

**ASSESSING SHORT TERM STUDY ABROAD
PROGRAMS IMPACT ON HOST COMMUNITIES:
THE CASE OF GHANA**

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by

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ABSTRACT

The numerous surveys and publications on short term study abroad programs have neglected, or largely ignored, how host communities are impacted by these programs. Questions such as what sort of interactions the students have with local communities in host countries and how these communities view and relate to the students have almost no published assessment to inform STA practitioners and international program that's develop STAs. Organizations such as the Institute for International Education (IIE), School of International Training (SIT), and many others have little or no data on the effects of study abroad programs on local communities. The Forum on Education Abroad Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad (2008, 19) only cautions students and the organizations sending the students to “respect the cultures and values of the countries in which it operates.”

This study seeks to shed light on how these programs influence, impact, and effect change on host communities and how those in the communities view the STAs. Two communities, Tse Addo and UG, were the survey sites.

Findings of the study reveal the need for more collaboration and effort be placed in developing mutually beneficial, targeted, and meaningful experiential learning not only for he students, but also where that learning takes place.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jackie Nina Sayegh was born and raised in Montserrado County, Liberia. She attended the University of Liberia where she graduated with a Bachelor's in English and History. In 1989, Jackie was awarded a Fulbright to pursue a degree in African/African American Literature at Cornell.

In 1995, Jackie worked at the State University of New York-Cortland, New York, and later at Montgomery College in Rockville and Germantown, Maryland. Anxious to return to Ithaca, Jackie got a job with the Institute for African Development where she currently works as the Senior Program Manager.

They held me up.

Mary Vinton Davies, Dolly Collins, and Diab Dayoub.

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Chapter I

Introduction

“Mark Twain said that travel is fatal to prejudice, and I don’t know about that—I think people can build some pretty high walls around their prejudice—but travel makes it harder to keep those walls intact, and most of our Cornell students want to learn, want to talk and learn with people from other cultures. I think they understand that you learn the most when you are outside your comfort zone. . . Students need to talk with people who live in different “worlds” and who grew up with different customs and don’t see the world through a U.S. lens.”
– Wendy Wolford, Vice Provost for International Affairs, Cornell

There is growing acknowledgement that the employees of the future must be skilled and equipped not only in the knowledge of their specific trade but also in intercultural awareness to effectively navigate the new global era. The interconnectedness and interdependence associated with globalization compels global citizens to understand other cultures as a necessity. Higher educational institutions have responded to this imperative through programs that focus on study abroad, on-site research in other countries and regions, and short-term visits to develop and enhance intercultural awareness and competence.

The United States has responded to this growing necessity of a globally competent labor force through legislation and an increase in innovative programs. One such example of legislation is the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act introduced in 2023. The Act’s goal is to “expand access to study abroad for U.S. undergraduate students. It revises the Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students program (commonly known as the IDEAS program) and formally renames the program as the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program.”

The Act notes that the “United States cannot remain globally competitive without a citizenry equipped with global skills and knowledge” and “Ensuring that many more American college students have access to study abroad as part of their academic preparation is vital to U.S. competitiveness and should be a national priority.”

https://www.nafsa.org/sites/default/files/media/document/simon_program_infographic.pdf

Another such program, USA Study Abroad, asserts that students “study abroad to build skills and knowledge, prepare to solve the world’s toughest challenges, and compete in the 21st century workforce.” <https://studyabroad.state.gov/value-study-abroad/why-study-abroad>. The Association for Talent Development in its 2021 ATD blog highlights that as “national economies evolve, overlap, and merge, the need to work with people from other cultures is an irreversible necessity. International corporations are increasingly searching for business management professionals who are skilled, flexible, and able to adjust and apply their skills with the tact and sensitivity that will enhance business success internationally” (Sinden, 2021).

Cornell, like many other institutions of higher learning, heeded the call and created comprehensive internationalization strategies that encompass all areas of academia, be it instruction, research, or outreach to provide opportunities in achieving global competence. On March 12, 2012, former Cornell President David J Skorton presented a presidential white paper to the university community, a manifesto on strategies for “Bringing Cornell to the World and the World to Cornell”. In the paper, he emphasized the importance of academic internationalization and noted that “there is growing recognition on university campuses across the world that internationalization is important in every aspect of higher education. If we are to educate students for global citizenship, we must offer them language study, an understanding of history

and of cultures beyond their own, and meaningful international experiences. We must equip them to live and work in a world whose chief problems transcend national boundaries.”

Many publications have asserted that study abroad programs serve as a major pathway for the future workforce to gain knowledge of other cultures to make it more compatible with the 21st century job market. “Study abroad . . . is the central component of the internationalization movement of college curricula in the US. (Watson, Siska, and Wolfel 2013), and it represents the primary tool for the development of global, international and intercultural competencies among students in post-secondary setting in the US. (Soria and Troisi 2014).

As previously mentioned, the demand for a skilled, interculturally aware workforce has given rise to numerous programs abroad. The need for effective study abroad programs has in turn put into place assessment tools and methodologies to evaluate the impact on students who participate in these programs. Assessment surveys chart their level of intercultural competence, level of cultural humility, quality of experiential learning and the host institutions’ ability to deliver on stated objectives. Institutions such as the School of International Training (SIT), the Institute for International Education (IIE) and other organizations have put into place metrics and modules to evaluate learning outcomes and impact on the student participants.

Many of the programs abroad are short-term (less than eight weeks) and take place in the summer or winter breaks. Currently the most popular among the study abroad options, short-term programs cater to students who may not want full immersion, but rather a brief visit to another region for cultural introduction.

Objectives and Goals of this Study

As a way forward, this study seeks to inform educators and international education policy makers on the value of community inclusion in developing syllabi, programs, and itineraries for an effective and meaningful partnership and collaborative experiential learning. Informed by community and student surveys, this study will shed light on short-term (less than 8 weeks) abroad programs in Ghana, using internships and STA courses to examine the participation of and the impact on host communities, specifically in Accra. It brings into the assessment the network of supporting structures that underpin the program and its function in the communities.

