

# Faculty Gains through Teaching Abroad: A Transformative Learning Approach

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## Abstract

*This investigation explores the benefits that faculty gain from teaching on short-term, faculty-led programs, complementing a much more extensive literature on student outcomes of this study abroad program model. A secondary goal of the research was to learn whether faculty gains stemming from these experiences resulted in follow-on benefits for the institution and, more broadly, for internationalizing curricula and teaching on the home campus. Among the findings, the four key benefits that faculty reported were cultural and intercultural learning, a further development of their own research interests and professional networks, a deeper knowledge of students, and a sense of rejuvenation for teaching. While these findings support related research demonstrating some strengthening of internationalization efforts, the authors argue that their research provides support for a transformative learning approach which would enhance faculty development through reflection and longer-term benefits to the institution.*

*Keywords:* faculty, internationalization, faculty development, transformative learning, authenticity, education abroad

## Introduction

U.S. campuses have increasingly viewed short-term education abroad programming as an effective means for rapidly expanding access to a wider range of students, and especially for those who might not otherwise go abroad without the support and sense of security provided within a group. Accordingly, the number of students participating on faculty-led programs, most eight weeks or less, has risen over the past two decades, outpacing other forms of education abroad in terms of growth (Redden, 2018). Approximately 65% of students who study abroad did so on a short-term program of eight weeks or less in 2018–19 compared to 56% in 2005–6, and only just over two percent went for at least an academic year (Institute for International Education, 2020), thus moving considerably away from the traditional Junior Year Abroad (JYA) model. While numerous factors explain these shifts, much has come down to a response from institutions to market demand with a greater diversity of students who may be unable or less inclined to go abroad for a longer sojourn due to curricular, financial, familial, or other considerations.

The discussion and research to date on short-term programs has revolved largely around the ways in which such programming benefits students, especially as a high-impact practice with transformational learning potential. At the same time, with the exception of a very small number of studies (Paparella, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2020; Watts, 2015), very little is known about what *faculty* may gain from these short-term experiences as opposed to longer-term positions as study abroad directors (Goode, 2007). Given that faculty are already leading programs abroad in increasing numbers, with this being in some

cases their sole means of international exposure, it is surprising that more work has not been done in this area.

Filling an important gap in the literature, here we explore case studies at two institutions—Boston College (BC) and Smith College (Smith)—following a pilot survey conducted of faculty who had taught abroad through the Office of International Programs (OIP) or Global Studies Center (GSC), respectively. The study began with a goal of understanding the extent to which faculty teaching abroad has an impact on the pedagogy and global content of the home campus curriculum. Among the findings, the four key benefits that faculty reported were cultural and intercultural learning, further development of their own research interests and professional networks, deeper knowledge of students, and a sense of rejuvenation for teaching. In addition to contributing to their home campuses' internationalization strategies, these findings suggest that faculty's teaching overseas can serve as a point of disruption, leading to significant and transformative alterations in their thinking, teaching, and research—and much more than has previously been considered. Further, this learning is deepened when faculty are afforded opportunities to reflect upon and consider ways of transferring the knowledge they gathered overseas when returning to the home campus.

### **Faculty and Short-term Programming**

The increasing scale and scope of globalization has had dramatic influences on higher education. Many university leaders have sought to address the changes in the global environment through their academic and co-curricular offering, (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998). In seeking a purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments, leaders and scholars have repeatedly pointed to the critical role of faculty, with the introduction of curricular reforms and new pedagogical practices (Childress, 2018; Landorf et al., 2018). This comes with an understanding, as Green and Mertova (2016) note, that faculty are the architects of the curriculum, and any planning must respect the deep connections faculty have to their disciplinary knowledge and social relations with academic peers on campus and beyond (Leask & Bridge, 2013; Green & Whitsed, 2015; Clifford, 2009).

To foster faculty engagement, a number of strategies have been employed, including training, research grants, traveling seminars, and opportunities for teaching abroad. Increasingly, faculty have had the chance to lead short-term programs, which are usually eight weeks or less and typically organized around a theme related to the faculty member's discipline or area of expertise (Keese & O'Brien, 2011). Such opportunities are attractive to students that may not be ready or able to participate in more traditional semester or academic year programs, for reasons including curricular requirements, finances, family commitments, or a fear of venturing abroad on one's own without support (Gaia, 2015). Faculty have also found these programs appealing for exploring a new country or reconnecting with a place they know, as well as for being able to fit an international experience in and around other personal and professional commitments.

