Increasing the Participation of Underrepresented Students in Study Abroad Programs:
Recommendations for University Presidents, Corporate Leaders, and Study Abroad Professionals

Report of IES Abroad’s Think Tank on Diversity
Table of Contents

Letter of Welcome from Mary M. Dwyer, Ph.D. 2
Directory of Think Tank Participants 4
Preface to Concept Paper 7
Concept Paper 9
Think Tank Participant Discussion Observations and Recommendations 19
Dear Colleagues:

How many times have we heard this: "Studying abroad changes students’ lives"? Without question, international study provides a wonderful opportunity for all students to gain a new perspective on the impact of a different culture on them, both in relation to their own identities and the identities of their peers on the program. Certainly, an international study experience enlarges their knowledge of the world.

However, in today’s increasingly competitive global economy, an international education experience must provide more concrete benefit for a student who will need to embrace the changing world that awaits post-graduation.

In the increasingly global marketplace, an international education experience can be more relevant than ever to a post-college career. Such an experience has the potential to alter students’ lives by influencing their professional choices and by preparing them for the many challenges they will face in the current, rapidly changing global economy.

If we agree that an international education experience has the potential to change a student’s life, to widen her/his perspective on the world and increase her/his ability to find professional status, then, certainly, this experience must be made available to all students who are eligible for it.

However, the reality of study abroad programs is that they remain the purview of majority students. Despite the increasingly-diverse student demographics on college campuses, students who study abroad continue to be non-Hispanic Caucasians. Underrepresented students – defined as members of racial/ethnic minorities, first generation students, economically needy students, and those who have demonstrated a history of overcoming adversity -- remain in the minority in international education programs.

This may be the case because they do not yet know that a study abroad experience is possible for them. This may be true because they have no one in their family who has gone to college or who has studied abroad; it may be true because they are completely focused on finishing their undergraduate studies on time, with no delays, and assume that studying abroad will postpone their graduation. They may not know that participating in an international education program is possible because they have never been told the clear connection between future personal and professional success and a study abroad experience.

IES Abroad is committed to breaking through these barriers.

Through its diversity initiative, IES Abroad diversifies its student body through the efforts of its recruiting staff and its diversity coordinator and through earmarking a portion of its $2 million total financial aid and scholarship funds for under-represented students. Indeed, IES Abroad is the only third-party provider of study abroad programs that employs a full-time diversity coordinator who, among other responsibilities, visits campuses to discuss outreach efforts to under-represented students and share IES Abroad research on the barriers to entry for underrepresented students. IES Abroad also actively seeks to partner with industry as employers increasingly seek to recruit college graduates who are interculturally competent.
This monograph is a report on the deliberations of the Think Tank on Diversity that IES Abroad sponsored September 18-19, 2008. Outstanding leaders from education, not-for-profits, and industry generously donated their time and effort to reflect on the important topic of increasing study abroad opportunities for underrepresented students. The monograph includes background information on the issue of diversity in study abroad as well as information on the discussions think tank participants engaged in during their time together. It ends with a call to action that must be shared by campuses, industry, and providers of international education programs. I trust that you will find it informative and will join IES Abroad in advancing the participation rates of underrepresented students in international education programs.

Sincerely,

Mary Dwyer, Ph.D.
President and CEO
Think Tank on Diversity Participants

**Deborah Bial, Ph.D.**  
Executive Director  
The Posse Foundation

**Mark Chichester**  
Vice President and Executive Director  
The Socrates Society  
The Aspen Institute

**James Colon**  
Vice President of Sales  
Toyota Division  
Toyota Motor Sales

**Robert A. Corrigan, Ph.D.**  
President  
San Francisco State University

**Darryl Crompton**  
Director  
The Institute for International Public Policy  
United Negro College Fund Special Programs Corporation

**Stephen C. DePaul**  
Director of Global Initiatives  
Office of Strategic Management  
The University of Texas System

**Eduardo B. Fernandez**  
President and General Manager  
Telemundo Chicago - WSNS

**W. Marichal Gentry**  
Associate Dean of Yale College  
Dean of Student Affairs  
Yale College

**Andrew Gordon**  
President and Founder  
DiversityAbroad.com

**Steve Hollingworth**  
Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President  
Global Operations  
CARE

**Dale Knobel, Ph.D.**  
President  
Denison University
Regge Life
Founder and Executive Producer/Director
Global Film Network, Inc.