The study aims to:

- identify areas of contact and examine the quality and duration of interaction with the community and with peers; and,
- discuss the findings and propose strategies for more inclusive, immersive, collaborative, and effective STAs.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study is not exhaustive in its coverage of STAs, however, it attempts to review important publications on the topic. Short-term study abroad (STAs) programs have increased tremendously in demand and popularity among undergraduates. (See Appendix #2)

Study abroad programs have increased the assessment of participating students' experiences and their contribution to program learning outcomes such as cultural awareness, cultural adaptability, language proficiency, among others. Many institutions view STAs as a precursor to more extended collaboration with the foreign partner (Mason & Their, 2018). The UNESCO Global citizenship education handbook lists as one of its core conceptual dimensions of global citizenship education, to “acquire knowledge, understanding and critical thinking about global, regional, national and local issues and the interconnectedness and interdependency of different countries and populations.” Its socio-emotional objective is to “have a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity.” 65 UNESCO (2014). Education Strategy 2014 – 2021, p.46.6 UNESCO (2014). Global citizenship education: Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century.

Michael J. Flack in the article *Results and Effects of Study Abroad* explains that “the propensity of recent years to think in cost effective terms, the need to justify the initiation or continuation of sponsored programs for both United States and foreign students, and the often

loose claims about the public welfare/foreign policy/international relations implications for education have led to a substantially increased emphasis on “evaluating’ programs, probing for consequences, and seeking to identify results, effects , and impacts ” (Flack 1976). Braskamp focuses on the ways educators can create “experiential learning courses for students for “character development and creating an effective environment for students to become global citizens.” (Larry Braskamp). English (1996) work focused on whether intercultural competence was valid and reliable as a concept while McCabe (1994) examined how study abroad influenced participants’ world view.

Advantages of STAs include: “(1) greater accessibility to study abroad for students with limited language proficiency or cross-cultural experience, (2) pre-approved curricula that are consistent with the home institution’s academic requirements, (3) programs scheduled to fit the duration and timing of the home campus term, (4) the potential for including innovative experiential courses tailored to the needs and interests of study abroad participants, (5) a group context that facilitates own-culture learning...(6) tuition and fees that are kept within the institution, rather than paid to outside entities, and (7) an easily accessible mechanism for faculty development” (Goldstein 2015).

Faculty-led STAs are like exported campus or “island” programs where the home university manages its own self-contained quasi campus, and therefore students are under the rules of the home institution (Cushing et al, 2019)

There has also been criticism of these types of programs from educators. Irwin Abrams, a leading authority on international peace movement explained that the study tours have become “no more than sight-seeing with a syllabus.” US students in STAs at times display “pervasive consumerist/entitlement mentality which they export to other regions” (Engle&Engle, 2003).

“Short-terms have kind of been the stepchild of study abroad. They were initially often summer programs with a ‘vacation-y’ image. And a lot of purists don’t believe a month is a long enough time for a significant experience abroad. All this is even more reason that institutions must have strong academic foundations for their short-term programs.” “Avoid two four-letter words: trip and tour,” “A trip is a one-time, isolated thing. A good short-term program is strongly connected to coursework and an integral part of a larger learning experience” (Smith 2009).

This demand for assessment powered the increase in reflections from all areas of study abroad. The evaluations serve “to learn what are the conditions, effects, and co-results of intercultural experience and learning, if for no other reason than because, in a variety of forms and methods, they will represent a growing imperative in preparing persons everywhere for constructive functioning in an increasingly interdependent and necessarily cooperating world. Also, the emphasis on the evaluation of results may in time lead to a more deliberate and comprehensive articulation, research, and thus knowledge of the many interacting and parallel factors that enter into and affect the dynamics of intercultural learning, encounters, and transfer of experience, and their roles in the all-important area of “knowledge-in-action.”

In “Intercultural Contact in Short-term Study Abroad Programs” authors Jorge Cubillos and Thomas Ilvento from the University of Delaware explained that “study abroad is a central component of the internationalization movement of college curricular in the United States (Watson, Siska, and Wolfel 2013) and it represents the primary tool for the development of global, international and intercultural competencies.

With the need for assessments comes evaluative methods that target language acquisition, content knowledge concerning a specific culture or knowledge of global affairs, salient personality variables, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence (Sobkowiak and

Mickiewicz, 2015). The study examines whether intercultural contact transmits into intercultural growth. One of the theories used is the contact theory which fosters intergroup relations. The intergroup contact theory posits that bringing culturally and linguistically diverse groups together promotes intercultural growth. However, the study results show that bringing such group together does not necessarily result in tolerance of other groups nor does it make them change their beliefs and world view. What does bring about open-mindedness and tolerance is participatory learning, engagement, and mutual understanding within the group.

Contributions to host communities while expanding intercultural awareness is necessary to the cooperative nature that should be a hallmark of the experiential living experience (Slimbach 2010), a sense of reciprocity of students sharing their culture and knowledge with host communities as those communities share and learn from them as well (Pak 2007).

Chapter III

Global Footprints

One of the hallmarks of our time is a greater appreciation of the extraordinary variation among the cultural traditions that help to constitute our world. To be effective in such a world, it is essential that adults feel at ease moving through different communities, interacting with people who are very different from them.
– Cornell Graduate Student survey (Call to Engagement) 2012

Short term abroad programs have mostly taken place in Europe and some parts of Asia. Over the years, the demand for Africa as a region has grown in part due to the continent’s diversity, affordability, and increased demand for experiences that take students outside of their comfort zones. Misconceptions about Africa and its diverse cultures abound and STAs challenge students to confront these misconceptions. School for International Training developed a campaign called “[Africa: See for Yourself](#)” to make students confront and challenge stereotypes and other misconceptions about Africa. According to SIT’s president Sophia Howlett, “With this campaign, we are encouraging students to broaden their worldviews and consider decolonial perspectives—to experience the vibrant cultures and sustainable practices that make Africa a global hub for development, technology, research, and the arts.”