While the popularity of faculty-led programs is undeniable, the research on these programs is still growing and often lopsided. A significant amount has been written on the extent to which students are fulfilling stated learning outcomes such as global awareness (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004), intercultural competency (Vande Berg et al., 2009; Hammer, 2012; Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013), language development (Engle & Engle, 2004), and civic mindedness (Mulvaney, 2017). It is expected that, upon return, these skills will contribute to students' learning on campus and ultimately prepare graduates for an increasingly global and diverse workplace (Trooboff et al., 2008; Niehaus & Wegener, 2018). Additional studies have addressed concerns around the quality and credibility of shorter experiences, with fewer opportunities for immersion and sometimes relaxed academic standards (Di Gregorio, 2015).

By contrast, only a handful of published studies (Rasch, 2001; Strang, 2006; Watts, 2015; Paparella, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2020) have investigated the extent of faculty development while teaching on a short-term program. Paparella (2018) notes, for example, that faculty leaders find the intellectual engagement with students in a holistic manner meaningful and satisfying, there is still much needed to

provide basic support and training from the home campus. Hull (2013) similarly observes that faculty deepen their disciplinary knowledge through networks and first-hand experiences in an international context and come to better appreciate the value of study abroad and campus internationalization at their own institutions. Most aligned with the study presented here is the multi-institutional survey conducted by Gillespie et al. (2020), involving more than 200 faculty members who led off-campus study programs at 27 selective liberal arts colleges. The authors find that faculty have positive experiences when global learning is seen as a campus value and the work is supported with training, compensation, recognition, and adequate staffing. Conversely, they face challenges in terms of excessive workloads, lack of preparation for their responsibilities with risk management, and experiences of stress and/or burn-out on their return (see also Paparella, 2018).

### **Teaching Abroad as Transformational Change**

Adding to previous scholarship, here we find that the framework of teaching as transformational change can offer a valuable lens for understanding how faculty's participation in short-term programming may lead to gains for faculty and the institutions they serve, provided that training and support are available to help faculty reflect on their experiences abroad and apply what they have learned. Several studies in recent years have emphasized the relationship of transformational learning to the pedagogies and experiences of study abroad (Brewer & Cunningham, 2010; Curran, Owens, Thorson, & Vibert, 2019; Green & Mertova, 2016). If "transformation" may seem like too grandiose a term to describe what faculty go through on a short-term program, teaching overseas can nonetheless present a point of disruption, or what Mezirow calls a "disorientating dilemma" (1991), forcing a faculty leader to rethink their assumptions about what, how, and who they teach.

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning hinges on this concept of a disorienting dilemma that challenges the assumptions of an individual's ingrained and culturally-informed "frames of reference," or their unexamined positionality in the world. This disruptive moment can be a critical incident that disturbs one's worldview, or a realization that how one makes sense of the world is under question. This is followed by the phases of transformative learning—the questioning, exploring, and enacting of new perspectives with the potential of radically transforming a person's way of knowing and living in the world (Mezirow, 2000).

While previous studies have effectively connected transformative learning theories with the internationalization of higher education (Sanderson, 2008; Schuerholz-Lehr et al., 2007; Kahn & Agnew, 2017; Clifford & Montgomery, 2015), the bulk of the scholarship in this area has been applied in other areas of higher education and adult learning, investigating for example the impact of technology and curricular reforms on teaching. In these and other cases, according to Mezirow's approach, transformative learning begins when:

we encounter experiences, often in an emotionally charged situation, that fail to fit our expectations and consequently lack meaning for us, or we encounter an anomaly that cannot be given coherence either by learning within existing schemes or by learning new schemes.  
(Mezirow, 1991, as cited in Whitelaw et al., 2004, p. 11)

In the case of leading an overseas program, any number of triggers may lead to such disorientation, including the need to respond to a new cultural context; coming into much closer contact with students, in and out of the classroom; teaching in a new environment where regular classrooms may not be available and, even if they are, facilities and support systems may be very different; and finding the need to weave lesson plans into other onsite activities. In addition to teaching and caring for students, faculty themselves may face culture shock, as they are pushed out of their comfort zones. While not all of these experiences are negative, and in fact the experience on the whole may be very positive, they nonetheless can present significant points of disruption.

