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Benefits of and Best Practices for International Experiences for College Students: A Synthesis of the Literature

Katy E. Lane
Texas A&M University

Theresa P. Murphrey
Texas A&M University

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Keywords

study abroad, international experience, benefit, cultural understanding, benchmark

Erratum

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Katy E. Lane
Theresa P. Murphrey
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Abstract

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Introduction

A rapidly shrinking world necessitates the need for a global perspective that includes international knowledge and competence (Zhai & Scheer, 2004). No discipline or corporate sector can be separated from the need for global understanding (Wright, 2010). It is imperative to prepare the next generation with first-hand global knowledge to successfully enter a global work environment and emerge as global leaders (Harder & Bruening, 2008; McGowan, 2007; Zhai & Scheer, 2004). These international components are “essential, integral, and central to the education, research and outreach mission of the university” (Bruening & Frick, 2004, p. 90).

Intercultural understanding and sensitivity are essential to live and work with people of different cultural backgrounds (Anderson et al., 2006). Additionally, a shortage of global leaders in the corporate sector has led more employers to look favorably at applicants with international experience (Orahood et al., 2008), particularly graduates with cross-cultural and foreign language skills (Bruening & Frick, 2004). Postsecondary policymakers have also acknowledged the importance of cross-cultural communication skills to be successful in our global economy (Salisbury et al., 2011). Enabling students to come in contact with foreign countries, cultures, and people provides valuable first-hand experiences (Douglas & Jones-Rikkens, 2001). Therefore, it is imperative that colleges and universities introduce curriculum and programs that effectively prepare students to successfully interact and do business with people from different backgrounds and orientations (Anderson et al., 2006). To this end, there is “no better way to understand a culture than by going to a country and experiencing it first hand” (Bruening, 2001, p. 2).

Participation in an international experience provides the opportunity to gain the global knowledge and skills needed for the workforce (Bruening & Frick, 2004). Students who study abroad have been documented as able to function in a “team-oriented, culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse work environment” (Bunch et al., 2013, p. 217). Study abroad is intentional travel outside the geographical boundaries of a student’s country of origin for educational purposes that includes earning academic credit (Alexis et al., 2017; Stone et al., 2017; Varela, 2017). These experiences can range from a weekend excursion to an academic year and may also include internship, research, and service-learning. Students also gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world when immersed in another culture (Lumkes et al., 2012). Additionally, the disorienting experience caused by study abroad pushes students to review and challenge their perspective and identity (Glade-Wright & Sorin, 2017).

Unfortunately, students in the United States tend to lack understanding of the effects of globalization. Therefore, one of the best ways to broaden understanding of the global market and acquire a global mindset is through participation in an international experience (Bunch et al., 2013; Wright, 2010). International learning experiences are critical to an undergraduate education (Wright, 2010). Colleges of agriculture responded to this need by internationalizing their curriculum and providing a great variety of international programs to better prepare students for a global workforce (McGowan, 2007). Additionally, the Institute of International Education (IIE) launched the Generation Study Abroad campaign as one such effort to increase participation in study abroad. Over 800 worldwide partners including universities, governments, and associations joined the 5-year initiative to double the number of U.S. students studying abroad by 2019 (Interis et al., 2018).

Need for the Study

While many individual studies document benefits of and best practices for a particular international experience, no synthesis of these studies exists. Given the fact that universities and departments are touting international experiences as a necessary component of the educational process, we identified a need for a synthesized summary of benefits and best practices based on the literature. Identifying the benefits of participation in and best practices for coordinating an international program could assist administrators in securing funds and students in obtaining post-graduation employment (White, 2016). To deliver this assistance, we sought to provide a summary of documented benefits and best practices for study abroad. The area of “Meaningful, Engaged Learning in All Environments” of the American Association for Agricultural Education’s 2016-2020 National Research Agenda (Roberts et al., 2016) was the target of this study.

Conceptual Framework

We rooted the conceptual framework of the study in the concept of high-impact activities or experiences and the inputs, processes, and outcomes of these activities or experiences. Kuh (2008) included global learning among a list of examples of high-impact activities that benefit students. High-impact activities included aspects such as dedication of students’ time, interaction with diverse situations, and real-world connections (Kuh et al., 2013). International experiences are a specific area within high-impact activities. Our study specifically focused on the outcomes (i.e., benefits) of and best practices for student participation in an international experience. In general, the study of high impact learning through international experiences has gained momentum as an increase in these types of activities has been recommended.