Regina Montoya
Attorney and former CEO,
New America Alliance

Nicole Norfles, Ph.D.
Education Program Officer
The Oprah Winfrey Foundation

Chinwe Onyekere
Program Officer
Pioneer Portfolio and the Childhood Obesity Team
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

James Carmichael Renick, Ph.D.
Higher Education Consultant

Alvaro Romo de La Rosa, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President
Programs, Services, and International Affairs
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D.
President
Spelman College

Roy E. Weathers
Tax Partner
U.S. Chief Diversity Officer
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

Benaree Pratt Wiley
Principal
The Wiley Group

Perry Yeatman
Senior Vice President, Corporate Affairs
Kraft Foods

Presenter/Facilitator
William B. DeLauder, Ph.D.
President Emeritus,
Delaware State University
**IES Board Members**
**Kathryn M. Moore, Ph.D. (Board Chair)**
Dean, College of Education and Psychology
North Carolina State University

**Debora de Hoyos**
Managing Partner
Mayer Brown

**John Coblientz**
Vice President
EDC, Inc.

**IES Staff**
**Mary M. Dwyer, Ph.D.,** President and CEO
**Michael Steinberg, Ph.D.,** Executive Vice President and Director of Academic Programs
**Carol Jambor-Smith, Ph.D.,** Associate Vice President of Institutional Relations
**Joan Gillespie, Ph.D.,** Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Assessment and Program Dean
**Jenise Holloway,** Diversity Coordinator
Introduction and Overview

Preface: Reflecting the True Face of America: Preparing Leaders Through Study Abroad

Why should we care about diversity in study abroad? I think the basic reason derives from the need to think of study abroad as an integral part of overall educational policy. Study abroad, that is, needs to conform to the larger goals of liberal learning that should structure everything we do in our colleges and universities. We need to take study abroad just as seriously as we do every aspect of education on campus. This means that we must seek to achieve the same goals in study abroad as we do in our domestic educational programs.

To the extent that diversity is a key goal of undergraduate higher education, it needs to be integral to successful study abroad programming. I recognize that diversity is a contested concept. It has too often been thought of as an end in itself, an end largely defined in terms of race. But that is too narrow an approach. Diversity can be expressed along many parameters, including race, ethnicity, class, geography, nationality, gender and sexual orientation. It is also expressed in different skill sets, including the multiple styles of learning identified by Howard Gardner. Most colleges and universities these days would feel that a largely homogeneous student body was both undesirable in and of itself, and also unlikely to enhance the learning outcomes of the student body.

Why should that be? Why does diversity matter? As most readers will recognize, this was the question addressed by Justice Lewis Powell in his well-known 1978 Bakke decision. That case involved the constitutionality of a medical school affirmative action program based on race, and in his decision Powell stated that while race in and of itself could not be used as a criterion of graduate school admissions, race could be used as one factor among many considered in order to achieve a diverse incoming class. He quoted previous United States Supreme Court opinions to the effect that “The Nation's future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure to that robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth `out of a multitude of tongues, [rather] than through any kind of authoritative selection’ arguing that the atmosphere of ‘speculation, experiment and creation’ - so essential to the quality of higher education - is widely believed to be promoted by a diverse student body.” “It is not too much to say that the ‘nation's future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure’ to the ideas and mores of students as diverse as this Nation of many peoples. “

Justice Powell went on to assert that if diversity was important in medical and law school education, “there is greater force to these views at the undergraduate level, “so long as diversity was defined broadly and “encompasses a far broader array of qualifications and characteristics of which racial or ethnic origin is but a single though important element.” He cited a current admissions program at Harvard College as a favorable example of expanding “the concept of diversity to include students from disadvantaged economic, racial and ethnic groups.” He used an interesting example: “A farm boy from Idaho can bring something to Harvard College that a Bostonian cannot offer.” Since Bakke, Powell's acknowledgement of its constitutionality and utility has been cited as a justification for college and university policies of educational diversity, especially in admissions programs.
The truly interesting question about diversity as an admissions goal is whether students in more diverse college cohorts actually learn more or learn differently than in homogeneous cohorts. There has been a good deal of education research on the matter, and my impression is that the jury is still out. Nevertheless, my own experience in the classroom is certainly that diversity matters to student learning outcomes. I cannot say whether it makes as much difference in courses on, say, math or physics, but in the sorts of humanities and social science courses I teach (including a required course on Democracy), there is little doubt that a diverse class has a different and preferable learning experience.