Drawing on Mezirow's transformative learning theory, Cranton's work on authentic teaching offers an aid in understanding how faculty make sense of their experiences teaching abroad. Sanderson

(2008) references Cranton's (2001) early notion of the "authentic self" or the "self as teacher, teacher as self," as central to a transformative process in international higher education by which faculty might develop a more cosmopolitan outlook, allowing for a dismantling of "the barriers that obstruct a legitimate understanding and acceptance of others" (p. 287). In Cranton and Carusetta's (2004) subsequent research on authentic teaching and transformative learning, these authors identify five key elements of authenticity—self-awareness, awareness of others, relationships with learners, awareness of context, and a critically reflective approach to practice—which provide a framework for furthering this process of reflection.

Faculty who return from teaching abroad will ideally already be aware of cultural differences and some of the elements of authenticity identified by Cranton and Carusetta. An intentional faculty development process of self-assessment and reflection might prompt the deeper learning from these experiences as a process of their own transformative faculty development. In not creating a space for critical reflection, there is a risk that faculty themselves are not engaging in this reflective work, preventing them from being their best in working with students. At the same time, from the perspective of institutional leaders, there is a significant concern that faculty and the campuses on which they teach will not be able to make the most out of the disorienting dilemmas they face. By simply moving forward and not contemplating further, faculty may suppress the moments of discomfort and/or not consider ways of applying what they have learned abroad back to the home campus.

## **Methods**

To better understand what faculty gain from teaching abroad on short-term programs, and how what they learn can be transferred back to the home institution, this study was conducted on two campuses: Boston College (BC) and Smith College (Smith). In addition to being the respective home institutions of the two authors, providing ready access to faculty, these cases were selected for their long commitment to both international education and undergraduate education. At the same time, they present unique variations in history and mission, allowing for a greater variety of faculty responses.

Located in Northampton, Massachusetts, Smith opened in 1875 to provide women with an undergraduate education that was typically only available to men at the time. The college was one of the first to provide study abroad opportunities in the U.S., with its first program offered in 1925. Today the college enrolls around 2,900 students total, of which 2,500 are undergraduates, and is a member of the historic Seven Sisters colleges, comprised of prestigious, historically women's institutions in the Northeast. Approximately 40% of Smith undergraduates study abroad by the time of graduation.

Situated in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, BC was founded in 1863 by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Created originally for men only, BC went co-educational by 1970. While the institution has developed over time as a top-tier, highly selective research university, with approximately 14,500 students in total, leaders remain fundamentally committed to a strong undergraduate education and Jesuit values. The first international office was started in the early 1970s, and today approximately 1200 (50%) of BC undergraduates study abroad each year.

## **Respondents**

All faculty who had taught overseas through BC's OIP or Smith's GSC between 2012 to 2018 were invited to complete a survey. Of the 123 who received an invitation, 54 (44%) began the survey and 52 (42%) fully completed it. All faculty engaged in this survey had had some sort of international experience prior to teaching abroad. Eight had taught one time abroad, 24 had taught two to five times, and 16 had taught six or more times (see Table. 1). The largest number of respondents (34) had taught at least once in Europe (see Table. 2), mirroring the sizeable percentage of U.S. undergraduates who opt to study there (Institute of International Education, 2020), with 18 in Italy. Fifteen had taught in other world regions, representing all other continents except Antarctica. In some cases, faculty had taught separate programs in different years, going to different countries, or in one case a faculty member's program had been split between two countries.

Table 1

*Number of Times Leading an Overseas Program*

Number of Times	Frequency
1	8
2-5	24
6+	4

*Note.* These numbers represent those who answered the question; not all responded.

Table 2

World Region	# of Responses
Europe	37
East/South Asia	3
Middle East/North Africa	9
Latin America	5
Sub-Saharan Africa	2

*Note.* Faculty members could select multiple countries either for programs that ran in multiple locations or where a faculty member led programs to different locations at different times. Not all faculty completed this field. Individual countries are not listed as they could help to identify individual faculty.