Purpose and Objectives

Using Kuh et al. (2013) as our framework, the purpose was to establish a benchmark describing not only what research had been conducted related to the benefits and best practices of international high impact experiences but also to identify research gaps. The characteristics of high impact experiences as described by Kuh et al. (2013) guided us as we addressed the following research question: What benefits have been documented related to student participation in an international experience and by whom? Two additional questions emerged during data analysis: Does the research reveal specific barriers to participation in an international experience?, and Does the research reveal guidance for those planning international experiences?

Methods

Descriptive research “describe[s] systematically a situation or area of interest factually and accurately” (Isaac & Michael, 1987, p. 42). A rigorous literature review process enabled the identification of articles specifically relevant to documenting benefits associated with international experiences and in line with Kuh et al. (2013). Cooper’s (2010) seven steps were followed: formulate the problem, search the literature using specified criteria, glean information from identified studies, assess each study’s quality, analyze and integrate study outcomes, interpret the evidence, and present the results. This process established trustworthiness by documenting the exact procedures used to collect and analyze the articles.

The search was conducted within the Texas A&M University library online catalog for articles using the search terms “study abroad,” “international experience,” and “benefit.” The term “cultural understanding” was added based on a review of initial articles. Additionally, a

specific search with the same terms was conducted within the *Journal of Agricultural Education* and the *Journal of International Agricultural & Extension Education* due to specific interest in studies conducted within agricultural education. The search was restricted to publications between 2001-2019. A total of 268 articles and papers were isolated for in-depth review. We reviewed each article or paper individually. A total of 108 articles and papers published across 55 unique journals, conference proceedings, and reports were included in the literature synthesis. The remaining 160 reviewed were removed based on the content not aligning with the inclusion criteria of benefits of study abroad or international experiences as shared in Kuh et al. (2013). We ensured rigor by creating a chart that included the following for each article: year, author, journal, and article title. Analysis of the selected articles revealed notable findings related to barriers and planning guidance. These topics were added to the study. Findings represent the synthesis of research and are documented with supporting references as an audit trail. Each table is organized by the number of citations for each finding, noted in parentheses.

Results

What benefits have been documented related to student participation in an international experience and by whom?

A significant amount of research describes benefits derived from participation in an international experience. These gains can be grouped into the following four categories: personal growth, international knowledge, cultural awareness, and additional skills. As Table 1 shows, students gain personal growth through broadening their horizons, career awareness, development of a desire for life-long learning, personal life experiences, and increased academic focus.

Table 1

Personal Growth Gained from an International Experience

Areas of personal growth (number of citations)	Sources
1. Career awareness/insight; improved career opportunities (11)	Bender et al., 2017; Deviney et al., 2014; Dwyer, 2004; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2012; Norris & Gillespie, 2009; Nyaupane et al., 2011; Orahod et al., 2008; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2019; Zhai & Scheer, 2002
2. Gain personal life experience/personal development (10)	Bunch et al., 2013; Interis et al., 2018; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; Lumkes et al., 2012; McGowan, 2007; Orahod et al., 2008; Place et al., 2002; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010
3. Increased academic focus; functional knowledge (6)	Bender et al., 2017; Dietz & Baker, 2019; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; Lumkes et al., 2012; Nyaupane et al., 2011; Redwine et al., 2018
4. Develop desire for life-long learning; transformational learning (5)	Edgar et al., 2018; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Glade-Wright & Sorin, 2017; Stone et al., 2017; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2019

- | | |
|---|--|
| 5. Broaden horizons; get outside comfort zone (3) | Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; McGowan, 2007; Pedersen et al., 2010 |
|---|--|

In fact, studies have shown that employers value international experiences, particularly those that are service learning or internship oriented (Trooboff et al., 2008). Coleman (2011) surveyed 1,162 graduates from three different universities in the United Kingdom who spent a year abroad in college to work or study and found that skills gained abroad played a role in more than 70% of the students finding jobs. Additionally, more than 30% said their international experience was a significant factor in being hired, and 10% said it was the determining factor for being hired. Di Pietro (2015) surveyed Italian university graduates and also identified a possible casual effect between their participation in an international experience and employment after graduation.