The call was successful. According to IIE [Open Doors](#) report, there has been a marked increase in the number of Americans at African universities. The Institute of International Education Open Doors Report (2007) listed that in 2006/07, approximately 241,791 students studied abroad, an 8.5% increase from 2005/06. According to the NAFSA Report, the rate of US students studying abroad increased by 49% from 2006/07 to 2022.03. Additionally, US students

studying abroad in Africa held steady at 3.3% from 3.9% in 2018.19 to 2.4% in 2021/23 and 3.3% in 2022/23. In 2022-23, there were 9,163 Americans studying in sub-Saharan Africa, 1,444 of them studied in Ghana, more than double the number from the previous year. Nearly 39 percent of all U.S. students studying abroad in sub-Saharan Africa attended universities in South Africa. There were 3,568 American students attending universities in South Africa during the 2022-23 academic year. This was up 113 percent from the previous year. In the 2022-23 academic year 1,444 U.S. students studied in Ghana, more than double the number from the previous year. Kenya hosted 1,024 U.S. students, up 38 percent from the previous year. There were 910 U.S. students at universities in Tanzania, up more than 150 percent from the previous year (The Journal of Blacks in Higher education). <https://jbhe.com/2024/12/huge-surge-in-american-students-studying-abroad-in-sub-saharan-africa/>

University of Ghana

The choice of Ghana for a more in-depth examination of the impact of study abroad programs on host communities and peers was for several reasons. As previously mentioned, Ghana is one of the two Cornell Global Hubs in Africa and has the most Cornell African alumni residing there. Cornell alumni in Ghana support the Cornell internship program and the UISFL STA course held at the University of Ghana. According to the 2019 Open Door Report, “there is an 18.5% increase in 2018 in the number of US students attending universities and colleges in Ghana, from 1,865 to 2,210.” Although the first place is held by South Africa, there has been a decrease in the number of students thereby making Ghana “ the only region in Sub-Saharan Africa that has experienced the largest growth.” [Ghana is the second highest study destination for US students in sub-Saharan Africa](#) (See Appendix #3).

The internationalization of academic programs in Ghana gave rise to an increase in placements with local and national organizations geared towards short term programs. Numerous organizations advertise immersive programs and connect with departments and colleges at the University of Ghana to support its itinerary of activities. Cornell currently places undergraduates in several organizations headed by alumni including GapNet, Lead for Ghana, and Population Council.

Like Cornell, UG has a global footprint and a mission that combines research, teaching and outreach/knowledge dissemination. . Established in 1948, the University of Ghana was a base for British institutions such as the “University of London, Oxford University and Cambridge University. In the early post-independence years, the foreign student population was often comprised of refugees or occasionally children of diplomats resident in Ghana.” The University of Ghana promotes internationalization and expands and enhances its role in providing numerous experiential opportunities for students from abroad. The University of Ghana (UG) Internationalization Strategy Development Committee has been successful in promoting the University of Ghana as a hub for study abroad.

The University of Ghana created its International Program Office in 1997 with the primary goal of turning UG into “the institution of choice in Africa for international partnerships to drive cutting-edge research, teaching and knowledge dissemination.” “Currently, UG has 530 international partnership agreements and collaborations involving 500 institutions in 70 countries worldwide. UG had collaborated with international partners on study abroad and international exchange programs to facilitate student and staff academic mobility before the office was created. These include the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), International Student Exchange Program (ISEP), Missouri Africa Program (MAP), SUNY@ Brockport,

University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC), New York University (NYU), University of California Exchange Abroad Program (UCEAP), California State University (CSU), and Tufts University. (See Appendix #4)

Cornell

Like the University of Ghana, Cornell's global footprint began at its founding. According to Engst and Kammen, while other institutions language instruction centered on the classics such as Greek and Latin, Cornell internationalized its curriculum and added languages such as French, German, Swedish, Icelandic and Persian. In addition, study abroad trips to Brazil, Greenland, and Alaska took place. "In 1894, the American academy in Rome gave Cornell students the opportunity to study abroad in Rome." Internationalization continued in myriad forms at Cornell and increased after 1947 primarily due to the Marshall Plan. Peru, Thailand, the Philippines, Liberia, Brazil and Italy joined the list of countries where Cornell students travelled for research. During his tenure as Cornell President, Jeffrey Lehman increased Cornell's interaction with foreign universities through his Call to Engagement thereby "launching Cornell as a truly transnational university."

In March 2012, then Cornell President David J. Skorton pushed for more a comprehensive and vigorous approach to the university's internationalization. "Today Cornell's international programs involve all of our colleges and professional schools and nearly every program on campus. . . . We operate our own study abroad programs in France, Rome, Tanzania, Nepal, Berlin and Tokyo. About 500 Cornell students each year enroll in a Cornell study abroad program or at an international university, with assistance from Cornell Abroad, for a semester or a year... Our approach to globalization is essentially one of building capacity – we believe that as part of our mission we have a responsibility to carry out research on issue where new

knowledge could make a difference, to extend ourselves to institutions of higher learning in other parts of the world, and to ensure access to our own system of higher education here at home....Today we have well over 150 agreements in more than 50 countries that run the gamut of arts and sciences, engineering, the professions, agriculture, and labor relations. “Like almost all the programs, presentations and trips, the focus centered on benefits to the university and students. “A priority in the first year has been internationalizing the student experience so our students will have the opportunity to have an international component to their curriculum—whatever their college, whatever their course of study” (Fredrik Logevall, former vice provost for international affairs and director of the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies), 2013,

The most comprehensive and ambitious strategy of internationalization currently at Cornell centers around the establishment of a set of “Global Hubs”. Launched in 2022, the Hubs are Cornell's “targeted partnerships with comparable global institutions. The hubs serve as a platform for varied and “multilateral engagement” from internships, research and exchanges.” According to the Cornell’s Vice Provost for International Affairs Wendy Wolford, “Students need to talk with people who live in different "worlds" and who grew up with different customs and don’t see the world through a U.S. lens.” According to the Vice Provost, unlike traditional study abroad “they emphasize experiential learning. Many locations have (or will have) internship opportunities for our students to work alongside their students and community partners, whether in short-term experiences or research projects during their study abroad semester.” Zambia and Ghana are the countries in Africa that currently serve as Cornell Global Hubs in Africa.