The survey did not ask respondents to indicate their department or school affiliation, title, or tenure status, with an understanding that it would have been too easy to identify faculty based on this information, thus preventing them from sharing more openly. From the original invitation, however, it is possible to gain a sense of the distribution of disciplines represented. Among those invited, 72 were in the humanities (theology, philosophy, languages & literatures, art & art history), 26 in the social sciences or had a social science lens to their work (political science, psychology, economics, history, cultural studies, international studies), 13 in the natural sciences, and 13 in professional fields (business, nursing, education, social work). This disciplinary distribution was supported by the program themes listed. Future studies might track results by faculty rank, years of experience teaching, gender, and discipline, among other categories.

### Survey and Analysis

Administered through Qualtrics, the survey was distributed in February 2018 and composed of 19 questions, including multiple choice and open-ended questions (Appendix A). The multiple-choice questions were primarily used to gather biographical data on the respondents whereas the open-ended questions allowed faculty to reflect more thoroughly on the experiences. The survey results were coded and analyzed by the two authors, using Atlas Ti coding software. Open-ended results coded within Atlas Ti by one author were compared with a manual coding process by the second author to establish intercoder reliability. Coding of the open-ended responses was begun as bottom-up, or in an inductive manner, with the two authors identifying commonalities and agreeing on a final set of codes for categorizing survey data by themes. A finalized coding book comprised of 15 codes was determined and re-applied to the text (Appendix B). The structure and content of the sections below are based on analysis of these results. Quotations in the text below were chosen as those most (or in some cases least) representative of what respondents had shared in open-ended questions.

To verify the analysis, preliminary results of the study were presented to twelve faculty in January 2020, as part of a BC Center for Teaching Excellence faculty learning community, organized for

faculty who had previously taught abroad through the OIP. Some of the community participants had been given an opportunity to complete the survey yet others had not. The group was able to offer clarifications and additional nuance.

## **Findings**

The findings presented in this paper focus most directly on the results relevant for the potential gains to faculty and potential for transformative learning. While the survey included sections on expectations, logistics, experiences with students and local communities, and recommendations, the findings related to logistics and workload are being considered separately for program assessment and organizational improvement. Here we focus primarily on what faculty reported in terms of their own gains and recommendations they provided for helping future faculty make the most out of their experiences abroad. We organize the findings into two sections: what faculty have gained and the extent to which what they learn can be brought back to the home campus.

### **Faculty Gains**

Respondents in this study observed that leading a short-term program abroad is challenging, if also enriching. In the words of one faculty program leader: “The intensity of leading short-term programs abroad, along with the complex nature of the faculty leaders’ roles, is not for everyone.” As another noted: “You need to want to do it; it’s a big investment of your time.” If it was not something to be undertaken lightly, faculty in the study overwhelmingly expressed great satisfaction with the work, both in terms personal fulfillment and professional gains. As one leader put it: “This is the most academically valuable and rewarding thing I do.” In terms of enrichment, here we explore four key areas of learning that faculty articulated following their teaching abroad: cultural and intercultural learning, a further development of their own research interests and professional networks, a deeper knowledge of students, and a sense of rejuvenation for teaching. While not an exhaustive list of what was reported, these areas were most frequently cited by respondents.

### **Cultural and Intercultural Understanding**

This study initially set out to consider the extent to which faculty gain international knowledge, expertise, and contacts that may contribute to institution-wide internationalization strategies. If all respondents had traveled and/or lived abroad, not all had prior familiarity with the country where they were teaching, thus opening the door for them to learn quite a bit, along with the students. This was often the case with disciplines not rooted in cultural knowledge, such as the natural sciences and more technical fields. In a Dublin-based program, for example, the faculty member was able to teach an accounting course, while adding site visits to local businesses and communities. While not an expert on Ireland, she was able to offer her expertise, while collaborating with an onsite coordinator, who could add a local component.