I think there is every reason to believe that diversity will also matter in academic courses taken in study abroad programs. As I have said, study abroad courses have the same liberal education goals as those on home campuses, and much of the intellectual dynamic is similar. But courses taken abroad are of course already in a more diverse context. Students are coping with a foreign culture in every aspect of their lives abroad, and that includes their peer relationships within the study abroad institution. I suspect that we have not given enough thought to how American students will learn more and differently in more diverse peer groups abroad.

But there is perhaps an even clearer reason for advocating diversity in the recruitment of study abroad students: insofar as the study abroad experience enhances the student’s chances of future success in life, we need to make sure that the full range of students has access to study abroad opportunities. There is increasing evidence that, in a rapidly globalizing world, studying abroad helps students find jobs and perform well in them. Americans need foreign language facility, familiarity with other cultures, and the capacity to adapt to strangers and strange ways, and all of these capacities can be enhanced by good study abroad experiences. There is also increasing evidence that the capacity and propensity to provide institutional and community leadership is enhanced by study abroad. And surely our country needs to make sure that it has a deep and broadly diverse pool of future leaders.

My argument is thus that efforts to make our study abroad programs more diverse (and we have a very long way to go in this regard) will enhance learning outcomes for all students, provide greater educational and job opportunities for disadvantaged students, and help make American democracy stronger at home and around the world. This sounds like a win-win policy, does it not?

Stanley N. Katz  
Professor of Public and International Affairs  
Woodrow Wilson School  
Princeton University
Reflecting the True Face of America: Preparing Leaders Through Education Abroad

The following two statements increasingly find echo: (1) The United States’ economic well-being is tied to the international marketplace; (2) Growing numbers of American undergraduates are choosing to spend some time studying abroad. Indeed, many in business, government, and education now link these statements as the premise for program initiatives: Because the United States’ economic health is tied to the international marketplace, American college students must be encouraged to study abroad. This argument implies endless possibilities and exciting challenges for current and future college students who develop the second language fluency and intercultural knowledge and skills that this marketplace demands by spending time abroad. The imperative faced now by higher education in general, and IES Abroad in particular, is to guarantee that these possibilities and challenges are open to a diverse student body.

The arguments for diversity in education abroad parallel the arguments for diversity in America’s undergraduate education which not only provides an environment for intellectual exchange but also offers a means for social and economic mobility. As international education becomes commonplace, its benefits likewise must be extended to all students. Diversifying the student body abroad enriches the intellectual exchange, just as it does on an American campus, by asking all students to recognize and respect different cultures and culturally-based perspectives.

At a time when American college campuses increasingly include the diverse faces of international students, international campuses should also reflect the diverse face of Americans who study abroad. Such international study by a diverse group of students is necessary for this country’s future economic health and security. IES Abroad seeks to affiliate with academic, not-for-profit, and corporate partners to develop strategies to reach beyond the traditional demographic of those who participate in education abroad programs. These strategies must address the barriers, both real and imagined, that are perceived by underrepresented students as standing in the way of their opportunity to spend a term abroad.

In convening a think tank on diversifying education abroad, IES Abroad aims to develop such programmatic strategies.

The Changing Face of the World’s Marketplace

Increasingly, the world’s economic balance of power is changing, with several western European nations expected to become less dominant than they have been, replaced by Asian nations such as India and China, Latin American nations such as Mexico and Brazil, and Russia. PricewaterhouseCoopers projects that India’s economy will grow to almost 90% of that of the United States by 2050. Such meteoric rises in the economies of such countries as China and India will pose a vast challenge and opportunity to the global marketplace.

In a 2005 speech, University of California Senior Vice President of University Affairs Bruce Darling told attendees of a University leadership institute that “global
economic shifts are challenging the United States’ long-standing economic preeminence. China, India, Brazil, and the European community are all investing heavily in higher education and research and development. These investments – together with their vast and highly-educated workforces, lower labor costs, growing consumer markets, and generous government subsidies – are driving U.S. companies to set up manufacturing operations abroad.”

Three years later, in his June 30, 2008 New York Times column, Roger Cohen expressed a similar thought: “The four emerging behemoths [Brazil, Russia, India, China] combined reserves stand at close to $3 trillion, almost ten times where they were in 2001. Their share of world output has doubled in that period to 16%. The military dominance of the United States is no longer matched by economic dominance.”

