP’d Participants

Hello,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the Study Abroad Re-entry Seminar! We are looking forward to hearing about everything you have experienced and getting to put faces to names.

If you would like, we are asking that you bring some sort of visual representation of your study abroad experience with you. You can bring any physical artifacts you may have or you could also put together a short slide show – whatever you are comfortable with! There will be plenty of time to show and discuss what you bring, so please feel free to be creative.

There will also be a part of the seminar where the Career Center will be speaking about how to market your study abroad experience on your resume and in interviews. If you have a resume already drafted, feel free to bring it to take notes on during this part of the seminar!

Again, we will be in the Alumni Center from 1-5 PM on this Sunday. Also, be sure to eat lunch ahead of time, as we will be unable to provide a catered meal.

If you have any questions for us, please feel free to contact us at any time.

We look forward to meeting you!

Best regards,
Melissa Webb
Adapted “Evaluating Your Study Abroad Experience” Quiz

Now, think back…

In the following section, check each item that applies to you or provide the appropriate information:

1. What excited you about your impending move overseas?
   - The opportunity to study overseas
   - Living in a different culture
   - Speaking another language
   - Making new friends
   - Developing professional skills in an internship
   - Becoming more independent
   - ________________________________

2. What were your greatest reservations about moving overseas?
   - Studying in a different culture
   - Housing arrangements
   - Speaking another language
   - Making new friends
   - Financial arrangements
   - Leaving family and friends
   - Medical facilities
   - ________________________________

3. Did you have expectations concerning any of the items listed below? What were they? Were your expectations met? If not, why not?
   - Academic environment
   - Communicating in another language
   - Housing
   - Transportation
   - Traveling
   - Developing new relationships
   - Keeping in touch with family and friends back home
   - Food
   - ________________________________
4. Try to remember your initial observations and experiences overseas. Were you surprised by anything you saw or experienced?

- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________

5. Use adjectives to describe your initial reaction to each item you listed in #4.

- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________

6. How do you feel about the items you mentioned in #4?

- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________
- ______________________________

7. Did studying abroad cause you to change your daily routine? How is it different from the daily routine you had in the United States before you moved?

_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________

8. Did you make adjustments in your attitude toward any of the following?
   - Punctuality
   - Noise
   - Privacy
   - Spatial relations
   - Touching
   - Independence
   - _______________________________________

9. What were the three easiest adjustments for you to make? Next to each one, note the approximate length of time it took for you to make this adjustment:
   a. ___________________________  Time to adjust:_____________
   b. ___________________________  Time to adjust:_____________
   c. ___________________________  Time to adjust:_____________

10. What were the three most difficult adjustments for you to make? Next to each one, note the approximate length of time it took for you to make this adjustment:
    a. ___________________________  Time to adjust:_____________
    b. ___________________________  Time to adjust:_____________
    c. ___________________________  Time to adjust:_____________

11. Is there anything about your overseas experience that you were never able to adjust to?
    a. ______________________________________________________
    b. ______________________________________________________
    c. ______________________________________________________

12. What did you enjoy most about living overseas?
    a. ______________________________________________________
    b. ______________________________________________________
    c. ______________________________________________________

13. Are there any customs, sports, styles or clothing, foods, shopping patterns, etc. that you have adopted from your overseas culture...

   At school:  Socially:  At home:
   a. _____________  a. _____________  a. _____________
   b. _____________  b. _____________  b. _____________
   c. _____________  c. _____________  c. _____________
   d. _____________  d. _____________  d. _____________
14. Have you been able to continue these practices or customs back in the United States?
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________

15. Have you picked up any greetings, gestures, or expressions that you have begun to use regularly? Please list them:
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________

16. How do you think your family, friends, and professors have reacted to the items you listed in questions number 13 and 15?
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
# “Values Americans Live By” Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. VALUES</th>
<th>SOME OTHER COUNTRY’S VALUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal control over the environment/Responsibility: Each person should control whatever might affect him/her</td>
<td>Fate/Destiny: Events beyond one’s power or control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change seen as natural and positive: Means improvement/development/growth/progress</td>
<td>Stability/Tradition/Continuity: Honors rich and ancient culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and its control: Punctuality, keeping schedules most important</td>
<td>Human interaction: Relations between people most important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality/Fairness: Of opportunity as an ideal</td>
<td>Hierarchy/Rank/Status: Position in society clearly defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism/Independence: The “self” as the center of the world/need time to be alone</td>
<td>Group’s welfare/Dependence: One cannot exist outside one’s group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-help initiative: A person’s achievement on his/her own</td>
<td>Birthright inheritance: Privilege of birth; inherited wealth or social position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition: Brings out the best</td>
<td>Cooperation: Working together for common good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future orientation: Looking toward the future as better; planning and goal setting</td>
<td>Past orientation: Serves as model; past kept alive; today’s world seen as continuity of past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action/Work orientation: Action is superior; inaction unacceptable</td>
<td>&quot;Being” orientation: State of inaction is acceptable; concern with the nature of existence and inner self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informality: Free from all pretense</td>
<td>Formality: Gives dignity and importance to situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directness/Oppenness/Bluntness: Better to be “up front” about everything</td>
<td>Indirectness/Ritual/&quot;Face&quot;: Must be preserved at all costs even if one has to lie a little to do so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality/Efficiency: Useful purpose for everything is only validity</td>
<td>Idealism/Theory: Philosophical; knowledge for knowledge’s sake; art for art’s sake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism/Acquisitiveness: Seen as the legitimate reward for hard work</td>
<td>Spiritualism/Detachment: Other worldliness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Follow-up Survey and Evaluation

Study Abroad Re-entry Seminar Evaluation
Spring 2013

1. I think the study abroad re-entry seminar overall was:

| Poor | 1 | 2 | 3 | Excellent | 4 |

2. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), rate the seminar facilitators:
   ___ They understood what they taught
   ___ They communicated clearly
   ___ I felt comfortable sharing with them

   ___ My facilitator did a good job
   ___ Their goals and expectations were clear
   ___ They let me make the seminar what I needed it to be

   Is there anything else you would like to say about the facilitators?

   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

3. What seminar activities did you like the most? Why?

   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

4. What seminar activities did you like the least? Why?

   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

5. I left the seminar with (check all that apply):
   ☑ A better understanding of how I had grown and changed as a result of my study abroad experience
   ☑ An understanding of why I was frustrated upon returning to the United States
   ☑ Coping mechanisms to help with the reverse culture shock I was experiencing
   ☑ A connection with one or more peers who also recently returned from studying abroad
   ☑ Techniques to better market my study abroad experience
   ☑ Other: ____________________________________________________________________________
6. What additional topic(s) or subject(s) would you like to see the seminar include in the future?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

7. Rate each of the following on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) in terms of how much it helped you:

   ___ Sharing my artifact and experience    ___ Case studies
   ___ Values discussion            ___ Career Center presentation
   ___ “Evaluating my study abroad experience” quiz and discussion   ___ Putting it all together closing discussion

8. How do you think we could improve the program?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

9. Has attending this seminar affected your transition back to the United States and your home campus?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

10. How do you plan to use your study abroad experience in the future?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

11. Is there anything else you would like to share with the Office of Study Abroad?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
REFERENCES


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