

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS: HOW WELL ARE WE DOING IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF BUSINESS STUDENTS?

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ABSTRACT

Few doubt the importance of an international experience for students (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright and McMillen 2009). Among the benefits are: “facilitating personal growth, changing world views, and enhancing resumes” (Clarke et al 2009). Most business students recognize the benefits though few actually undertake the experience. About 20% of US students studying abroad are business and management students—approximately 52,000 students nationally (Open Doors 2010).

The number of US students studying abroad did not increase for the first time in 25 years. In fact, there was a 0.8% decline (Open Doors 2010). While indications are that study abroad numbers are rebounding, the total number of students participating in a study abroad experience is less than 1.4% of all students.

Marketing educators continue to be concerned about how best to develop an international mindset among students as evidenced by two special issues in the *Journal of Marketing Education* in 2007 and 1998 as well as numerous articles published on the assessing and improving

effectiveness of international marketing experiences, including study abroad (Clarke et al 2009, Cann 2000). The purpose of this study is to add to that body of knowledge by investigating the study abroad options offered by MEA member institutions.

Differences were observed between AACSB accredited MEA member institutions and those that were not AACSB accredited. Not only were more programs available per institution but the percentage of institutions offering study abroad programs—exchange or university sponsored—was greater for AACSB schools. However, study abroad programs across all MEA member institutions were primarily traditional year -long or semester programs, in spite of the fact that the fastest growing type of study abroad experience is the short program. MEA institutions as a whole had few programs with a business focus.

An analysis of institutional capacity among MEA schools for business students in business focus study abroad programs is provided along with a discussion of implications for business faculty, students and institutions.