



Evaluating Student Engagement in a Combined Learning Community Study Abroad Program

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AGRICULTURE

ANIMAL SCIENCES

Creating Globally Competent Students



- By 2050, the world population is expected to be 9.8 billion (UN Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs)
- Agriculture students must be culturally literate and have the capacity to communicate
- Global citizenship often identified as an institutional specific learning outcome



High Impact Practices

- Transformational experiences outside of the traditional classroom
- Educational benefits
- Positively associated with:
 - Increase in critical thinking
 - Greater appreciation for diversity
 - Overall high student engagement
 - Promote faculty/student interactions



Learning Communities

- Emphasize collaborative partnerships between students, faculty, and staff
- Assist in establishing academic and social support networks
- Smaller space for students and faculty
- Provide setting for community-based delivery of academic support programs



Study Abroad

- Engage students in active learning that increases their performance on desired outcomes (NSSE, 2007)
- Transformative experience for participants
- Intentional study abroad activities result in a positive impact on students' development of global and intercultural outcomes (Braskamp, 2009)



Intercultural Competence

- The ability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities
- A lifelong process
- Must be intentionally addressed



Objective

- To explore and describe student engagement in a combined study abroad, learning community experience



Produzioni Animali: Exploring Animal Production in Italy



Classification of Students:

- Incoming first-year students, composing 26.3% (n=5)
- second-year students, composing 73.7% (n=14) of the group

Demographics:

- 94.7% female (n=18)
- 5.3% male (n=1)

Majors Represented:

- 94.7% Animal Sciences (n=18)
- 5.3% Agricultural Economics (n=1)

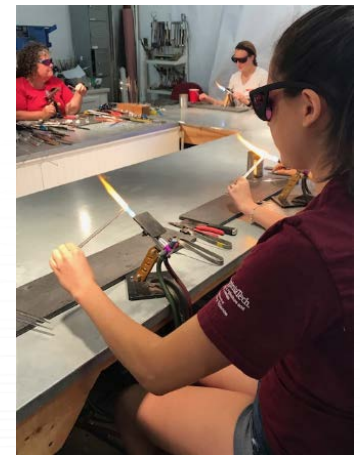
Program Design

Study Abroad	Learning Community
10-d cultural immersion in Italy	Weekly 50-min lectures
Animal production, products, and cultural experiences	Outreach activities
Intercultural activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name Game• Who am I?• Reflective journaling	Intercultural activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alpha/Beta simulation• Intercultural Development Inventory Plan• Market visits• Reflections



Out-of-Classroom Activities

- Connect with other students, faculty, staff that share similar interests
- Opportunity to live in residence hall with other LC members
- Learn about community and University resources
- Network with industry



Community Outreach

- Groups designed outreach presentations for local 4th grade students
- 193 elementary students participated
- Topics included: poultry development, dairy production, feed and nutrition, wool, cheese production, swine breeds



Program Assessment

- IRB approved
- National Survey of Student Engagement
 - Administered wk 15 of the Fall semester

Theme	Engagement Indicators	
Academic Challenge	Higher-Order Learning	
	Reflective & Integrative Learning	→ 5 items
	Learning Strategies	
	Quantitative Reasoning	
Learning with Peers	Collaborative Learning	→ 4 items
	Discussions with Diverse Others	→ 4 items
Experiences with Faculty	Student-Faculty Interaction	→ 4 items
	Effective Teaching Practices	→ 3 items
Campus Environment	Quality of Interactions	→ 4 items
	Supportive Environment	

Results



Theme 1: Academic Challenge

During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?

Reflective & Integrative Learning	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Very Often (%)
Included diverse perspectives in course discussions or assignments	10.5	21.1	31.6	36.8
Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	10.5	15.8	52.6	26.3
Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from their perspective	5.3	21.1	31.6	36.8
Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	5.3	15.8	52.6	26.3



Theme 2: Learning with Peers

During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?

Collaborative Learning	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Very Often (%)
Asked another student to help you understand course material	10.5	42.1	26.3	21.1
Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course materials with other students	5.3	36.8	31.6	26.3
Worked with other students on course projects or assignments	0.0	15.8	31.6	52.6



Theme 2: Learning with Peers

During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups?

Discussions with Diverse Others	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Very Often (%)
People of a race or ethnicity other than your own	0.0	47.4	26.3	26.3
People from an economic background other than your own	0.0	26.3	36.8	36.8
People with religious beliefs other than your own	0.0	26.3	31.6	36.8
People with political views other than your own	0.0	36.8	15.8	47.4



Theme 3: Experiences with Faculty

During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?

Student-Faculty Interactions	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Very Often (%)
Talked about career plans with a faculty member	5.6	52.6	10.5	31.6
Worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework	21.1	36.8	21.1	21.1
Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class	10.5	42.1	21.1	26.3
Discuss your academic performance with a faculty member	15.8	36.8	10.5	36.8



Theme 3: Experiences with Faculty

During the current school year, to what extent have your instructors done the following?

Effective Teaching Practices	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)	Very Often (%)
Clearly explained course goals and requirements	10.5	36.8	36.8	15.8
Taught course sessions in an organized way	10.5	36.8	31.6	21.1
Used examples or illustrations to explain difficult points	15.8	36.8	21.6	15.8



Theme 4: Campus Environment

Indicate the quality of your interactions with the following people at your institution.

Response options: 1 = poor to 7 = Excellent, Not applicable

Quality of Interactions	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Students	3.0	7.0	5.7	1.1
Academic advisors	2.0	7.0	6.0	1.2
Faculty	4.0	7.0	5.9	1.0
Student services staff	2.0	7.0	5.1	1.4



Student Engagement

- Course experience contributed to:
 - Ability to work with others (79%)
 - Development or clarification of personal codes of values and ethics (79.0%)
 - Ability to be an informed and active citizen (63.2%)
 - Assisted in understanding people with diverse backgrounds (79.0%)
 - Assisted in understanding someone else's views by imagining how an issue looked from their perspective (73.7%)



Discussion

- Learning communities impact academic and intellectual experiences
- Previous studies support increased engagement on the NSSE for those students participating in a learning community compared with those who did not participate (S. McKittrick, 2008)
- Future Directions
- Limitations
 - Small, convenience sample – caution overgeneralizing
 - Single semester
 - No comparison group



Program Challenges

- Participant selection
- Location of program
- Duration of immersion experience
- Predeparture assignments



Conclusion

- The development of globally competent agriculture students is critical
- Learning communities can be a high-impact practice to encourage student engagement
- Overall, students in this program reported high levels of engagement, illustrating the potential for combining two HIP into one experience



Questions?