Further proof of the changing nature of the world’s marketplace can be found in statistics published by the World Bank: they predict that China will surpass the United States in gross national product by 2040, with India becoming an increasingly important economic power. The Committee on Economic Development refers to the increasing need for “global teams,” which bring together individuals of different nationalities who must work together across cultural barriers and time zones for extended periods of time. With the success of these multicultural teams becoming critical to success in the global marketplace, American companies “could be spared financial losses if employees possessed the necessary cross-cultural skills to interact successfully with their foreign counterparts.”

Clearly, American businesses must prepare to compete in this changing international marketplace. For the University of California’s Darling, higher education is a source of such preparation through its research and development acumen: “higher education is at the nexus of both demographic change and economic competitiveness...the new knowledge produced by university research is a significant factor in our economic well being.”

The Committee for Economic Development also stresses the importance of the role of higher education, but from the perspective of foreign language acquisition. In a paper titled “Education for Global Leadership,” the Committee said: “[American] firms increasingly need employees with knowledge of foreign languages and culture...cultural competence and foreign language skills can prove invaluable when working on global business teams or negotiating with overseas clients.”

However, America’s need to become nimble in its response to the changing world stems from more than an economic imperative; surely, there is a concomitant security imperative. Post-9/11, the global scope for America’s diplomacy has increased, underscoring the need for a citizenry educated in global knowledge and skills. As our national security increasingly relies on our ability to communicate our belief in humanitarian principles to the world, America will need spokespersons who are proficient in critical languages but who are also interculturally competent. As the Committee on Economic Development has said, “we will need credible, articulate representatives who have attained a high degree of proficiency in a host of strategic languages and dialects as well as an understanding of the cultures and geographic contexts of world regions.”

Thus, higher education will be looked to for research, development, and training in critical languages and cultures for both economic and security concerns. But there
are other, equally compelling, reasons that higher education is the best place to prepare students to embrace the changing world.

As one of the world’s most developed countries, the United States has an obligation to prepare its future leaders to make a positive impact on the global population. In addition to future economic development, American college students will have opportunities to play important roles in the social development and environmental improvement of the earth. Many students who currently participate in service learning projects or internships with non-governmental agencies while on education abroad programs continue to do so upon graduation from college, working for organizations such as the Peace Corps and USAID. Through participating in education abroad programs that promote second language fluency and intercultural competence, students are well equipped to participate in important global humanitarian projects.

Of course, a higher education setting is also enriched simply through the scholarly rigor of an education abroad program that both stimulates and nourishes a student’s intellectual curiosity. The exchange of ideas on an international basis, among students from different countries and cultures, can only serve future global decision-making.

The federal government also looks to higher education in its calls for an educated workforce whose skills include fluency in critical languages and intercultural competence. Indeed, Congress enacted the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program (of which Dr. Mary Dwyer, President of IES Abroad was a member) which recommended that by 2011 an annual appropriation of up to $125 million be enacted to provide students with study abroad scholarships. The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation bill has been passed by the House and is currently being considered by the Senate; the bill would authorize $80 million per year for financial assistance with the goal of increasing the number of students who study abroad annually to one million students.

The Changing Face of American College Campuses

As the world’s face is changing, so, too, is the face of America changing. The growth rate of non-Latino Caucasians will slow over the next fifty years while the growth rate of African-Americans, Asians, and Latinos will rapidly accelerate. By 2050, there are projected to be 211 million non-Latino Caucasians, 61 million African-Americans, 103 million Latinos, and 33 million Asians. These changes represent a small growth rate for non-Latino Caucasians (7.4%) but larger growth rates for African-Americans (71.3%), Latinos (188%), and Asians (212.9%). (Lopez, The Impact of Demographic Changes on US Higher Education.)

The immigrant population within the U.S. is also expected to rise. According to Lopez, immigrants now account for 12% of the total population; by 2020, the percentage is expected to rise to 14%, exceeding the peak of the immigrant population in 1914.

What impact will this expected shift in demographics have on colleges and universities?

Simply put: enormous.
The change in populations will result in a larger group of American young people bound for college who have historically been underserved, economically needy, and under-prepared. Higher education will be asked to develop pedagogy to educate this changing demographic at the same time that it also will be expected to prepare a globally-competent, educated workforce. Education and training beyond high school must be provided to this changing population if America is to compete successfully in the rigorous, knowledge-based global economy of the future.