Research shows that students acquire international knowledge through the pursuit of an international experience as displayed in Table 2. International knowledge is obtained through the experience itself and gaining global and regional competence. Students also develop a better understanding of world issues and international affairs as well as global interdependence. Additionally, an international experience enables students to gain awareness of U.S. influence on other countries and may increase appreciation for their home country.

Table 2*International Knowledge Gained from an International Experience*

Areas of international knowledge (number of citations)	Sources
1. Global and regional competency; prepare for global economy (7)	Bruening, 2001; Bender et al., 2017; Dietz & Baker, 2019; Glade-Wright & Sorin, 2017; Goldoni, 2013; Harrison & Brower, 2011; Smith & Yang, 2017
2. Explore the world/gain international experience (6)	Bunch et al., 2013; Goldoni, 2013; Marx & Moss, 2011; McGowan, 2007; Nyaupane et al., 2011; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005
3. Understanding of world issues and international affairs (6)	Bell et al., 2016; Bender et al., 2017; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2012; Snyder et al., 2012; Williams, 2009
4. Global interdependence (4)	Glade-Wright & Sorin, 2017; Lumkes et al., 2012; Redwine et al., 2018; Smith & Yang, 2017
5. Increase appreciation of own country (2)	Harder & Bruening, 2008; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2012
6. See U.S. influence (1)	McGowan, 2007

Cultural awareness was a distinct category that emerged from the literature. An increase in research was revealed related to the importance of cross-cultural skills and understanding which were documented as desired traits that result from international experience participation. Table 3 summarizes the research identified that shows cultural awareness gained by participants through an international experience. Participating students open themselves to different ideas and

values, learn about new cultures, gain cultural awareness and a deep appreciation of differences, and develop cross-cultural understanding. An international experience also provides an opportunity for students to gain a worldly perspective and awareness that can contribute to becoming global citizens. Additionally, students learn first-hand about other people and cultures and develop an appreciation for perspectives and approaches that differ from their own.

Table 3*Cultural Awareness Gained from an International Experience*

Areas of cultural awareness (number of citations)	Sources
1. Cross-cultural skills/awareness; intercultural competence/development, cultural understanding (18)	Alexis et al., 2017; Bai et al., 2016; Berg, 2007; Cadd, 2012; Conner et al., 2016; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Goldoni, 2013; Hernandez-Diaz et al., 2016; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2012; McGowan, 2007; Pedersen, 2010; Pedersen et al., 2010; Salisbury et al., 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Varela, 2017; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2019; Wright, 2010
2. Gain worldly perspective/global mindedness/world-mindedness (14)	Alexis et al., 2017; Bruening, 2001; Coker & Porter, 2016; Dwyer, 2004; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Interis et al., 2018; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2012; McGowan, 2007; Nyaupane et al., 2011; Pedersen et al., 2010; Snyder et al., 2012; Sutton & Rubin, 2004; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005; Zhai & Scheer, 2002
3. Increase cultural/global awareness (10)	Bunch et al., 2018; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Harder & Bruening, 2008; Lumkes et al., 2012; Orahood et al., 2008; Redwine et al., 2018; Roberts & Edwards, 2016; Smith & Yang, 2017; Snyder et al., 2012; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005
4. Learn about other people and cultures (9)	Bender et al., 2017; Dietz & Baker, 2019; Dwyer, 2004; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Harder et al., 2009; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2012; McGowan, 2007; Roberts & Edwards, 2016
5. Increase cultural sensitivity (8)	Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Bruening & Frick, 2004; Conner et al., 2016; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2012; Redwine et al., 2018; Smith & Yang, 2017; Zhai & Scheer, 2002
6. Appreciation of diversity/differences (7)	Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; Redwine et al., 2018; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005; Varela, 2017; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2019
7. Become a global citizen (5)	Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Glade-Wright & Sorin, 2017; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Nyaupane et al., 2011
8. International/global understanding (5)	Harder et al., 2009; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2012; Place et al., 2002; Place et al., 2005; Salisbury et al., 2011
9. Open mind to different ideas and values (5)	Bell et al., 2016; Ellwood, 2011; McGowan, 2007; Smith & Mrozek, 2016; Varela, 2017

A number of additional skills valuable to a student's personal, academic, and professional pursuits were documented as a result of an international experience and are summarized in Table 4. The most prominent we identified were the attainment of language skills, self-confidence, and flexibility. Research also indicated that students reported greater independence, critical thinking, communication skills, maturity, and teamwork, among other less cited gains.