The Task Force on Internationalization (TFI), created by Skorton to push forward Cornell’s global vision, addressed the lack of effort given to global interaction with the colleges. Cornell’s once eminent position in international studies has eroded greatly during the last 30

years. While many of its peer institutions invested heavily in highly visible and well-focused international activities, Cornell stood still. While Cornell ranked 15th in 2003 among research institutions in the percentage of undergraduates (31.9%) studying abroad, by 2008-09 it had fallen out of the top forty universities to 20.9%. Cornell is behind Dartmouth, 61.2%; Stanford, 47.4%; Brown, 37.1%; University of Pennsylvania, 36.9%; Harvard, 35.9%; Yale, 34.1 (2009 Open Doors report). Currently, the percentage of Cornell undergraduates who engage in study abroad is 28%, considerably lower than Princeton (61%), Stanford (50%) and Harvard (70%).

The TFI report had 27 recommendations with three primary pathways:

- "Expand and enhance the number and quality of student opportunities for meaningful international experiences linked to their curriculum." This would be achieved through expanded student travel grants, engaged learning and research opportunities, international partnerships, new lower division undergraduate courses, an internationalization requirement for all undergraduates, and administrative reorganization.
- "Realize the original vision of the Einaudi Center 'to stimulate, support and coordinate the university's efforts in all facets of international studies and activities.'" The center's area studies, and thematic programs should be reinforced, and its links to natural sciences and engineering should be created.
- "Ensure international education, research and engagement are woven into academic life structures."

The report affirmed that internationalization must be comprehensive, involving curricula, faculty, cross-college leaders, university wide centers, senior leaders, alumni, trustees and donors, creating a holistic approach to intercultural learning.

Chapter IV

Methodology

This study focuses on the interaction of local community members and local students and how they view their interaction with foreign students living within their communities during the STAs. I chose purposeful sampling in the town of Tse Addo where most of the interns live as well as students from the University of Ghana where STA courses were held. Students were chosen based on their connection with international programs and living in campus housing where some STAs students stayed. Approximately 50 surveys were handed out and 34 responded. The surveys were anonymous and were returned with no identifiers that would be traced back to a respondent.

The STAs nature and research questions brought about a qualitative approach of questioning. Respondents were diverse in terms of educational attainment. Informed consent was obtained with human subjects' research ethics approvals. Almost half of the respondents were University of Ghana students. The respondents were knowledgeable about the research topic and most were willing to fill out the questionnaire. The comments in the following chapter came from the comment section of the survey.

Tse Addo community has hosted students for a much longer duration and for more years than the University of Ghana. The community members were diverse and some of them shared internship placements sites with the interns.

(See Appendix 5)

Chapter V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditionally, studying abroad included immersion in the host country's culture to bring about cultural understanding. That was the motivation for the first study abroad undergraduate program in the US which was developed by the University of Delaware in the 1920s. The French professor who founded the program took students to France in the first ever for credit study abroad as a way to foster cross cultural understanding. Motivation for choosing to travel abroad was primarily to enhance language skills while living with host families to gain a level of intercultural awareness. Today, study abroad has morphed into an educational conglomerate of different programs, objectives, and goals. There is an overall view among some students, over half of the local community members, and a few educators, that study abroad exists to fill the summer gap and to travel on a tourist-style excursion to foreign locales. Termed the island method, this belief is "at their extreme, island programs have been accused of being ghettos of U.S. culture in a foreign country, surrounded by an almost impenetrable membrane that prevents meaningful contact with the host culture and community. . Island programs are mostly self-contained academic programs with the format and system like mini exported campuses. This system manages every aspect of the students' experience, from local interactions to social excursions. The program center disseminates information on local culture and knowledge, a repository of experience providing helpful do's and don'ts related to interaction with the surrounding community, and a stable contact point for parents, friends and the home institution (World Education News Review, 2001)

The island method is the most practiced form of STAs, ensuring stability and peace of mind to parents and institutions. Excursions, guest presentations, and carefully crafted local

integration adhere to institutional guidelines and can be enough to satisfy the students' desire for introductory intercultural knowledge.

The National Consortium for Study in Africa (NCSA) developed a study abroad program group in 1994 as a blueprint to shape quality study abroad programs in Africa. Like many other studies that preceded it, the study emphasized recruitment, preprogram preparation, predeparture orientation, but has minimal content on community engagement. The consortium mainly focused on understanding barriers and attractions, developing criteria for best practices, increasing consultation and collaboration with African universities, developing new programs in Africa, and developing materials for making study in Africa more attractive.” The guidelines for the ‘high-quality programs” in Africa shows the absence of community collaboration, student engagement with the local communities and the engagement with peers at the host institution. The section on post program activities highlights the “well-defined procedures for implementing the transfer of credit to the home university.” Section V: Reciprocity and Collaboration highlights a “strong commitment to developing mutually beneficial collaborative relationship with African universities, other tertiary institutions, and/or local nongovernmental organization” but it lists only areas of “staff development at the US institution for faculty of the African institution, study leave for faculty, creating foreign exchange accounts in the US for African host institutions to use for pressing hard currency needs and creating mechanisms for them to receive funds drawn from the exchange program.”

The relationship with tourism and study abroad is also highlighted in the Research Excellence framework article where ‘the review process identifies the non-academic impact of research is understood as “an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture,

public, policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academic” (REF, 2022)

According to the survey, many of the respondents view the students as tourists, although the duration is a bit longer. Depending on residential areas, the economy shifts with the presence of students from abroad. Study abroad, like tourism ‘brings about an intermingling of people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, and also a considerable spatial redistribution of spending power, which has a significant impact on the economy of the destination.’ (Archer, Cooper, and Ruhanen 2005, 79). The study continues that in relation to tourism, the characteristics of study abroad “by its very nature attracted to unique and fragile environments and societies and . . . in some cases the economic benefits (to host communities) may be offset by adverse and previously unmeasured environmental and societal consequences’ (Archer, Cooper, and Ruhanen, 2005).