The Rise of International Study

American campuses are already welcoming students from across the world, testament to the world’s appreciation of the globalization of the marketplace. Increasing numbers of students from the world’s colleges and universities are traveling to the United States to study. Today, more than one-half million international students are enrolled in institutions of higher education in the United States, with India, China, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan sending the largest numbers. Business and management, engineering, and science hold the greatest interest for this group.

As part of the changing educational landscape, American college campuses have stepped up their encouragement for undergraduates to study abroad. Nearly 242,000 U.S. students participated in programs abroad during the 2006-07 academic year, according to the latest annual survey by the New York-based Institute of International Education. Yet even though the majority of international students on United States campuses come from Asia, American college students continue to favor studying in the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France, and Australia, although an increasing percentage is choosing to study in non-European countries, with programs in China, India, and Africa experiencing rising enrollment numbers.

All of these developments would seem to bode well for the future. Through education abroad, increasing numbers of American college students are gaining critical language fluency and intercultural competence, important skills needed for the United States to compete economically, intellectually, and strategically in the changing world.

Benefits of Education Abroad

The trend for American college students to secure jobs in the global marketplace already is underway. The 50-year alumni study conducted by IES Abroad in 2002 showed that education abroad alumni are pursuing globally-oriented careers in higher numbers than ever before. Compared to alumni in the 1950s and 1960s, alumni of IES Abroad programs offered in the 1990s were nearly twice as likely to have been influenced by their IES Abroad experience to procure a job overseas, three times more likely to have worked for a multi-national organization in the United States, and twice as likely to have worked in private industry with an international component.

The alumni of the 1990s benefited from the increasing number of internships available to them during their term abroad, and those who subsequently worked in an international capacity were ten times more likely than their counterparts in earlier decades to participate in an internship as part of their academic program. Notably, 70% of all students who were interns report that this experience gave impetus to
their career, and 83% credit the internship for developing skill sets that influenced their career path.

The 50-year alumni study documents other benefits regardless of whether alumni chose an international career path. Data indicated that education abroad influenced the subsequent academic choices of high percentages of alumni, such as their commitment to foreign language study, their decision to change their major, and enrollment in graduate school. In the category of personal and social development, more than 90% of all alumni reported on the positive effect of education abroad on their self-confidence and increased maturity and its lasting impact on their world view. The same high percentages report on the effect of education abroad on their intercultural development, including a better understanding of their own cultural values and biases and the long-term continuing influence on interactions with peoples from different cultures. On a personal level, alumni who elected certain program options report that they are still in contact with host-country friends.

Current American undergraduates who are open to and excited about encounters with new places and people and who are willing to test themselves with the new ideas, information, and experiences that accompany a term abroad will reap the long-term benefits of alumni who preceded them.

**The Lack of Diversity in International Study**

With education abroad experiences finding increased importance for this country’s future workplace and strategic success, it is imperative that these experiences be made available to the increasingly diverse student body arriving on American college campuses. Currently, a very narrow spectrum of American college students is studying abroad, as the following charts demonstrate. IES Abroad’s enrollment of under-represented students closely parallels national figures.

**Open Doors 2008 Profile of U.S. Study Abroad Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>2000/01</th>
<th>2001/02</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic-American</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial Native American/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>154,168</td>
<td>160,920</td>
<td>174,629</td>
<td>191,231</td>
<td>205,983</td>
<td>223,534</td>
<td>241,791</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the racial and gender disparities among students who choose to study abroad, other groups find themselves underrepresented: those who are first-generation college students, those who are from depressed economic backgrounds, and those who have demonstrated a history of overcoming adversity, such as a physical disability. In addition, there are college majors that are underrepresented in study abroad: students who major in pre-professional programs such as pre-law
and pre-med as well as disciplines such as the sciences and engineering leave their home campuses less frequently during their time as undergraduates.

**Possible Explanations for the Lack of Diversity in Study Abroad**

American employers who are interested in hiring people with education abroad experience and campus administrators who emphasize the importance of education abroad must address the reasons for lack of representation among minority groups.

In part, the reason for this underrepresentation lies with the experience of students and their friends and families. Certainly, those who study abroad often come from families where foreign travel experiences are familiar, either because the family has traveled together, a parent or other relative has done so or because a friend has done so. These families may also more readily perceive a connection between education abroad and the future, both in terms of employment and in terms of general life satisfaction.