Table 4*Additional Skills Gained from an International Experience*

Areas of important skills (number of citations)	Sources
1. Language skills (21)	Alexis et al., 2017; Berg, 2007; Bruening & Frick, 2004; Cadd, 2012; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dewey, 2017; Dwyer, 2004; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Goldoni, 2013; Harder et al., 2009; Hernandez-Diaz et al., 2016; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2012; McGowan, 2007; Norris & Gillespie, 2009; Nyaupane et al., 2011; Okken et al., 2019; Pedersen, 2010; Salisbury et al., 2011; Varela, 2017; White, 2016
2. Self-confidence; leadership skills (20)	Bai et al., 2016; Bender et al., 2017; Dwyer, 2004; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Glade-Wright & Sorin, 2017; Harder et al., 2009; Houser et al., 2011; Interis et al., 2018; McGowan, 2007; Okken et al., 2019; Orahod et al., 2008; Pedersen et al., 2010; Place et al., 2002; Place et al., 2005; Preston, 2012; Redwine et al., 2018; Smith & Mrozek, 2016; White, 2016; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010; Zhai & Scheer, 2002
3. Flexibility; open-minded; tolerance; adaptability; patience (15)	Andrade et al., 2019; Bender et al., 2017; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Glade-Wright & Sorin, 2017; Goldoni, 2013; Harder & Bruening, 2008; Interis et al., 2018; Orahod et al., 2008; Root & Ngampornchai, 2012; Russell & Morris, 2008; Sutton & Rubin, 2004; White, 2016; Williams, 2009
4. Better (cross-cultural) communication skills (6)	Bender et al., 2017; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Orahod et al., 2008; Smith & Mrozek, 2016; White, 2016; Williams, 2005
5. Critical thinking/problem-solving skills (6)	Andrade et al., 2019; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Harder & Bruening, 2008; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; White, 2016; Williams, 2009
6. Maturity/responsibility (5)	Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Orahod et al., 2008; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005; Wright, 2010
7. Independence/autonomy; self-efficacy (4)	Cubillos & Ilvento, 2002; Okken et al., 2019; Sutton & Rubin, 2004; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010
8. Teamwork (4)	Bender et al., 2017; Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Sutton & Rubin, 2004; White, 2016

9. Respect for others/trust (3)	Bunch et al., 2018; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dietz & Baker, 2019
10. Empathy (2)	Farrell & Suvedi, 2002; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011
11. Reflective learning (2)	Dietz & Baker, 2019; Salisbury et al., 2011
12. Ambition (1)	Orahood et al., 2008
13. Competitiveness (1)	Nyaupane et al., 2011
14. Connection to nature (1)	Bell et al., 2016
15. Financial skills (1)	Redwine et al., 2018
16. Networking (1)	Bender et al., 2017
17. Organization (1)	Houser et al., 2011
18. Relationship formation (1)	Bunch et al., 2018

Does the research reveal specific barriers to participation in an international experience?

Our review of the literature, which focused on benefits of international experiences, also revealed a litany of reasons that students chose not to participate. A majority of these reasons were provided by students with some offered by parents, faculty, or university advisors. A summary of these barriers is provided in Table 5. The cost/financial constraint was the most frequently mentioned barrier. This was followed by students' concerns about graduating on time, coursework needed for their degree, and lack of familial support among others.