Context matters and STAs should consider the culture and norms in Africa and within each country. Common norms including respect for elders, greeting strangers, deferring to parents and those in authority often come into conflict with young students who characteristically challenge authority and live within cultures that are more open, individualistic, and tolerant. Foreign undergraduates flexing their independence in other countries at times come into conflict with cultural barriers and norms and must navigate the line between offending and standing up for themselves.

Peers at host institutions are not offered the space or time to interact with the students. Of the 29 students interviewed, 21 of them expressed disappointment for not meeting the students. A student mentioned “they go from the bus to the class and then back to the bus. We don’t talk to them.” Another student noted that “the professor did not greet us. She did not look

at us but only walked with the students to the classroom” These views by host institution students are a barrier to both groups learning from each other. Peers should be invited to join the foreign students during lunch breaks, accompany them on excursion, and time set aside for social interaction.

Short-term programs’ impact on host communities can be difficult to determine with accuracy. However, there are some effects, however minimal, that need to be considered. Everyone carries with them their own world view which influences what they see and how they relate or process what they see. Overall, those surveyed see foreign students in Ghana as a positive. Meeting the students, however briefly, gave the community members opportunities to showcase their culture and themselves. Local community members made efforts to interact with students living with their community and those who visited as part of a program. As a result, although brief and sometimes closely scripted, by meeting with the students and interacting with them, peers seem mainly positive about their stay in Ghana. One respondent noted “she knew Ebony (a local Ghana singer) songs and I taught her some dance moves.”

Most of the community members surveyed view groups on STAs with ambivalence. This should also be taken into context that community members are older and in Ghanaian culture of hierarchical societal relations, they might have only had very brief interaction with the students. Few reported that the students seem informed about happenings in the world. More than half of those surveyed view foreign students as elitist and intolerant of the daily challenges their Ghanaian peers and communities go through. One student explained that “the girl did not want to get water from downstairs when the faucet did not work in the house. We all were doing it, but she did not want to do it.”

Increased rent and expensive items are viewed as a byproduct of foreign students' residential stay. Landlords and some home stays view the payment of accommodation fees as means to supplement income and increasingly that impacts the way they view the students. Costs of housing go up and make it more difficult for community members to afford the increased costs. Payment arrangements for home stays should be made through a host partner or institution and not directly from student to family. That will also give an assurance that the family has been interviewed and is able to host a student. Often, families with considerable means are chosen to host students. That gives the students a skewed and erroneous belief of the country and the economic means of households. Families with modest means should be afforded the opportunities to host students. Unlike landlords, the relationship between foreign students and a host family is one that aligns with familial similarities in Ghana. Any direct payment from student to family for accommodation creates a boarder relationship where the student may feel that he or she should not be subjected to house rules as they now view the relationship as one of tenant and landlord.

Culture / Pre-Orientation Programs

The conceptual framework of culture developed by anthropologist Edward T. Hall comes into play in STAs when behaviors, customs, and norms are not given the importance they deserve in experiential learning. Students unwittingly convey negative attitudes to the beliefs, values, and world views of the communities. Students should be encouraged to ask questions about foreign habits or practices they do not understand in the host country. Programs should have a colleague or employee from the country who would better explain cultural practices to the students when asked. One of the terms used frequently in pre-departure orientations is cultural humility. The Oxford Review defines it as “an approach to understanding and respecting the

cultural identities of individuals and communities. . . cultural humility focuses on a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique. It encourages individuals to recognize their own biases, power dynamics, and the limitations of their cultural knowledge while fostering open and respectful relationships with people from diverse background.” Generally, team leaders who are not trained in the host country’s culture create an atmosphere of don’t ask, don’t offend. This creates a challenge for students who are genuinely interested in knowing more about a culture or a particular practice. Foreign students often do not ask the questions they should because they mistakenly believe that they would offend by doing so. Consequently, they may make up their own explanation or reinforce misconceptions they may already have. “Anytime we can be challenged, we can have discomfort, and then we can think differently,” according to Braskam. It is that discomfort that propels learning and that should be encouraged in experiential learning.

Most STAs hold pre-departure orientation for preparation for study abroad. These orientations are often held in a day, covering safety, health, and cultural information. Pre-departure orientation is one of the most important activities before the STA trip and should be organized with collaborative, in depth, and comprehensive overview of information that serve to minimize challenges in the host country. Discussion on cognitive dissonance and practices that need clarification should be discussed openly and frankly. Students from intended host countries should be invited to join smaller discussions on cultural norms and life of their host site peers. Too much emphasis is placed on cultural humility, which often hinders genuine curiosity and questions. Schroeder et al reaffirms the discussion that context matters and experiences vary depending on location. It is therefore necessary to tailor pre-orientation and abroad relevant courses to a region or country as a “one size fits all” approach does not work. For example, in Ghana, the use of the left hand is taboo while it is perfectly appropriate in many Southern

African countries. Three of those surveyed reported that the students informed them that they were specifically instructed not to ask questions unless those questions were discussed and approved by the abroad staff. Many questions can be resolved by having a competent staff member and someone from the community as team leaders. Most team leaders from abroad do not consider the impact the students have on the local community. To foster a positive environment and to have the community welcome them back the following year, team leaders should develop strong guidelines and even stronger penalties for infractions that negatively impact the community.

The issue of students with considerably greater economic means than the community they reside in is also a challenging one. Home stays with wealthy families and obvious signs of expensive practices contribute to the local communities' negative views of the students. Over half of those surveyed view STAs students as coming from wealthy homes, which is mostly not the case.

Rethinking the Nature of Partnerships

Considerable importance is placed on the objectives and deliverables of STAs by home institutions. Tasked with assessment and administrative oversight, most foreign universities do not consider co-creation of syllabi or course development with their host partner. Host institutions are often unaware of the demands placed on home institutions by their funding sources and may have their own objectives in the partnership. In Lehman's *Call to Engagement*, several caveats were listed. "Precipitous collaborations" where in the quest for partners in host country, unsuitable partners are chosen "where the anticipated benefits never materialize or are dwarfed by unanticipated costs, either to resources or to reputation."