Other answers to explain the ethnic and economic disparity in the demographics also lie within family background. For many first-generation college students, the family may think of an education abroad experience as an unwelcome, unnecessary interruption to college study. For students from meager economic circumstances, education abroad may be viewed as a frivolous pastime that has no relevance to future employment goals and is beyond their economic reach, both because of the actual cost of the study abroad program and the loss of any income a time away from campus may represent. Additionally, these students may not receive information about education abroad programs available on their campuses or may not receive encouragement to seek out such programs.

**IES Abroad Commitment to Diversity**

Because IES Abroad is dedicated to providing all students with the opportunity to study abroad, it has undertaken an initiative to increase the numbers of under-represented students in its programs. (The term “under-represented” is used broadly to include students who are first-generation college students, those who are economically disadvantaged, those who are members of an ethnic or religious minority, and those who have demonstrated a history of overcoming adversity.) IES Abroad believes that this initiative will help ensure that America’s future global leaders represent its true diversity.

To meet this goal, IES Abroad now includes the topic of diversity at its annual conference for consortium members. In 2007, it hired a full-time diversity coordinator (it remains the only third-party provider of study abroad programs to have done so) to work with students, education abroad coordinators at consortium schools, and other IES Abroad staff members. Of the over $2.2 million IES Abroad pledges annually for scholarships and financial aid, 13% is earmarked for underrepresented students.

IES Abroad has taken steps to ensure that all of its marketing materials reflect a diverse student body; student ambassadors (former IES Abroad students) from under-represented groups have also been identified and recruited so that they are able to offer advice on programs to students from similar under-represented groups.
A number of academic programming options at IES Centers specifically address diversity. IES Abroad Madrid launched a curriculum designed for heritage speakers of Spanish in 1998, with language courses and preparation for internationally-recognized exams in Spanish fluency. In 2008-09, it will expand its offerings with a new course on teaching Spanish as a second language. This Center consistently enrolls the highest percentage of self-described students of Hispanic-American ethnicity. Courses on the broader topic of multiculturalism are taught at IES Abroad Centers in Barcelona, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Granada, London, Paris, and Rome. In addition, international staff members receive training on addressing challenges that U.S. under-represented students might encounter while abroad.

**Background on IES Abroad**

In 1950, the Institute of European Studies was founded. That year, twenty-three students sailed to Rotterdam, en route to Vienna, to study for a year, the first participants in the sole IES program. Today, the Institute for the International Education of Students (as it was renamed in 1997) has academic Centers located throughout Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, New Zealand, and South America and is a consortium made up of over 175 selective U.S. colleges and universities, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities such as Spelman College, Morehouse College, and Howard University.

In 2007-08, IES enrolled 5,400 students to study in its worldwide study abroad programs. With more than 80 programs in 31 cities (starting 2008-09), IES is dedicated to broadening its global reach and continuing its commitment to offering students outstanding academic options while acquiring intercultural competence.

During its almost six decade history, IES Abroad has emphasized second language fluency and intercultural competence. Expanding on its excellence in teaching the Indo-European languages, IES Abroad now offers language instruction in Mandarin, Japanese, Hindi, and Arabic. With Centers currently in China (Beijing, Shanghai) and India (Delhi) and Centers in Sub-Sahara Africa (Cape Town, 2009) and Morocco (Rabat, 2009) IES Abroad is focused on offering American students the opportunity to become competent in the languages and cultures of those countries with the fastest-growing influence on the world, whether economic or political.

The twenty-three member Board of Directors of IES Abroad is comprised of members from academe and industry. The IES Abroad Board of Directors includes an Academic Planning and Student Services Committee that provides oversight for IES Abroad programs. Members of the IES Abroad consortium serve in the Academic Governance system, the Academic Council and Curriculum Committee; the Academic Council rules on matters of academic policy, curriculum design, and program review. The Curriculum Committee reviews and approves the syllabus of every IES Abroad course in the context of the IES Abroad program’s curriculum design and strict guidelines that apply across programs and address goals for student learning, course content, and assessment. IES Abroad follows an exhaustive and comprehensive evaluation system that assesses every aspect of the programs. In addition, periodic program review committees with representation from the IES Abroad consortium conduct on-site evaluations. This complement of expert advisors and the level of assessment that they provide is unique in the field of education abroad.

