TALES FROM THE TRENCHES:

TRANSITIONING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS USING INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE - MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2015

OBJECTIVES

1. What types of first-year seminar models exist, and what are the benefits and costs of each type?
2. What are the first-year seminar's purposes and outcomes in the context of multiple institutional outcomes such as internationalization, retention and persistence, and social and academic transition?
3. How can global education be infused into the first-year?
4. Does going abroad make an FYE qualitatively different than other types of seminars?
5. Are fist-year students prepared to learn experientially and/or in an international setting?
6. How can we best prepare students and faculty for the international experience?

FYE PROGRAM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS & CONCERNS

What are your primary concerns about planning and designing international programs for first-year students?

GENERAL STUDY ABROAD CONTEXT

U.S. Study abroad - IIE Open Doors 2012/13

- 289,408 students studied abroad for credit in 2012/13
- Only 9% of U.S. undergraduates study abroad before graduating
- 60% short-term programs, 37% mid-length, 3% long-term
- 3.8% of all U.S. students studying abroad are freshmen

Retention and graduation success rates

Generation Study Abroad

- Campaign to double the number of students studying abroad by 2019
- Increased attention on U.S. campuses

TRENDS IN STUDY ABROAD MODELS FOR FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCES

- **Embedded programs**
  - Embedded within an orientation program
  - Embedded within a semester-long course
  - Generally 1-2 weeks before the semester begins, during a break period (J-term, Spring break), or at the end of the term

- **Short-term faculty/staff-led programs**
  - Duration of 1-6 weeks
  - Summer, J-term, spring break
  - Students usually absorb faculty expenses (lodging, activities, etc.)

- **Semester-long customized "island" and/or hybrid programs**
  - Especially popular for universities with spring admission programs
  - Fall quarter
  - Overseas campuses

BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH LOCAL & ON-SITE PARTNER

- Health & safety
  - 24/7 Emergency support
  - In-country orientation to the host culture and housing
  - Liability insurance
  - Referrals to English-speaking medical providers
- Academic & program design support
  - Access to local academic resources and networks
  - Local faculty network
- Logistical support
  - Support from on-site staff
  - Volume discounts for local activities

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OVERVIEW OF MSU'S EFFORTS

- 2003/2004 – President asked Undergraduate Education to create an international first-years seminar based on our existing model for campus seminars
  - First seminars were to Mexico (Spring Break) and Quebec (Summer), followed by Ireland the next year
- 2006 - Mandatory 2-night orientation started
- 2007 - Spring Break programs discontinued
- 2013 - Aligned with integrative studies
- 2014 - Changed from 2 to 3 credits

DETAILS OF MSU FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

Structure

- Run mid-July through mid-August prior to Fall classes
- 10 – 14 day long
- In-coming, traditionally-aged, first-year students
- Typically 30 students, two faculty, with one staff person

Costs

- Cost $3000 - $4500 for program fee and plane ticket + tuition
- Different budget model than other study abroad programs; 100% of tuition goes toward program
- Scholarships provided (up to $3000)