Some of the host institutions express doubt that STAs can really have an immersive or a meaningful effect on intercultural knowledge. Home institutions need to have more direct

discussions for the host to assist them in meeting these goals. Additionally, to meet the increased demands for STAs, many home institutions face budgetary and administrative challenges. Faced with meeting the needs of STAs, host institutions often pull back on funding for local students which often leads to resentment. The University of Ghana has a computer lab for foreign students that is more fully equipped than the ones for domestic students. Administrative staff, transport vehicles, and other resources already stretched thin are available to the foreign students while increasingly limited for local students. More than half of those surveyed expressed

Local peers and community member respondents view the students as necessary encumbrances or an exception to their week/month. Those interviewed felt that the students themselves showed no desire to interact or get to know them. Some mentioned that they were given short or no advance warnings before the arrival of the students in their community. In the Tse Addo district in Accra, a few residents mentioned greeting the students and asking them about their institutions, but that was related more to their desire to apply to the foreign university. Interestingly, some of the students surveyed express no desire to meet the students nor did they reach out when called upon to do so. It may be that peers from the host institution also view STAs students as tourists and therefore not worthy of their time investment due to the short duration of the stay.

Alumni / Local Affiliation

The Institute for African Development internship program began in 2012 and has placed more than 80 students in 7 African countries. The internship hallmark is its strong alumni involvement in the activities, placement opportunities, and mentoring of the students. Ghana alumni assist and guide STA students in navigating the culture and country. The internship is considered an STA, but unlike other STAs, it is not an island. Cornell undergraduate applicants to the Ghana

program submit a research proposal that directly aligns with their academic focus. Applicants are selected after a rigorous interview process and co-creation, and collaboration begins with zoom meetings of host families and research supervisors. Alumni in host countries are alerted to their arrival and are encouraged to initiate contact. Over the years, the alumni have supported interns by supervising their research and trips. It is necessary to have locals in the country to assist with intercultural learning. Some home institutions believe that this can be done in isolation of locals. This study, and the experience of Cornell's STA program in Ghana suggest that this significantly diminishes cultural learning.

Place and context matters. Many of the responses showed that STAs students socialized mainly within their groups and have minimal contact with local communities. This contributes to students obtaining superficial cultural knowledge of the country and the community. Most of the respondents expressed the view that the students "carry prices up" and "don't greet us." STA syllabi should work with host countries partners to develop country-relevant itineraries, syllabi, and programs. Many existing programs develop carefully scripted and limited contact with communities and regulate the depth and length of those interactions. Host countries may control the movement of students due to the short duration of STAs, and/or choose a select group. The learning outcome is often a one-sided, superficial form of cultural awareness. Team leaders must be both from foreign and host universities. The quality and depth of the interaction matter, no matter the duration.

"To build a cross-cultural community, it is critical to create an experience that allows students to understand the host culture beyond the surface level. This can be accomplished when students are encouraged to utilize the following tools: story sharing, reciprocity, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication, and cultural immersion and adaptation. These concepts

provide a framework for students abroad as they experience new cultures and explore the relationship between their own lives and the lives of people overseas. Through these experiences, students will learn more about themselves, become more globally rounded citizens, and make connections with individuals abroad in the first steps toward building a global community.” (Jean Booth, 2021)

Student learning outcomes should include community centered deliverables and emphasis should be paid to the interactions of students with members of the local communities and peers. Civil society organizations and local community officials should be encouraged to participate in the organization of events to foster engagement. Often the arrival of STAs students in local communities is without adequate prior notice. Stereotypes and misconceptions can be alleviated by scheduling visits with groups where both groups are comfortable and prepared.

The universities or programs need to hold continued discussion with African partners to co-create programs that will benefit both institutions. Usually, the foreign institution aligns its syllabi with the core requirements of its institution and the African partners’ academic needs are secondary or not considered at all. Discussions and on-site weekly check-in are important for the facilitation of deeper connections based on mutuality and respect. It also helps to resolve challenges that may arise.

Establish Meaningful Relationships

To develop meaningful, impactful, and interculturally aware STAs programs all parties should be provided a holistic, collaborative overview of the entire program and that includes the community, host institution participants/peers. The success of some STAs depends on the network that supports the program. Host institutions should define and guide the interaction with

the local community and align it with the syllabi of the programs. Local communities can reinforce what is taught in the classroom and be a vital part of the process of intercultural awareness through being a deliberative, relevant, and embedded part of STAs programs

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APPENDICES

#1

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BY ACADEMIC LEVEL

Sub-Region	Academic Level											
	Undergraduate			Graduate			Non-degree			OPT		
	2017/18	2018/19	% Change	2017/18	2018/19	% Change	2017/18	2018/19	% Change	2017/18	2018/19	% Change
All Africa, Sub-Saharan	21,627	21,194	-2.0	11,892	12,525	5.3	1,195	1,227	2.7	4,765	5,344	12.2
Central Africa	2,415	2,271	-6.0	615	582	-5.4	247	186	-24.7	285	286	0.4
East Africa	5,245	5,488	4.6	2,570	2,403	-6.5	241	210	-12.9	1,037	1,126	8.6
Southern Africa	4,054	3,835	-5.4	1,499	1,514	1.0	214	169	-21.0	662	797	20.4
West Africa	9,913	9,600	-3.2	7,208	8,026	11.3	493	662	34.3	2,781	3,135	12.7