Two initiatives of IES Abroad support excellence in all of its programming: The IES MAP® (Model Assessment Practice) and IES 3-D® Program Design. These two
initiatives complement each other in the planning and implementation of the diversity initiative. The programming principle of the IES MAP® is to use the local environment as the starting point for courses and co-curricular activities. IES Abroad has the experience and expertise to create a variety of academic programs, each of them addressing diversity as represented by the specific site’s current social, economic, and political spectrum. Diversity can serve as the organizing principle of courses.

A necessary component of the cognitive understanding of how cultures differ and how they are produced and reproduced is personal experience with difference, including segments of the host population who are minorities themselves and part of the total identity of the locale. The IES 3-D® Program Design envisions the IES Abroad Center as a partner with the community as well as the students’ link to the community. This view offers the solid basis for a program of community-based learning through field work, service, and volunteerism, and the means for all students to commit themselves to balancing the needs and rights of all peoples in a global world.

**Goals for the Think Tank**

The Diversity Think Tank participants and IES Abroad leadership adhered to the following goals, with recommendations resulting in the following areas:

1. A partnership with leaders from the academy, NGOs, and industry to educate a diverse body of future leaders through IES Abroad programming;
2. Training and funding initiatives to be implemented by the partnership;
3. A strategy to implement these initiatives.
4. A strategy to measure the success of the initiatives.
References


http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=113282


Rediff India Abroad. 2008. “India to be 90% of US economy by 2050: PwC,”
http://www.rediff.com/money/2008/mar/07india.htm

Carol Jambor-Smith, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Institutional Relations

Joan Gillespie, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Assessment and Program Dean
Think Tank Discussion Observations and Recommendations

Think Tank discussions centered on four topics:

I. AWARENESS OF BENEFITS OF EDUCATION ABROAD

The growing interdependence of international economies has become glaringly evident in the current global financial crisis. When combined with the increasing awareness of the importance of cross-cultural work groups, global competence emerges as a vital requirement for any workforce.

Increasingly, international education programs are seen as places students are able to develop such competence. Participants in the Think Tank agreed that members of underrepresented groups—both students and their parents—need to be made more aware of the connection between international education programs and practical applications to a job search and future employment.

1. Diversity must be a goal of all international education programs.

Think Tank participants were unanimously of the opinion that just as diversity is a key educational component of undergraduate education, so too must it be a vital component of international education programs.

2. Students and parents must be shown that the skills that students develop through international educational programs are closely tied to current critical workplace skills needed in the global marketplace.

Think Tank participants stressed the importance of communicating that an education abroad program of cultural immersion will build useful career development skills in addition to academic skills.

Think Tank participants agreed that such skills include cross-cultural sensitivity, adaptability, resilience, and self-reliance, all of which are also key leadership skills.

3. International education programs must emphasize the new perspectives on themselves and on other points of view that students develop, demonstrating that these broadened and inclusive perspectives are requirements of leaders.

Being able to work in cross-cultural teams is a given in the current corporate world, with data demonstrating that such teams produce superior results. A period of education abroad requires students to rely on people in new, cross-cultural ways. This experience leads to shifts in a student’s social relationships and sense of self as she/he learns how to live and work surrounded by cultural diversity. As the student becomes more comfortable in the new culture, she/he may become less comfortable with and more questioning of her/his own cultural assumptions. This learning and re-evaluating, which occurs constantly in a new environment, is necessary for leading in a global environment.
II. FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF EDUCATION ABROAD PROGRAMS

For some students, financial need is a real barrier to participating in an education abroad program. Think Tank participants addressed the need to provide underrepresented students financial support for and accurate financial information about a term of education abroad.

1. Students need more information about the cost of education abroad.

Information about the cost of education abroad should discuss tuition and other fees as well as financial aid options. Communicating this information is of the utmost importance in recruiting underrepresented students for education abroad and should be made available both through home campus offices and program abroad providers. Further, early outreach to underrepresented students is critical, since they may need additional time to plan for study abroad and to research scholarships and financial aid sources.

Universities and international education organizations must do a better job of informing students of fellowships available that would help them fund their education abroad experience.

Ways to compensate students for income lost while participating in an international education program must be accounted for, especially with underrepresented students who may depend on such income to fund critical pieces of their college education.

2. Public-private partnerships offer one venue for increasing access through financial aid and funding.

Corporate support already exists for discipline-specific programs and for domestic internships that serve as pipelines for corporate employment; an example of this support is General Electric internships in different business locations for “Trio” students.