Table 5

Barriers to Participation in an International Experience

Barriers to participation (number of citations)	Sources
1. Cost/financial constraints (17)	Andrade et al., 2019; Brux & Fry, 2010; Coker & Porter, 2016; Deviney et al., 2014; Doyle et al., 2009; Edgar et al., 2018; Estes et al., 2016; Gordon et al., 2014; Harder & Bruening, 2008; Houser et al., 2011; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Lovett, 2018; McGowan, 2007; Murphrey et al., 2016; Nyaupane et al., 2011; Salisbury et al., 2011; Smith & Mrozek, 2016
2. Delayed graduation/not able to take classes needed abroad (10)	Brux & Fry, 2010; Deviney et al., 2014; Doyle et al., 2009; Gordon et al., 2014; Harder & Bruening, 2008; Interiset al., 2018; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Nyaupane et al., 2011; Salisbury et al., 2011; Stroud, 2010
3. Lack of family support/encouragement (7)	Brux & Fry, 2010; Coker & Porter, 2016; Deviney et al., 2014; Doyle et al., 2009; Gordon et al., 2014; Hernandez-Diaz et al., 2016; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005

4. Safety/security; fear (4)	Deviney et al., 2014; Gordon et al., 2014; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Murphrey et al., 2016
5. Unaware of opportunities (4)	Brux & Fry, 2010; Doyle et al., 2009; Harder & Bruening, 2008; Interis et al., 2018
6. Culture shock (3)	Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Lovett, 2018; Zaykovskaya et al., 2017
7. Do not speak another language (3)	Deviney et al., 2014; Doyle et al., 2009; Harder & Bruening, 2008
8. Lack of ability to pre-plan, lack of staff support (3)	Abrams & Ziegler, 2016; Doyle et al., 2009; Orahod et al., 2008
9. Athletic expectations (2)	Andrade et al., 2019; Coker & Porter, 2016
10. Potential loss of romantic relationship (2)	Deviney et al., 2014; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010
11. Work/school obligations (2)	Andrade et al., 2019; Edgar et al., 2018
12. Academic challenges/differences (1)	Lovett, 2018
13. Participation in international activities domestically (1)	Harder & Bruening, 2008
14. Poor study habits (1)	Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010

Does the research reveal guidance for those planning international experiences for students?

The reviewed literature provided a wide range of guidance for planning international experiences for students. This is likely because most studies were focused on implementation of one specific activity. We discovered best practices for programming as faculty develop international activities as well as evaluation techniques to measure activity quality and effectiveness. We also found guidance within the literature related to student recruitment and student preparation.

Research indicated that courses developed for on-campus instruction should not be taught the same way when used for study abroad. Table 6 provides a summary of the types of instruction used when conducting an international experience for students. The most cited activities included journal writing and reflection, lectures, presentations, seminars, and excursions.

Table 6

Types of Instruction Used in Conducting an International Experience

Types of Instruction (number of citations)	Sources
1. Lectures/presentations/seminars (13)	Bai et al., 2016; Bell et al., 2016; Bruening & Frick, 2004; Bunch et al., 2013; Bunch et al., 2018; Conner et al., 2016; Core, 2017; Dolphin et al., 2019; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Hill &

	Karlin, 2019; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; Shostya & Morreale, 2017; White, 2016
2. Journal writing and individual reflection (12)	Bai et al., 2016; Bunch et al., 2018; Core, 2017; Dietz & Baker, 2019; Dolphin et al., 2019; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Harder et al., 2009; Krueger & Reese, 2002; Lamm et al., 2011; Savicki & Price, 2017; Shostya & Morreale, 2017; White, 2016
3. Excursions and leisure activities with cultural connections or field work (10)	Abrams & Ziegler, 2016; Andrade et al., 2019; Bell et al., 2016; Bunch et al., 2018; Core, 2017; Cotten & Thompson, 2017; Dietz & Baker, 2019; Dolphin et al., 2019; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Hill & Karlin, 2019
4. Group reflection and debriefing (7)	Arens et al., 2018; Bai et al., 2016; Cotten & Thompson, 2017; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; McCoy & Holt, 2018; Redwine et al., 2018; Ward et al., 2017
5. Local engagement (4)	Bai et al., 2016; Dietz & Baker, 2019; Snyder et al., 2012; Roberts & Edwards, 2016
6. Readings (4)	Bell et al., 2016; Core, 2017; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; McCoy & Holt, 2018
7. Activities (3)	Bruening & Frick, 2004; Bunch et al., 2018; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012
8. Company visits (3)	Abrams & Ziegler, 2016; Core, 2017; Cotten & Thompson, 2017
9. Service-learning (3)	Bell et al., 2016; Cotten & Thompson, 2017; Harder et al., 2009
10. Blog posts (2)	Roberts & Edwards, 2016; Savicki & Price, 2017
11. Research (2)	Bell et al., 2016; Shostya & Morreale, 2017
12. Role-play (2)	Bai et al., 2016; Foronda & Belknap, 2012
13. Scavenger hunts (2)	Conner et al., 2016; Krueger & Reese, 2002
14. Case studies (1)	Foronda & Belknap, 2012
15. Group projects (1)	Foronda & Belknap, 2012
16. On-site orientation (1)	Dietz & Baker, 2019
17. Welcome dinner (1)	Dietz & Baker, 2019
18. Workshops (1)	Jackson & Nyoni, 2012