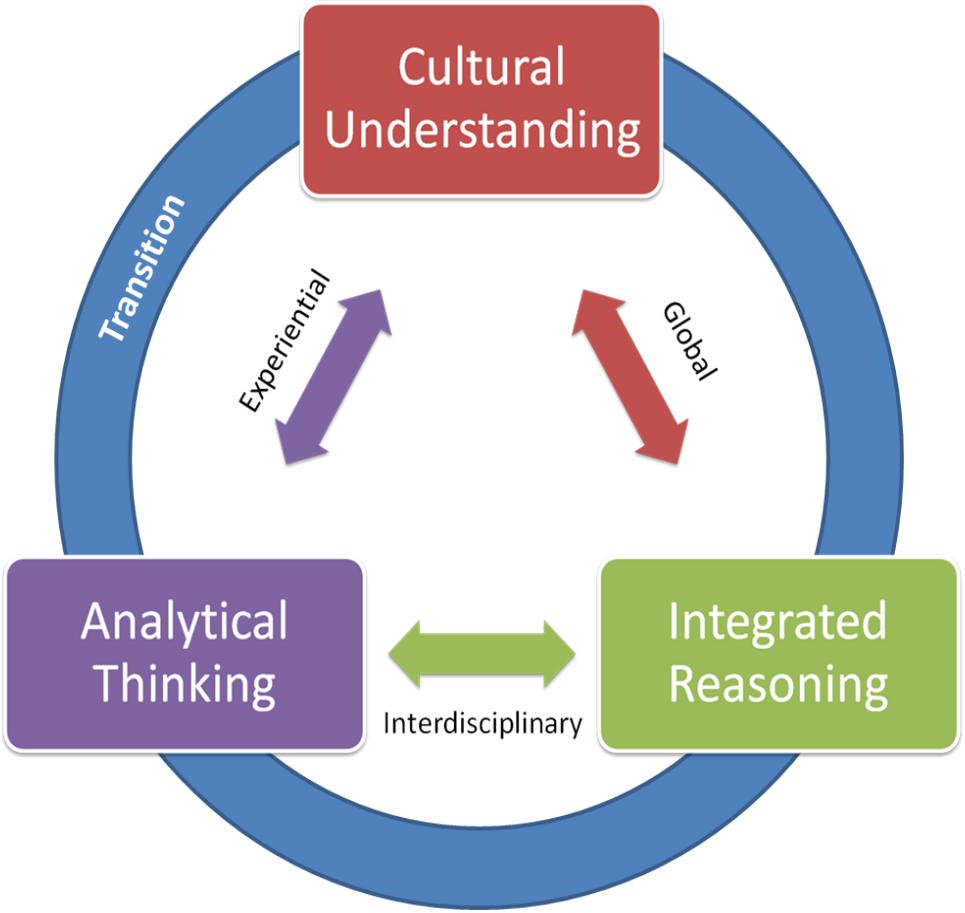
Academics

- Themed seminar with attention toward transition
- Counts toward general education
- Required pre-departure and re-entry
- 3 credits, graded (4.0 scale)
- ½ time spent in "classroom" and ½ time spent engaged in experiential learning
- Required faculty development events

Locations

- Canada (Quebec), Cuba, Japan, Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, Spain/Morocco, New Zealand, and UAE

THE MSU MODEL



Academic theme foci that attends to students' college transition; major learning outcomes analytical thinking, cultural understanding, and integrative reasoning

ASSESSMENT

- **Efforts**
  - Student pre/post survey and focus groups
  - Statistical comparisons
  - Faculty surveys and focus groups
- **Results (Qualitative and Quantitative)**
  - Reported gains in student academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal confidence
  - Increased interest in global issues and intercultural engagement
  - Development of peer and faculty support network
  - Connection to institution, less homesick, better communication skills
  - Statistical gains in GPA, time to degree, persistence

SKIDMORE'S FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE LONDON

SKIDMORE'S FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE IN LONDON

- 2001 – First program in London (students *placed*)
  - 17 students, 1 Skidmore faculty director
- 2005 – First program with IES in London (students *placed*)
  - 38 students, 2 Skidmore faculty directors
- 2008 – Current program (students *choose*)
  - 40 students, 2 Skidmore faculty directors, 1 Skidmore RA

SKIDMORE'S
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE IN LONDON

Academic
Partnership

SKIDMORE'S
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE IN LONDON

Curricular and Co-Curricular Programming

SKIDMORE'S
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE IN LONDON

Student Support and Social Activities

SKIDMORE'S
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE IN LONDON

IES London Staff – 3 (+)
Skidmore Faculty – 2
Skidmore RA – 1
Skidmore OCSE Staff – .5
Skidmore Admissions Staff – .25
London/IES Staff visits per year – 2
Skidmore FYE Director visits - biannual
Years of development – 14

SUCCESS

SKIDMORE'S
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE IN LONDON

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S EFFORTS

- Winter 2010 – University Task Force Developed
- Spring 2012 – First Seminars to France, Ghana & UK
- 2014 – Fall + Winter Break model discontinued
- Spring 2015 – Offering seven seminars
- 2016 – Pilot of Spring Semester + May Session model

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA: EMBEDDED PROGRAM MODEL

Explore @
umabroad.umn.edu

INNOVATION AND IMAGINATION IN DUBLIN

Explore the biological and social perspectives of innovation and creativity on a Freshman Seminar in Ireland.

Spring Break 2015 • Scholarships available

CONSIDERATIONS

- Participant eligibility
- Peer Mentors
- Aligning with existing FYE, study abroad, and institutional goals and initiatives
- Adhering to existing university structure
- Students' self-management and critical thinking ability (life away from helicopter parents); Role of experiential learning
- Faculty: roles and rewards, development, and selection
- Impact assessment
- Emergency/safety & on the ground support while overseas

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