Corporate support for international internships could be made part of an education abroad term. Such internships could prove beneficial for underrepresented students, providing them with the kind of job experience that is currently valued highly by recruiters: one that provides students the opportunity to work in multi-cultural environments. Another benefit of such international internships may be increasing parental awareness of the career benefits derived from participation in education abroad programs.

Community organizations may also be a source of funding opportunities for and awareness of the long-term benefits of study abroad. Excellent outreach networks include churches, schools, and organizations such as the Boy Scouts.

3. Institutional support for education abroad must augment public funding.

Think Tank participants encouraged colleges and universities to extend their institutional aid to education abroad through grants and awards. Need-based aid should be allowed to travel from program to program or institution to institution with the student. Participants encouraged the field to consider ways to offset both the
program costs as well as the lost income that students realize by not working during an international education program.

III. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS IN EDUCATION ABROAD PROGRAMS

Several concerns that were discussed by the Think Tank are not specific to underrepresented students but apply to institutional commitment to education abroad for all students.

1. **Support for education abroad originates with the campus’ Office of the President.**

Institutional policies and culture often contribute to the rate of participation in education abroad among students from underrepresented groups. The Think Tank agreed that the initiative for allowing more students from underrepresented groups to study abroad has to come from the top, from college presidents and university boards.

2. **Pre-departure recruiting and advising strategies and re-entry support are critical to increasing the participation of underrepresented students in education abroad.**

Underrepresented students need more information early in their college careers about the benefits of education abroad, financial aid options, and credit transfer. They also need strong support systems when they are abroad and when they return to their home campuses; these systems will have major impact on the extent to which these students succeed in their international programs.

IV. COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Communication strategies for the target market of underrepresented students need to address a number of issues specific to their concerns and needs.

1. **Outreach to the parents of underrepresented students is critical to increasing the representation of underrepresented students in education abroad.**

Parents and family members in underrepresented households may not automatically support a student’s desire to participate in an education abroad program. This reluctance can be overturned by creating greater awareness of the benefits of education abroad, as discussed in the preceding section. Education abroad information materials must emphasize the return-on-investment aspect of program participation, particularly in relation to career choice.

2. **Expanded messaging to students should draw on success stories.**

Marketing strategies should draw on role models and peers who will carry positive messages about education abroad to members of minority groups. The field might also consider building relationships with community-based organizations and foundations to provide pre-college study abroad awareness efforts.
3. The field of international education is encouraged to work with the federal government and corporate America on several fronts to advance the diversity initiative.

Participants in the Think Tank suggested that IES Abroad and the field of international education hold a public policy briefing with Congressional leaders to emphasize the importance of education abroad. Participants agreed that it remains unclear whether corporations, in particular HR personnel and hiring managers, understand the value of a period of education abroad on the résumé of a potential employee. Thus, participants recommended some kind of briefing also be made to corporate leaders.

V. CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Think Tank participants recommended three key initiatives to diversify the education abroad student body.

1. College campuses must become pro-active in recruiting, advising, and supporting underrepresented students for education abroad programs. These activities must include information addressing student concerns as well as information addressing parental concerns. The need for these proactive measures must be communicated from the highest administrative level.

2. Organizations, including corporations, community-based agencies, high schools, and college/university administrations, must commit to making education abroad opportunities available to all students. This mandate requires access to information and support as well as access to meaningful financial aid that travels off-campus to education abroad programs.

3. Corporate leadership must recognize the value of an education abroad experience in terms of future employee success and implement initiatives with education abroad providers and campus study abroad programs that create meaningful career-oriented opportunities, such as internships. This commitment to education abroad must be valued at the highest administrative level and communicated to all aspects of the corporation, including the HR department.
About IES Abroad

IES Abroad is one of the nation’s oldest, largest, and most reputable study abroad providers. Founded in 1950, IES Abroad is a growing Chicago-based, not-for-profit organization that enrolls more than 5,000 students annually. Committed to quality, IES Abroad is comprised of a consortium of more than 170 highly-selective U.S. colleges and universities. With more than 80 programs in 31 locations, IES Abroad is dedicated to offering students outstanding academic options coupled with everyday opportunities for immersion in the local culture.

IES Abroad believes that every student should study abroad and encourages students from all backgrounds to embark on this life-changing experience.