

An International Educational Experience Should be Accessible to all Undergraduates

An “Academic Futures” White Paper by CU Boulder Education Abroad

Authors: Mary Dando, Kelsey Lanning and Sarah Westmoreland

1/16/18

In 2014 CU Boulder joined nearly every other major university in the U.S. in signing the Institute of International Education Generation Study Abroad (GSA) pledge. The mission of Education Abroad (formerly Study Abroad) at CU Boulder is to increase access to global opportunities to help students in developing cross-cultural competencies and global skills. We recognize that education abroad is a life-changing experience for many students, both personally and academically, opening their eyes to different ways of life. As part of this collective pledge, Education Abroad (EA) set a goal to double the number of CU Boulder students going abroad by the end of 2020. Since signing the pledge, we have attained 65% of the goal, with 2,215 students having had a CU Boulder international experience in 2016-2017.

CU Boulder ranks 33rd in the country in the number of students going abroad among doctorate institutions; we rank 7th in this cohort in the number of students going abroad for a semester. It is worth noting that these rankings are based on raw numbers. Despite the fact that many of the top ranked institutions have a higher undergraduate enrollment in general, it is still entirely reasonable for CU to aspire to rank in the top 25. The goal of Education Abroad (EA) and the Office of Undergraduate Education is to ensure that an education abroad experience is accessible to all students. We have made progress towards that goal, but future advances need the support of the entire institution.

The following outlines initiatives already in place to provide students with an international experience, followed by aspirational goals for an international education to be a part of every undergraduate’s college career.

Initiatives already in place:

Education Abroad staff have dedicated considerable effort over the last decade to make education abroad more accessible to all undergraduates. EA currently offers over 400 programs in 65 countries for academic credit. In 2016-2017, 2,215 CU Boulder students went abroad. Among students who graduated in 2017, 27% had gone abroad on a CU Boulder program. The majority of students going abroad are from A&S, with a substantial percentage coming from the Leeds School of Business and CMCI. Engineering is the fastest growing segment, now up to 7% overall. Contrary to popular belief, studying abroad does not delay time to graduation; data shows that students who go abroad graduate at a faster pace than those who do not go abroad.

Education Abroad has worked to increase access to international opportunities for all students in multiple ways. These include working with academic units to integrate education abroad into the curriculum, strategically expanding short-term faculty-led programs, integrating an international experience into Boulder based classes, and providing substantial scholarship money for education abroad programs. The following outlines initiatives already in place.

❖ **Redefine, rebrand and modernize the concept of “study abroad”**

- Recognizing that students seek a variety of international experiences, in 2015, Study Abroad changed its name to Education Abroad.
- Education abroad experiences include not only traditional classroom-based programs abroad but also international internships, volunteering, research, service-learning, and travel as part of a Boulder-based course (see Global Intensives model below).

❖ **Current Education Abroad program models**

- **Faculty-led Global Seminars:** EA currently offers 30 Global Seminars, with capacity to double that number by 2020.
- **International Internships:** EA now has a team supporting international internships for credit. Internships are offered across the globe, from London to Shanghai.
- **Global Intensives:** EA’s goal is to quadruple the number of Global Intensives by 2020 to at least 30. A team is in place to support any faculty or academic department who would like to incorporate a travel experience into an existing course taught on the Boulder campus.
- **Global Experiences:** EA has a team dedicated to supporting students and faculty taking students abroad on a Global Experience (CU Boulder international experiences run outside of Education Abroad).
- **Global Opportunity (GO) Scholars:** EA has a team supporting three cohorts of GO Scholars. GO Scholars are awarded education abroad planning scholarships in their first year at CU, to be used anytime before they graduate. They receive guidance and mentoring from dedicated EA staff.

❖ **Quality control**

- **Education Abroad Committee:** CU Boulder’s EAC (formerly the Study Abroad Committee) approves all study abroad programs for academic credit.
- The EAC also sets academic policies for EA programs.
- In existence since the mid-1960s, the EAC consists of 12 voting faculty, appointed by the deans of the Schools and Colleges.

❖ **Address the perceived and sometimes real cost barrier to education abroad**

Students cite high costs as the number one reason they don’t pursue education abroad. Part of this is a perceived barrier that has been engrained for generations, and part of this is a true barrier that some students face. The EA office has addressed this in several ways:

- Adding high quality yet affordable programs to the approved program portfolio.
- Helping students compare education abroad costs to the cost of attending CU.
- Increasing the number of student exchanges, which allow students to go abroad at a cost very similar to in-state tuition and fees.
- Offering scholarships through the EA office, developing scholarship partnerships with CU Schools and Colleges, and training all EA staff in guiding students through national scholarship applications.
- Offering an international experience through the affordable Global Intensive model.

- Establishing the Global Opportunity (GO) scholarship for first-year students in CU LEAD Alliance programs.

❖ **International Risk, Health, and Safety**

- EA has assigned staff to support students on EA programs, with an aspirational goal to have the campus create a dedicated International Risk Management position.
- In 2009, EA also took on responsibility for supporting all students traveling internationally on CU-sponsored programs, as mandated by the _____

- Education abroad is not a marginal opportunity open to only the privileged.
 - Education abroad is a critical component of the undergraduate educational experience and prepares graduates for an increasingly globalized workforce.
 - An aspirational goal is to make education abroad central to CU Boulder's core teaching mission.
- ❖ **Provide incentives to faculty and staff who champion international education**
- Allow faculty to use their Global Seminar or a Global Intensive directorship to count towards promotion and tenure.
 - Fund faculty and staff (such as academic advisors) to participate in International Faculty Development Seminars or site visits to EA programs abroad.
 - Provide incentives to faculty to go abroad to help internationalize their teaching.
- ❖ **Grease the wheels of underutilized campus programs to unlock restricted growth in education abroad participation.**
- Increase affordability of programs by working with CU Advancement to conduct fundraising programs for student scholarships.
 - Create a campus-wide policy that allows students to earn credit on supervised internships abroad by offering an international internship course for credit.
 - Work with the Registrar's office to report all "special academic activities" on the transcript, including education abroad participation.
 - Work with Admissions to provide a letter to parents in acceptance materials focusing on education abroad importance and options.
 - Further work with Admissions to articulate to the campus how many students come to CU because they can participate in credit-bearing education abroad programs.