Information describing strategies for pre-departure preparation emerged from the literature. While not part of the overseas instruction, preparing students for their international experience was indicated as a component of a program's success. Table 7 provides a summary of 20 elements found in the literature to prepare students for an international experience. The most frequently cited strategies included a pre-departure orientation or course, learning about the host country, discussing cultural differences and culture shock, understanding expectations, and attending a health and safety orientation.

Table 7
Steps to Prepare for an International Experience

Steps to prepare (number of citations)	Sources
1. Participate in pre-departure orientation or course (11)	Abrams & Ziegler, 2016; Andrade et al., 2019; Arens et al., 2018; Core, 2017; Dolphin et al., 2019; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; McCoy & Holt, 2018; Shostya & Morreale, 2017; Snyder et al., 2012; Wright, 2010
2. Learn about the host country, e.g., customs and laws (9)	Abrams & Ziegler, 2016; Andrade et al., 2019; Arens et al., 2018; Core, 2017; Dolphin et al., 2019; Goldoni, 2002; Jackson & Nyoni, 2012; Shostya & Morreale, 2017; Wright, 2010
3. Discuss cultural differences and culture shock (6)	Andrade et al., 2019; Burns-Cusato & Cusato, 2019; Foronda & Belknap, 2002; Goldoni, 2013; McGowan, 2007; Shostya & Morreale, 2017
4. Read assigned articles and reflect (6)	Andrade et al., 2019; Cotten & Thompson, 2017; Dolphin et al., 2019; Hill & Karlin, 2019; McCoy & Holt, 2018; Shostya & Morreale, 2017
5. Understand expectations (5)	Andrade et al., 2019; Dolphin et al., 2019; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Goldoni, 2012; Gouldthorpe et al., 2012
6. Attend health and safety orientation; determine medical requirements (4)	Abrams & Ziegler, 2016; Burns-Cusato & Cusato, 2019; McGowan, 2007; Wright, 2010
7. Get a passport/visa (3)	Andrade et al., 2019; McGowan, 2007; Wright, 2010
8. Get packing tips/advice (2)	Andrade et al., 2019; McGowan, 2007
9. Learn vocabulary, common phrases/expressions (2)	Goldoni, 2013; Shostya & Morreale, 2017
10. Research financial aid and scholarships (2)	McGowan, 2007; Smith & Mrozek, 2016
11. Talk to students who went on program previously (2)	Foronda & Belknap, 2012; McGowan, 2007
12. Understand perspectives and perceptions (2)	Goldoni, 2012; Gouldthorpe et al., 2012
13. Prepare family for less frequent communication (1)	Wright, 2010
14. Purchase travel insurance (1)	Burns-Cusato & Cusato, 2019

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 15. Read newspapers, listen to TV/radio, or watch films from host country (1) | Goldoni, 2012 |
| 16. Research how to access money abroad (1) | Wright, 2010 |
| 17. Review safety and responsibility parameters (1) | Burns-Cusato & Cusato, 2019 |
| 18. Role play what to do in difficult situations (1) | Goldoni, 2012 |
| 19. Talk with hosts/natives (1) | Jackson & Nyoni, 2012 |
| 20. Understand application process and deadlines (1) | McGowan, 2007 |

Our review of literature uncovered a variety of methods used to attract students to participate in an international experience, both for a particular study abroad program as well as general recruitment to encourage participation in any international experience. These approaches are summarized in Table 8. The most cited recruitment method for a specific program was faculty promotion and student testimonials while the most cited approach for general recruitment included encouragement to participate from faculty and/or parents.

