Retention to Graduation
Including study away for success

STUDY ABROAD AS A RETENTION STRATEGY

Experiential learning activities like study abroad are ideal for expanding effective retention strategies in part because many of the learning outcomes of meaningful immersion experiences in other cultures align with the goals and objectives of university retention programming. [1]

Participation in academic travel provides students the opportunity to develop strong relationships with faculty, staff, and peers. Students also gain confidence and an understanding of setting academic goals. These programs shape a student’s perspective regarding the university as well as establishing a sense of institutional fit.[2]

RETENTION BENEFITS

Research illustrates some of the retention benefits of study abroad participation, including:

- Study abroad participants are approximately 20% more likely to graduate on time than non-participants. [3]
- In general, students’ GPAs tend to rise as they approach graduation. Students who studied abroad saw their GPAs rise twice as quickly.[3]
- Returning study abroad participants focus on developing relationships with faculty outside of class [4] and research indicates that faculty-student interactions are critical to the retention of students. [2]

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

Study Abroad and 5-Year Graduation Rates at 2 Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Minnesota, Twin Cities</th>
<th>Study Abroad Participants</th>
<th>90%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Participants</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of California, San Diego</th>
<th>Study Abroad Participants</th>
<th>92%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Participants</td>
<td>78%</td>
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Other examples include:

GLOSSARY: The University of Georgia System implemented the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI). Students who studied abroad had a 17.8% higher 4 year graduation rate. [5]

Indiana University Bloomington: Data shows 95% of students who study abroad graduated within 6 years as compared to 68.5% for the students who did not study abroad. [6]

EXAMPLE MODEL AT OSU

Oklahoma State University’s Living Learning Programs (LLP) collaboration between the Study Abroad/National Student Exchange Office and Housing & Residential Life.

The Global Scholars House, Okstate First and EcoHouse LLP will be housed across 2 floors in Iba Hall during 2019. This collaboration will further increase awareness of international education opportunities to incoming freshmen, especially first-generation students, as part of a new study abroad and internship scholarship initiative. The program will further promote cross-cultural learning among OSU first-generation students and others participating in these LLPs as part of an effort to deepen institutional fit through cross-cultural learning for the residential students.

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

Many times students are academically successful but experience challenges associated with institutional fit and socialization. Lucas McCamon shares how a student exchange program created a stronger institutional fit at OSU.

“...Upon reflection, it seems obvious to me that my semester exchange with the National Student Exchange program was an instrumental turning point in my college and professional career. In the semesters before exchange, I was a high-achieving, albeit slightly lost, student with multiple major changes. During the exchange, I felt a growing connection back to my home university - in fact, I became interested in all the resources and student leader opportunities that my home university offered. After my return, I grew confident in my skills in public speaking, educational programming, and working under pressure. I’ve used those skills extensively in the years since.”

- Lucas McCamon
  Peace Corps Volunteer in Rwanda
  OSU Alumnus