DESTINATIONS FOR U.S. STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD

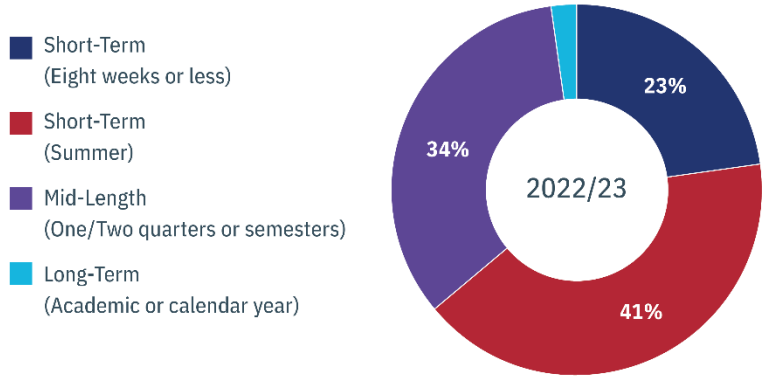
Destination	2016/17	2017/18	% Change	Destination	2016/17	2017/18	% Change
Angola	2	0	-100.0	Malawi	215	263	22.3
Benin	22	64	190.9	Mali	2	3	50.0
Botswana	275	252	-8.4	Mauritania	0	2	-
Burkina Faso	7	6	-14.3	Mauritius	3	22	633.3
Burundi	11	0	-100.0	Mozambique	30	48	60.0
Cabo Verde / Cape Verde	11	9	-18.2	Namibia	207	237	14.5
Cameroon	99	57	-42.4	Niger	6	0	-100.0
Central African Republic	0	0	0.0	Nigeria	42	34	-19.0
Chad	0	2	-	Reunion	0	3	-
Comoros	0	0	0.0	Rwanda	380	377	-0.8
Congo, Dem. Rep. of (Kinshasa)	8	6	-25.0	Saint Helena	0	0	0.0
Congo, Rep. of (Brazzaville)	3	5	66.7	São Tomé and Príncipe	0	0	0.0
Cote d'Ivoire / Ivory Coast	4	3	-25.0	Senegal	344	337	-2.0
Djibouti	0	0	0.0	Seychelles	0	0	0.0
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	0.0	Sierra Leone	56	79	41.1
Eritrea	1	0	-100.0	Somalia	0	10	-
Eswatini	92	118	28.3	South Africa	6,042	6,001	-0.7
Ethiopia	73	207	183.6	South Sudan	23	0	-100.0
Gabon	5	4	-20.0	Sudan	0	16	-
Gambia	39	62	59.0	Tanzania	1,364	1,556	14.1
Ghana	1,865	2,210	18.5	Togo	28	28	0.0
Guinea	2	14	600.0	Uganda	845	837	-0.9
Guinea-Bissau	1	6	500.0	Zambia	306	372	21.6
Kenya	778	927	19.2	Zimbabwe	37	35	-5.4
Lesotho	23	1	-95.7				
Liberia	30	37	23.3				
Madagascar	145	159	9.7				

Source: *Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange* is a comprehensive information resource on international students and U.S. students studying abroad. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE. For more information, including press releases and FAQs, visit www.iie.org/opendoors or contact IIE's Public Affairs office at press@iie.org.



OPEN DOORS U.S. STUDY ABROAD DATA

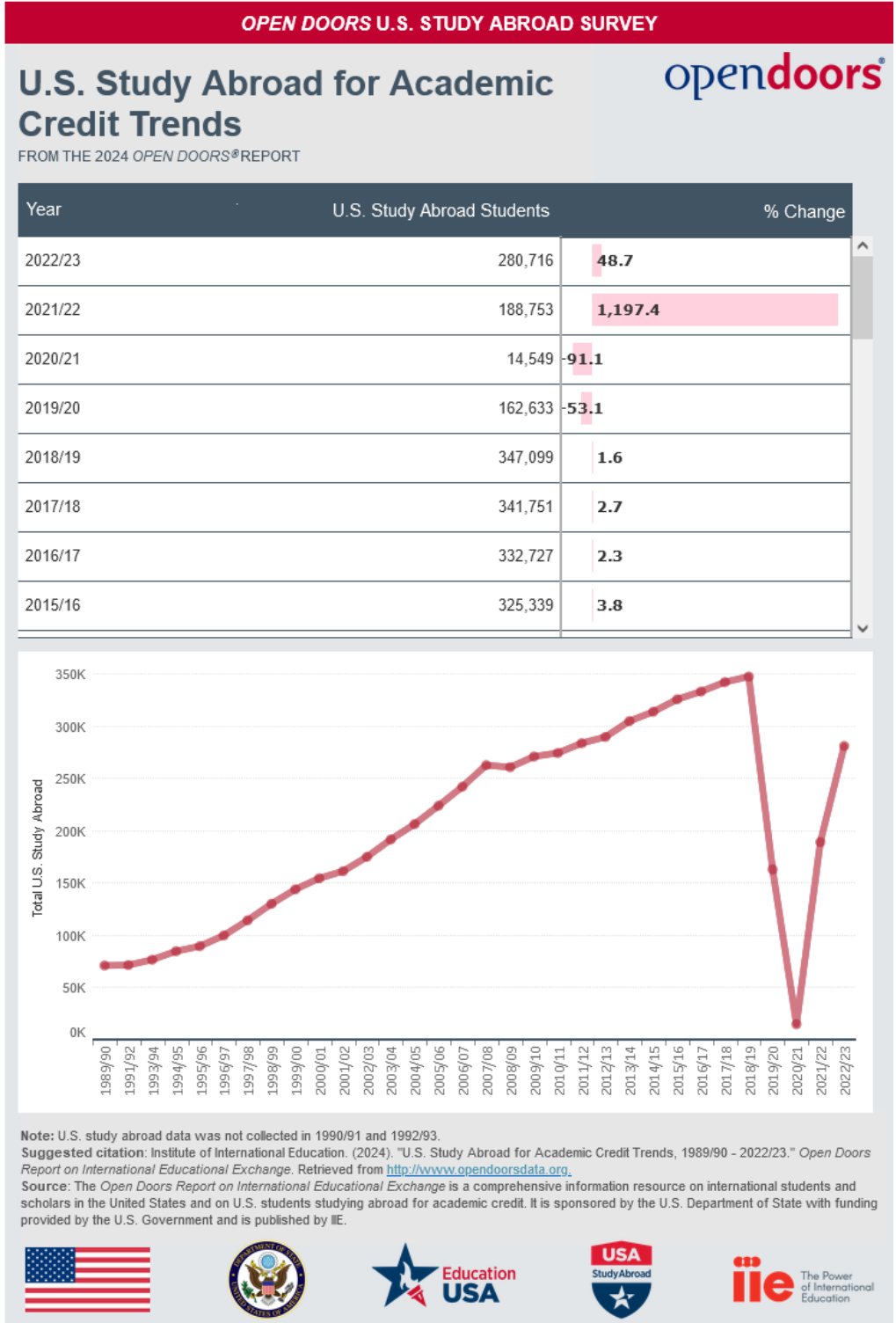
DURATION OF U.S. STUDY ABROAD, 2022/23



For their study abroad experience, **64% of students** traveled for eight weeks or less, or during the summer.

