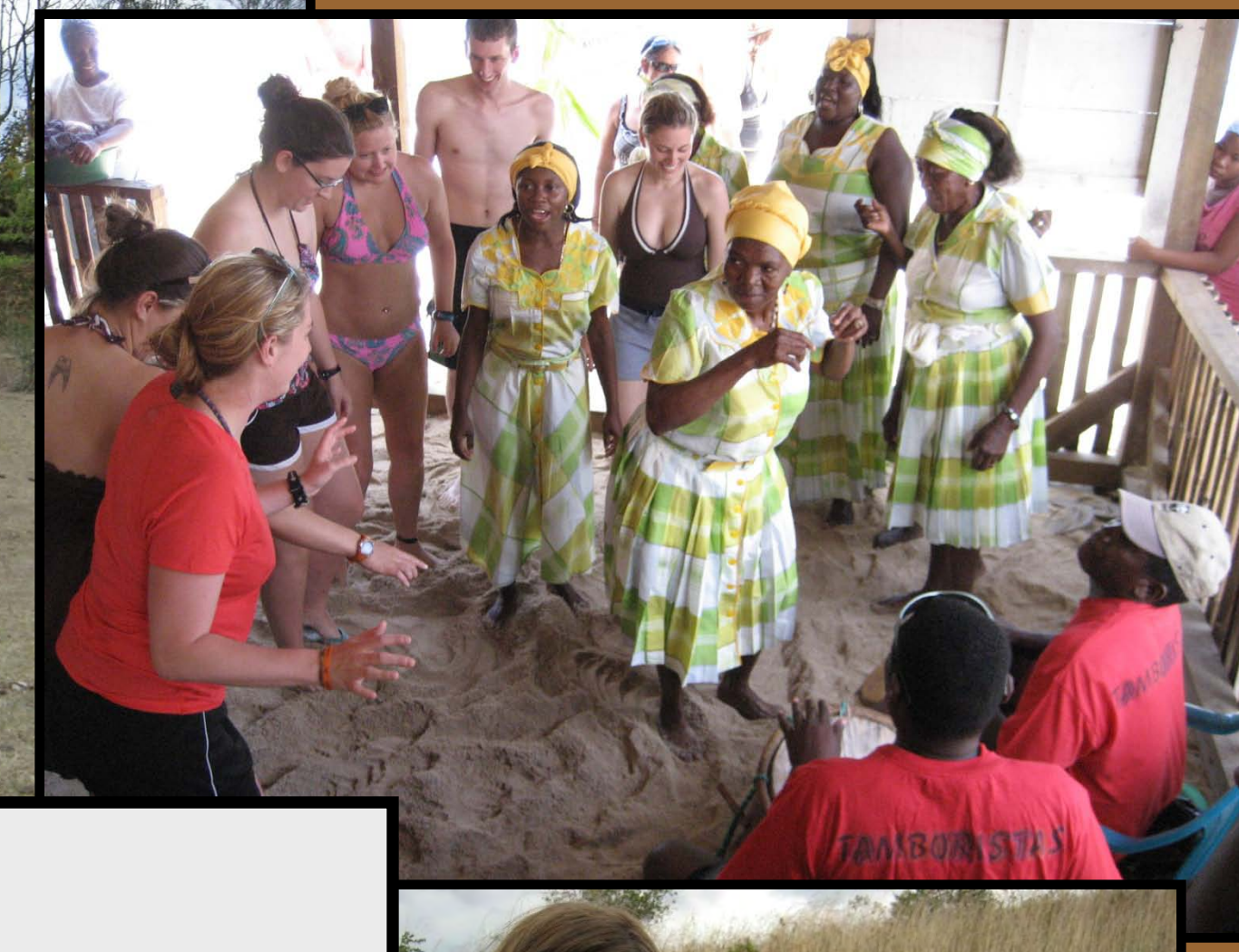


INTEGRATING COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION AND CELEBRATION INTO SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT: Short-term study-trips to developing countries can be meaningful and life-changing for university students if they are carefully crafted with genuine opportunities for rich cultural interaction, hands-on activity with people in a diversity of settings, service-learning experiences, and participation in cultural traditions and events. Twelve years of experience with a short-term program focused on examining the relationship between people and the land in the Latin American tropics of Honduras, Central America, demonstrates effective strategies and techniques for creating memorable opportunities for students to broaden their cultural awareness, understanding, sensitivity and ideology. Evaluation of student journals, creative components, written self-assessments submitted by students, and their participation in a campus-wide open-house after the trip demonstrate a broadened sense of a realistic global perspective in program participants. Students experience and understand dramatic differences in life and living in a developing nation in dramatic contrast to their lifestyle at home in the USA, and come to recognize and appreciate the value of community capacity-building and sustainable living for all people regardless of nationality, culture, socio-economic status, and ideology. Further, they develop cognizance and appreciation of the reality that all people aspire to higher order needs beyond subsistence living, and that there are many benchmarks of happiness, prosperity and quality in life beyond the acquisition and ownership of material possessions, among them, strong family ties, a sense of community, and self esteem regardless of one's station in life.



COLLABORATION

- Confucius once said: "I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand." This is an experience aimed at *doing* things, to cultivate awareness, understanding, and compassion.
- We get off the tourist track and have "real" experiences with "real" people in their homes, on their farms, and in their villages, workplaces, and communities.
- We engage in service-learning experiences with NGOs, micro-enterprises, schools, and community development organizations.
- We put in a good day's work, to earn a good day's *understanding!*



CELEBRATION

- Opportunities to experience the *cultural spice of life* through music, dance, the arts, and holiday traditions are infused throughout.
- Celebrating includes taking time from our academics and our work to simply play with the kids.
- Celebrating a good day's work with a smile, a hug, and a heartfelt chat, go a long way in cultivating our *global village*.



COMMUNICATION

- A *savvy traveler* is one who can *connect* with the people around them, wherever they may be.
- Basic Spanish language skills are built into the pre-trip class sessions.
- Opportunities for communication occur all day, every day...everywhere we go...in very unique ways.
- We teach a class at a rural school in a Honduras village, and *connect* with the children.
- We share our international experience at a campus-wide open-house, to come full circle. We view this as our responsibility. *Think global...act local!*



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