

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING ACROSS BUSINESS DISCIPLINES

A ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The global reach of business has increased significantly. In the past, relocating for a job might mean moving across the state. Now it could mean moving across the globe. Students must acquire knowledge of the global markets and the globally changing landscape. Study abroad provides a key element to students' global development. We, as educators, should desire our students to experience the rich tapestry of the global culture. Study abroad may be the only opportunity for many students to incorporate a global experience into their undergraduate program.

Historically, only a small number of students take advantage of study abroad. Less than 1% of US students study abroad each year. Although few students take study abroad, the benefits are great and are not in dispute. Our students need to understand how the world works. Just understanding the US market is not enough anymore. All business disciplines have a growing emphasis on globalization. Developing skills to manage intercultural business transactions is crucial to success and better prepares them for working in the global village. Students who engage in study abroad are more likely to develop interpersonal skills, team building, and problem-solving skills. As a result of the process, (international travel) students can synthesize information they have already gained in the classroom.

This type of experiential learning is more effective than other methods. This type of learning cannot be gained in the typical classroom experience. All students gain greater understanding of globalization. All students can and do benefit from study abroad. The benefits of study abroad cross all academic disciplines. Study abroad can improve cultural knowledge and transform worldviews. For example, students who studied abroad showed signs of growth in emotional resiliency, flexibility, openness, and personal autonomy. Students returning from study abroad will see personal growth in a way that cannot be repeated in the campus hallways. Research shows study tours have a significant impact on language learning and cultural awareness and understanding, and in content areas outside of business and language.

Students who study abroad found significant long-term career benefits from their study abroad experience in terms of compensation, mobility, opportunities, and self-confidence. Study abroad will give graduates a competitive edge in the job market and provide future opportunities for advancement later. Because of costs, time allocations, and school resources, study abroad has been limited. However, the short-term study tour can achieve similar results at a fraction of the cost.

In our case, the annual interdisciplinary trip to England, Ireland, and Northern Ireland from the University of Central Oklahoma have combined history, finance, real estate, and legal studies disciplines. We approach the tour to expose the students to all of England's influence on the United States. Each faculty member can add to this goal by using his/her expertise. Students get to experience Parliament, Westminster Abbey, and the British Museum for a view of England's history. In addition, we tour the Bank of England and Lloyds of London to see England's financial influence on America's economy. We tour several real estate developments including King's Cross, the Olympic Village, and the Docklands to see the impact on the real estate market. Finally, we tour Old Bailey, the Royal Courts, and the English Supreme Court to see the effect England has had on the American legal system. By combining the disciplines into one trip, the experience for the students is more rich and full than any one professor could accomplish acting alone.

The program was originally confined to London, but has expanded to Dublin, Ireland, and most recently to Belfast, Northern Ireland. These travels expose the students to three different national traditions, laws, and cultures, even with a shared language. The study tour that originally only went to one city (London), now visits three nations, which geometrically expands the students' international exposure. The UCO program, now in the 21st year, has branched off to offer additional opportunities besides the traditional study tour. Students can add an extension on their trip and conduct archival research (history) or primary research (real estate). These student-faculty projects have led to numerous presentations and publications including collaboration with other British universities. The program plans to add research projects in the areas of finance and legal studies. By combining disciplines, the study tour can achieve a diversity of ideas and backgrounds and still achieve an economy of scale that makes the trip viable and affordable.

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