Table 8*Ways to Attract Students to Participate in an International Experience*

Ways to attract students (number of citations)	Sources
Recruit for a particular study abroad program	
1. Faculty promotion (4)	Beseli et al., 2016; Coker & Porter, 2016; Dolphin et al., 2019; Woodham et al., 2016
2. Testimonials from past study abroad students (3)	Coker & Porter, 2016; Doyle et al., 2009; Zhai & Scheer, 2002
3. Brochures (1)	Harder & Bruening, 2008
4. Completion of credit (1)	Beseli et al., 2016
5. Guest speakers/seminars (1)	Harder & Bruening, 2008
6. Online videos (1)	Harder & Bruening, 2008
7. Use of social media (1)	Harder & Bruening, 2008
General recruitment to study abroad	
1. Encouragement from faculty and parents (5)	Beseli et al., 2016; Coker & Porter, 2016; Estes et al., 2016; Paus & Robinson, 2008; Woodham et al., 2016
2. Develop shorter programs (2)	Beseli et al., 2016; Harder & Bruening, 2008

3. Discuss employment advantage; build resume (2)	Bruening, 2001; Edgar et al., 2018
4. Offer scholarships (2)	Doyle et al., 2009; Harder & Bruening, 2008
5. Increase options (1)	Harder & Bruening, 2008
6. Knowledgeable staff (1)	Abrams & Ziegler, 2016
7. Promote first semester (1)	Orahood et al., 2008
8. Student promotion (1)	Beseli et al., 2016
9. Websites (1)	Harder & Bruening, 2008

Evaluation methods for international experiences emerged as a distinct category within the literature. These methods included post program items to prepare for and coordinate future programs as well as assisting students with transitioning back to their home culture and sharing about their international experience. Table 9 summarizes methods documented to measure the quality of an international experience. Aspects included assessing the program's objectives and health and safety records, the increase in functional knowledge for student participants, number of credit hours earned, interactions with the host community, and student satisfaction.

Table 9*How to Measure the Quality of an International Experience*

Measurements of quality (number of citations)	Sources
1. Increase in students' functional knowledge (2)	Anderson et al., 2006; Pedersen, 2010
2. Student satisfaction (2)	Pedersen, 2010; Sutton & Rubin, 2004
3. Health and safety records (1)	Sutton & Rubin, 2004
4. Number of credit hours (1)	Sutton & Rubin, 2004
5. Objectives (1)	Anderson et al., 2006
6. Social interactions with the host community (1)	Goldoni, 2013

Conclusions and Recommendations

International experiences provide students and society as a whole with many benefits (Di Pietro, 2015). Study abroad participation helps students gain an international perspective through real-world application and exposure to diverse people and circumstances that they could not have received in the classroom (Kuh et al., 2013). Studies have revealed the benefits students derive from the time and effort invested in study abroad, including skills, knowledge, and competencies essential for global competence (Bunch et al., 2013; Kuh et al., 2013). The attributes students gain from an international experience include personal growth, international knowledge, and cross-cultural awareness, among many other workforce skills (Bender et al., 2009; Carley et al., 2011; Lumkes et al., 2012; McGowan, 2007). The summary of benefits from the literature

provides a benchmark for researchers to build upon and practitioners to utilize in program planning.

Based on findings, we conclude that research has documented specific benefits as a result of students' participation in international experiences; however, many of these are based on studies conducted immediately following the experience rather than longitudinal data. While assessments of benefits such as career impact are important immediately following an international experience, assessment of these benefits five, 10, and 15 years following the experience would provide stronger evidence of sustained benefit. We recommend that longitudinal research be conducted that documents how the benefits gained translate into future, long-term success. Particularly, understanding the effect of a study abroad experience on a students' career choice (Orahoo et al., 2008) and data that documents skills for future employees (Trooboff et al., 2008) would be valuable.

