

THE CENTER FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN
STUDY ABROAD

A joint project of NAFSA and NASULGC

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Welcome to The Center for Capacity Building in Study Abroad Newsletter!

On September 2, 2008, The Center for Capacity Building in Study Abroad officially opened its doors. What this new effort will offer is more and better tools to help study abroad “decision-makers” expand their programs. The Center is targeting this group because they will determine how well our colleges and universities can respond to the growing importance of international education and of international experience for college and university students. The Center is being organized by NAFSA and NASULGC, and supported by AACC, AASCU, ACE, AAU, and NAICU.

The Center aims to gather and disseminate the best and most current ideas, models and tools needed by campus policy makers for expanding education abroad programs. It also aims to generate new knowledge in areas where information is scarce—how to finance study abroad, for example, in a period of fiscal stringency. Colleges and universities as well as individual students urgently need a larger store of models and resources to help them make the best financial decisions for support and expansion.

With the economy struggling, and higher education under extraordinary financial pressure, two messages are most prominent. First, cost effective practices and programs in study abroad are more important than ever. And second, the force of internationalization, in all respects, continues to accelerate, so expansion in student opportunities is imperative. Clearly, more and better information is needed on these issues, as well as many others, across the field.

The Center's First Steps

Landscape Scan of Study Abroad

During the past three months the Center Director, Dr. Margaret Heisel, has spoken with study abroad practitioners throughout the field, soliciting their ideas and requests regarding assistance for expanding and supporting programs. She has canvassed study abroad professionals at five different national conferences, spoken with many representatives of national and international study abroad programs, both public and private, and has visited college and university campuses. The issues she has found to be predominant in the field are the following:

Mission/Goal/Quality: *As study abroad moves toward a core position in undergraduate curricula, what assumptions and expectations should guide program development, and how can these be actualized for highest quality expression? What content, duration and structure will best incorporate and express curricular goals, and how can program quality be measured?*

Faculty Involvement: *What are prevailing faculty views with regard to internationalization and their implications for study abroad development?*

Financing Study Abroad: *What financial models, both at the institutional and individual participant level, represent the most cost effective choices and practices?*

Program and Campus Organization: *How can study abroad be best organized to promote high level leadership on campuses and how can a portfolio of programs be selected and organized for maximum efficacy?*

Planning Center Programs

First: The Center's leadership is finalizing a two-year strategic plan of activities. Within that plan, the first action will be a posting on the Center's web site of existing information about study abroad, divided into several core categories. The posting will represent "best of class" articles and tools, as determined by an advisory group of experienced study abroad professionals. Looking across existing sources, an experienced professional can locate good information, but currently it exists in fragments and finding the best is time consuming and laborious. We hope to save users time and effort, centralizing good information, by subject. We also hope to attract users outside the core study-abroad practitioner group by making the web site and its information more broadly accessible. Our target date to debut the site is March 1.

Second: The Center is planning an invitational symposium on the issue of financing study abroad programs and program expansion. This will take the form of a day-long conversation of high-level professionals in the field, along with specialists in financing of higher education. The proceedings of the symposium will be published and we expect that models and products will be generated from this discussion of experts from various areas.

Down the Road: Beyond these initial steps, we are planning additional symposia and "action teams" organized to develop organizational models for program expansion. We also aim to begin a process for identifying locales and institutions that can best accommodate expansion in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Comments, requests, and other feedback we receive from the higher education community will also, of course, guide our agenda.

How Can You and Your Program be Involved in The Center?

Invitation from the Director

Over the course of the past three months, I've had the opportunity to meet and speak with a wide variety of wonderful individuals across the study abroad field. I've found a wealth of knowledge and skills and a remarkable degree of enthusiasm for, and commitment to, international education. Because of the dynamic force and rapid pace of globalization and their implications for higher education, study abroad is poised for a very significant level of growth. The vision for this Center is that it will make a substantive contribution to that growth by placing in your hands better knowledge and tools for building and sustaining high quality programs.

To take a metaphor from a historical international dynamic, I think of the spice trade routes and the information that travelers and merchants on those routes shared of the opportunities and the pitfalls that lay ahead and how to prepare for them and take best advantage. The experiences that our students will have will change the world just as the spice trade linked east and west, increasing knowledge and promoting exchange. We at the Center hope to act as facilitators, offering a site and a storehouse for information exchange. Please take the opportunity to write us with your ideas, comments and questions, and please pass along word of the Center's plans among your colleagues.

I hope to hear from you and meet with you over the coming months. I can be reached 24/7 at mheisel@nasulgc.org. Drop me a note!

*Margaret Heisel
Director
Center for Capacity Building in Study Abroad*