Source: The *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* is a comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars at higher education institutions in the United States and U.S. students studying abroad. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE. For more information, visit www.opendoorsdata.org.



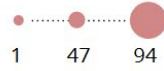


#4

Geographical Impression Of UG International Partners



Number of Partnerships



#5

Assessing the Short term Abroad Programs on Host Communities / Peers

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Your frankness and honesty are appreciated.

Where do you reside:

- *UG University of Ghana*
- *Tse Addo*

What is the most time you have interacted with foreign students:

- *Less than one week*
- *More than two weeks*
- *More than one month*

How do you view the foreign students in the community

- *Beneficial*
- *Not Beneficial*
- *No interest*

Ghana benefits from the foreign students

- *Positively*
- *Negatively*

The foreign students bring new ideas that are

- *Positive*
- *Negative*
- *Unsure*

The foreign programs should spend more time in the community and with local students

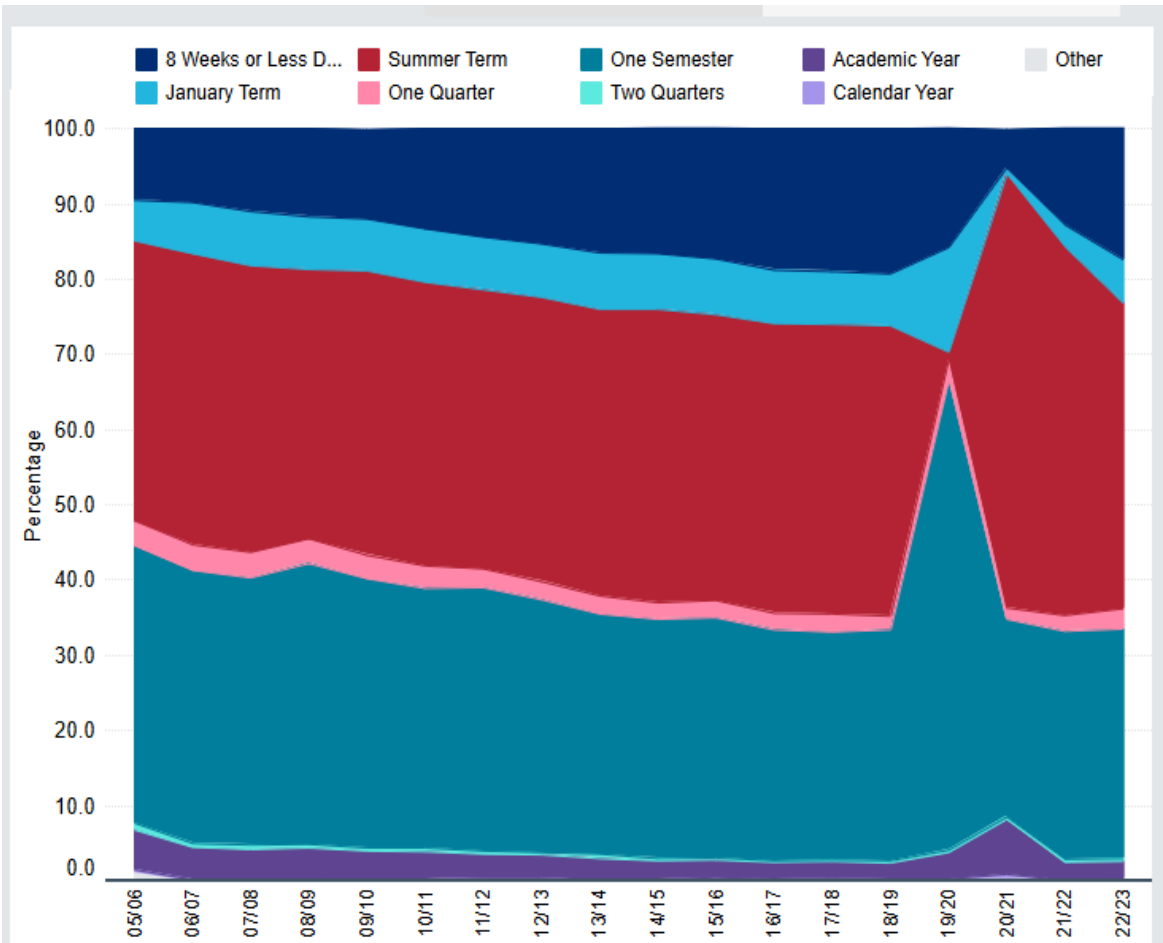
- *Yes*
- *No*

How do you rate your overall experience with the students:

- *Favorable*
- *Not favorable*
- *No response*

Comments:

#6



Note: Percent distribution may not total 100.0 due to rounding.
 Suggested citation: Institute of International Education. (2024). "Detailed Duration of U.S. Study Abroad, 2005/06 - 2022/23" *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.opendoorsdata.org>.
 Source: The *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* is a comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars in the United States and on U.S. students studying abroad for academic credit. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE.



#7

U.S. Students Abroad

Host Region	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Africa	3.9%	3.3%	2.4%	2.4%	3.3%
Asia	11.7%	9.1%	12.3%	4.7%	9.4%
Europe	55.7%	57.9%	66.3%	73.1%	64.4%
Latin America	13.8%	13.4%	11.0%	10.3%	10.7%
Middle East	2.3%	3.2%	4.9%	2.9%	2.5%
North America	0.6%	0.5%	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%
Oceania	4.4%	7.1%	0.5%	0.7%	3.2%
Multiple Regions	7.5%	5.4%	7.5%	5.5%	6.0%

The information in the charts above is based on the most current data from the Institute of International Education's *Open Doors* Report and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