Even with prior knowledge of a host culture and customs, other respondents reported that teaching overseas deepened their understanding of the place. A faculty member who had taught multiple times at an Italian university noted that each time was different and that, with each new cohort, she “became much more familiar with the Italian university system, and got to know colleagues in many fields at the University.” Similarly, another respondent pointed out that she gained a deeper understanding of the Middle East through the observations and interviews that her group had with local officials and experts, adding that this, “direct experience has made [her] more knowledgeable in the classroom.” The act of having to organize lectures and co-curricular programs often gives faculty an opportunity to engage with those whom they may not ordinarily meet on their own. Moreover, the need to answer student questions, as well as provide a context for lectures and activities, forces faculty to bone up on aspects of local cultures that may not relate directly to their own scholarly work.

### **Research and Networks**

In addition to learning more about the host culture, respondents found that their teaching abroad contributed to their research. Much of the benefit came down to being in the location itself, as one respondent noted: “My attachment to living culture is essential to my research, thus these experiences are crucial.” By returning to a place where they have ongoing research, it is possible for faculty to stay fresh on current events. The tone and tenor of a location may transform quickly from one year to the next with sweeping changes such as new political leaders, variations in population, and/or military or economic upheaval. In other circumstances, the shifts may be more subtle yet still highly significant for those like the respondent above, who contextualize their research in a “living” place.

One of the advantages of teaching abroad is the ability to network with and learn from guest speakers and site visits. As one faculty member noted, “I have written articles about the Middle East based on observations and interviews we had with officials. I reference information and opinions we heard in class.” An on-the-ground class can provide a pretext for getting to know a local official or expert. In a follow up conversation, one faculty member who taught in Paris noted that it was sometimes possible to secure a speaker who would not be as interested in granting an individual interview to the faculty member yet is pleased to talk with a student group, as there is a bit of excitement or novelty in doing so. Additionally, the questions that students ask help a faculty consider the same topics from new angles, thus adding depth and additional layers to her research.

Those who were not experts in the location where they were leading students also found benefits for their research and teaching. A respondent who leads students to Spain noted, “Because I take a comparative approach in teaching law while abroad, it has been incredibly interesting and stimulating for me to learn more about other legal systems.” As a legal expert, teaching in a business school, being on site provides a more solid understanding of how legal systems function in a place like Spain, e.g. helping to explain the outcomes of court cases that may have international implications. Conversing with colleagues likewise can shed light on issues that are equally relevant for U.S. entities conducting business in Europe such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the implications of Brexit for the European Union.

Finally, faculty frequently used their teaching abroad as a launching pad for conducting additional research before or after a program. At BC, some took advantage of a grant through the College of Arts and Sciences designed expressly to extend their time abroad for such purposes. Others called for additional funding along these lines, with the argument that the costs were relatively low, given that faculty were already getting their flights to and from the location covered through the program. As a caveat, one faculty member cautioned colleagues to “make sure you are able to spend the maximum amount of time involved in the program and with students rather than trying to work in professional trips/research.” In other words, while a program is in progress, faculty need to give their full attention to students; research should be done before or after the program dates.

### **A Deeper Knowledge of Students**

Typically, those who sign on to teach overseas enjoy working with students and are used to seeing them in settings that stretch beyond the classroom. Despite all they felt that they knew from these prior interactions, the overwhelming majority of survey respondents reported that they learned much more while teaching overseas, in a greatly accelerated timeline. As one faculty member noted:

I learned that I only know a sliver of my student’s lives through our normal interactions, even including close work in the research lab. Travel opened up so many rambling conversations and intense experiences shared with students.

The sort of interactions described by this faculty member may take place while conversing with students over meals, traveling from one location to another either in the same city or for an excursion, or in the small moments that pop up in between planned activities. The barriers are quickly lowered when students see faculty outside of their prescribed role in front of the classroom or behind a desk, and when not dressed in the same manner, for example in shorts and a t-shirt back at the hotel. The frequency with

which faculty and students encounter each other also breaks down a wall, making the “rambling” conversations more possible and organic. All of this allows students (and faculty) to share more than they might at home, thus opening a window into each other’s worlds.