While it is important to understand a student's perceived value of participating in an international experience (Bunch et al., 2013) and understand their personality traits and attributes and how this may affect their experience (Goldoni, 2013), research is needed to document change in students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors during and after an international experience (Farrell & Suvedi, 2002). Further, a comparison between types of international experiences would provide crucial data to guide the planning process for students choosing between types of international experiences and for faculty who are planning the experiences. Additionally, it is important for universities to help students communicate and demonstrate the skills gained or enhanced by their participation in an international experience to employers (White, 2016).

Increasing the number of students who choose to participate in a study abroad experience is a documented need that can be accomplished through an increase in the number of programs offered and the development of shorter programs (Harder & Bruening, 2008). Aggressive promotion through social media and additional funding also has the potential to positively impact recruitment. Research shows that promotion of international opportunities during freshman year and testimonials from past participants are extremely influential (Orahoo, et al., 2008; Zhai & Scheer, 2004). The recruitment process for international experiences deserves further study.

It is important to note that we specifically focused on articles related to benefits gained through international experiences. Even though our literature search did not specifically focus on barriers to participation, 14 barriers were identified that prevented participation in an international experience. The most well documented barrier related to the financial constraints associated with pursuing an international experience. Other frequently acknowledged obstacles included the inability to take classes abroad that were needed to maintain progress toward graduation (so as not to delay graduation) and a lack of familial support or encouragement. Both of these obstacles could potentially also be related to financial constraints, as an additional semester in college adds expense for a student and not having familial support can likely mean not having financial support to pursue an international experience.

Our literature review of benefits of international experiences also revealed significant findings related to program planning for international experiences. The studies we reviewed made clear the differences between teaching a course domestically versus the instruction and content variation needed in a course that is part of an international experience. Dominant components recommended for an internationally taught course included the use of experiential and hands-on learning experiences, the inclusion of journal writing, and lectures or presentations with content specific to the local environment. The information we identified related to program planning extended to include steps to prepare students for an international experience. First and

foremost, students need to participate in pre-departure orientations. This enables the instructor to prepare students on topics related to cultural differences, knowledge of the host country, and expectations in a foreign environment. Less literature was found related to recruitment of students to participate in an international experience and how to measure the quality of a study abroad program. We believe these areas warrant further investigation.

Implications

Research has emphasized the need for international experiences for students in agriculture (Dooley et al., 2008), so agricultural colleges are globalizing and internationalizing their curriculum to prepare their students for jobs in a global workforce (McGowan, 2007). Today's agriculture graduates must be prepared to live and work in a global society (Harder et al., 2012). However, only 2.7% of the 341,751 students who participated in study abroad in 2017-2018 were from the field of agriculture (Institute for International Education, 2019). It is imperative that colleges of agriculture create effective international opportunities to address global issues in agriculture (Edgar & Edgar, 2009). More specifically, departments of agricultural education should continue to increase student opportunities for participation in international experiences and thus expand "Meaningful, Engaged Learning in All Environments" (Roberts et al., 2016). Our research provides a useful summary of benefits and program strategies that can be utilized by both researchers and practitioners as it synthesizes results across a multitude of studies, many of which were conducted with a focus on one program.

Future Research

A majority of the research we identified and reviewed focused on specific international experiences being studied. Program designs can be quite complex, so it is difficult to account for each factor that could affect a participant's response. In addition to program location, type, and length, there are additional factors like housing in a dorm, in a private flat, or with a local family (Dewey, 2017). Another is the mixing of program types (e.g., study with intern or service-learning), as well as the level, quality, and frequency of engagement with the host culture (Varela, 2017). Our synthesis provides a benchmark that individual programs can use in conducting further research on specific programs. Further, we began our study with a focus on understanding benefits, but soon realized that topics such as barriers and program planning were intertwined with benefits and thus, reported in our findings. We recommend that a synthesis of literature on these topics may prove valuable to add to the findings presented. Finally, we concluded our synthesis of literature prior to the 2020 pandemic. We believe the findings presented are more important today than ever as we face both economic and cultural awareness challenges. The need to provide international experiences for our students is critical, and we must find ways to meet this need.

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