Much of what faculty gain lies at a human level, with an opportunity to discover more about students as individuals. This can entail learning details of students’ upbringing; parents, friends, and significant others; likes and dislikes; and areas of involvement at home and on campus. Students may be curious about faculty members’ lives in return, and so it becomes easy to connect over points in common, as well as to understand each other better. The extent to which this sharing takes place is often set by the tone of the program, and the faculty member’s own willingness to let down their guard. As one faculty member observed, “I learned that one of the most important factors leading to the success of [an abroad] course is community.” From this perspective, it was necessary for the faculty leader to create a space for sharing, both in developing a closer relationship with the students, yet also in allowing students to feel more comfortable with each other.

Gaining a deeper awareness of students also meant uncovering some of their strengths and limitations. A faculty leader found for instance that “students have a surprisingly limited knowledge of modern history and current events.” This might prompt the faculty member to provide more context in future lessons, to fill in some of the gaps in student’s knowledge base. On the flipside, students will inevitably offer skills and experience that the faculty member does not have and which may benefit the group. At the same time, another respondent noted that the overseas experience sheds light on, “[students’] learning styles, and even ideas about education that students bring with them.” By being in such close contact, faculty can observe what students are absorbing and which techniques work the best for individual participants, something that is not always feasible in larger classes and with less time for interaction on the home campus.

Probably the biggest surprise for faculty came down to an appreciation of students’ mental health and wellbeing. As one respondent explained:

Living closely with different groups of students, and being responsible for them 24/7, helped me understand the kinds of issues students have to deal with in a way teaching on campus doesn’t. On campus class deans, housing coordinators, medical and psychiatric services, and many other support systems deal with many of the issues I had to tackle as a faculty study abroad program director.

Faculty like this one may be familiar with numerous reports chronicling the increase in students seeking out mental health care, however they recognized that it was a very different thing to deal with such cases on the ground, with far less support. Even with pre-departure training and resources provided by the international office on the home campus, many felt out of their depth, with great concern as to what might happen. In separate correspondence, one faculty member described an incident with one student who had a psychotic break on the last day of the program. In less severe cases, faculty members come across any number of issues including anxiety, depression, and eating disorders that affected students’ ability to participate fully in the program.

Not all faculty were completely blindsided by student issues. In addition to their own prior experiences with students, they may have school-age children who are dealing with some of the same concerns. What is different is the close contact with a larger group of students, in an intense environment, and with much less support, all of which amplifies the severity of the situation. While often quite challenged, faculty felt that their deeper understanding of students is something that will help them be better mentors, teachers, and advisors, both abroad and on their home campus.

### **Rejuvenation**

While faculty felt the full weight of responsibility that comes with leading a group overseas, many also agreed with one faculty member who observed that teaching abroad is one of the best aspects of her job: “I find it one of the most rewarding and enlightening experiences of my professional career.”



This sentiment was echoed by another who stated, “I have been doing it for 10 years now, and it is easy for me to acknowledge this aspect of my teaching career as one of the most lively and fulfilling.”

The faculty members here describe a sense of fulfillment—and, significantly, of rejuvenation—in teaching overseas. Being abroad permits them to get out of the rut of teaching on campus. Even those who are constantly rethinking their lesson plans and develop new courses, in order to keep things fresh for both students and themselves, find the new setting to be invigorating. As one respondent remarked: “I would strongly encourage a colleague to take students on a faculty-led study abroad program not only so that they could assist students in exposure to cultural diversity, but also so that the faculty member could experience teaching in a much more stimulating cultural environment.”

These comments provide insights for how institutions might combat complacency and burnout among faculty, in addition to other strategies that are employed on campuses. This is above all important for the two cases included in this study, which pride themselves in liberal arts-based undergraduate teaching, yet also for other universities and colleges that are hoping to retain the best and brightest faculty, while serving students.

### **Bringing Back Learning to Campus**

Based on the results presented thus far, faculty gain much from being abroad in terms of their exposure to other cultures, as well as in their increased understanding and appreciation of students. Teaching in a very new environment can be challenging though it also provides an opening for faculty to rethink their pedagogical practices and course content. As with students who are encouraged to move outside of the proverbial “comfort zone” in overseas programming, faculty too benefit from the disruptive aspects of being pushed out of the familiar. Within this context, two key questions remain at the core of this study: How much of what faculty learn is being brought back to campus? And to what extent is this learning contributing to overall institutional internationalization efforts?

### **Teaching and Mentoring**

As noted in multiple examples above, faculty observed that their abroad experiences help them to become better instructors and mentors. This is accomplished in large part by having an opportunity to learn more about students, including their likes and dislikes, preferred ways of learning, and the struggles they go through as young adults. They also often return with a sense of rejuvenation, with an opportunity to teach in a new environment, as challenging as the experience might be. Moreover, all of this can provide faculty with a greater sense of confidence and credibility.

As with internationalization, however, what is nonetheless notably missing from the responses are concrete examples of the ways in which faculty members’ teaching and mentoring are altered upon returning to the home campus. It may be that the nature of the questions on the survey did not sufficiently prompt respondents to drill down to the level of detail required. Similarly, a focus group or interview format could permit a further probing of this question. These limitations notwithstanding, there is nonetheless a gap between the more abstract sense of what is gained abroad and how such learning then tangibly translates into different practices. None of this is to say that faculty are not incorporating what they learn from abroad yet that the process is fuzzy, often without a lot of direction or space for reflection.

### **Need for Training and Collegial Connections**

From these findings, it becomes clear that there is a need for mechanisms that help faculty translate their experiences abroad into the classroom, while also seeing their teaching as linked more visibly to broader internationalization strategies. While respondents did not make overt connections to campus internationalization, many did express the need and/or desire for additional professional development opportunities including workshops, seminars, and panel discussions. Such activities were separated from the regular pre-departure training offered on topics like health and safety and logistics.

In returning to campus, one faculty member noted that there are places for sharing what they have learned: “We also have a forum (Liberal Arts Lunch, for instance) for group leaders to share their

knowledge and experience with other faculty.” However, most who did comment saw a need for group that was tailored for those who had taught abroad. At BC, several articulated the idea of creating a cohort experience akin to that offered by the University’s Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE).

Unlike with pre-departure training, intended primarily to pass on certain information, the post-program experience called for is less about instruction and more about permitting participants to debrief their experiences. The cohorts developed by BC’s CTE do not typically include lectures, and instead begin with a faculty member sharing a case study, which then leads the rest of the group to chime in. Through storytelling, faculty are then able to consider how they might alter their own pedagogical practices. When done properly, it may be possible for faculty to follow the advice of one respondent, who recommended that colleagues “treat the summer abroad course as a laboratory for new pedagogical approaches and new or re-envisioned courses.”

### Discussion and Conclusions

The research presented here contributes to the limited body of scholarship (Paparella, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2020) investigating the extent to which faculty may benefit from teaching abroad on short-term, faculty-led programs, helping to complement a much larger and well-researched body of literature focusing on students’ gains from education abroad. If such programs are ultimately designed to benefit students, we would be amiss to not also consider the ways in which faculty may bring back knowledge, skills, and perspectives that can help shape their own teaching, research, and personal outlook, while also contributing to their home institution’s internationalization efforts.

We had hypothesized that there would be connections in which the faculty gains from teaching abroad would lead to an enhanced global pedagogy and curricula on the home campus. The ties between overseas teaching and internationalization efforts writ large remained largely abstract for faculty respondents. At the same time, in survey responses and follow up discussions, faculty noted four broad benefits of teaching overseas, some of which are “international” in nature, yet others that are more universal: a greater cultural and intercultural understanding, an expansion of personal and academic networks, a deeper knowledge of students, and a sense of rejuvenation. While we were less successful in finding data on this topic, this is an area for future research, perhaps with revised questions and/or other methodologies such as focus groups or interviews that permit more probing.

Faculty who had had limited exposure to their program’s host culture prior to leading a group felt much of the culture “shock” that comes with being in a new place, akin to what their students experienced. Those who were already familiar with the culture had less of a sense of dissonance yet too gained greater and updated knowledge of their host culture. Regardless of experience, all faculty had an opportunity to expand their academic and personal networks, providing benefits for teaching and research within their respective disciplines.

More surprising for many faculty was the deeper understanding that they gained of students. Most thought that they already knew much about those with whom they are in contact on a daily basis on the home campus. However, in a less formal setting and with frequent interaction, faculty leaders found themselves more intimately intertwined in students’ lives; serving as *ad hoc* counselors and first responders in emergencies, they became acutely aware of students’ backgrounds, hopes, concerns, relationships, areas of knowledge (and deficits), and sometimes even medical histories. While exhausting at times, many faculty found the combination of increased intimacy with students and challenges for teaching and mentoring to be rejuvenating and constructive, taking them back to when they first started working with students.

This study confirms some of the findings from earlier publications such as Gillespie et al.’s (2020) recent book, which provides a useful overview of how institutions may better organize overseas programming for the benefit of faculty and students. At the same time, what has been largely left out of previous work, and which we focus on here, is a deeper way in which overseas teaching may affect faculty personally and professionally, within a framework of transformative, authentic teaching (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). A transformative learning approach suggests change will not occur if the experience

itself has not had a transformative impact on faculty that translates into new pedagogical approaches, an embrace of the transformational possibilities of global learning, and the integration of the experience in their own scholarship, teaching and co-learning with students.

The findings outlined here inspire hope by uncovering the power of an overseas teaching experience. At the same time, as with reentry needs for students, there is a legitimate concern that faculty, and the institutions they serve, may not fully benefit from overseas learning. There is a tendency for all of us upon returning home to plunge back into old routines, as a way of resuming “normal” work and life. This can be necessary yet there is also a need for faculty to have space for reflection, figuratively and literally. It is recommended that institutions provide training and seminars for returning faculty to process what they have learned and consider how they can transfer the knowledge gained back to their teaching, research, and mentoring.

Given how the sheer amount of time and resources that go into offering international programs, along with the rapid increase in short-term faculty-led programs, it is essential that we understand more about how such programming can benefit faculty as well as students. Moving forward, it will be beneficial to expand the research outlined here to different types of institutions and with faculty who have varying levels of intercultural and international competency. This will include adding greater texture by tracking results more closely according to categories such as faculty status, gender, and/or discipline. Additionally, investigations among faculty from other countries, as well as research from the perspective of students, will add other dimensions to our knowledge of this topic.

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## Appendix A

### Survey Questions

1. Have you led students abroad at your current institution? (Note: this survey is designed for those who have led a program abroad. If you have not, select “no” and you will be taken to the end of the survey.)
  - a. Name of Institution (optional) – Selected Choice or Other
  - b. How many times have you led students abroad?
2. Was the nature of the last program you led abroad?
  - a. List of countries (select all that apply)
  - b. What was the theme of the program? (Write “N/A” if not applicable)
  - c. Did another faculty member or staff person accompany you as a back-up or logistical support?
  - d. What was the duration of the program?
  - e. Was the trip a one-time program or an ongoing offering to be repeated? (Select all that apply.)
  - f. In addition to you, as the faculty leader, who else was primarily involved in planning and designing the program?
  - g. What has been the average number of students on the program? (If a one-time program, how many students did you have?)
3. What was your initial primary motivation(s) for serving as a faculty leader for such a program? (Select up to 3 responses, including “other” with write-in field)
4. In returning from teaching abroad, what do you feel that you gained the most from the experience? (Select up to 3 responses, including “other” with write-in field)
5. In returning from teaching abroad, what do you feel that you gained the most from the experience? (Select up to 3 responses, including “other” with write-in field.)
6. What advice would you offer to a colleague considering whether to take students on a faculty-led study abroad program?
7. What sorts of training do you believe would help prepare faculty best for leading a short-term program abroad? What might have been missing from the training you received?
8. In what ways has your teaching abroad influenced the ways in which you teach on campus? Your research? Other aspects of your role as a faculty member?
9. How might your institution help faculty transfer the skills and experiences gained while teaching on short-term abroad programs to their teaching, research, and other activities on the home campus?
10. Please provide any comments that you would like to add related to teaching abroad as a faculty member.

**Appendix B**  
Codebook

<b>Code Name</b>	
Amount of Work	
Exposure to Students	
Faculty Development	
Faculty Support	
Funding	
Health & Safety	
Integration of Knowledge on Campus	
Qualities Needed for Success	
Regional Knowledge	
Rejuvenation Excitement	
Research	
Responsibility of Position	
Sharing What is Learned	
Support of Other Faculty	
Teaching	