ARE YOU ACHIEVING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCY GOALS?

Increasing intercultural competency is a primary goal of both sending students on study abroad programs and accepting international students and scholars on campus. But how does a university gauge its success at measuring that goal? Just because a cohort spends a semester in Guatemala or a college increases international student enrollment doesn't mean that learning or skill development will occur.

There are many approaches to measuring intercultural competency—and just as many tools to help you do so. This article will take a look at how two schools gauge their success, then present advice for assessing cross-cultural competency.

TRACKING
PROGRESS OVER FOUR YEARS

Approximately 2,500 students attend Augustana College, a private, liberal arts school in Rock Island, IL One of the ways the college strives to promote transformative experiences among its students is through a program called the "Augie Choice." Every student is offered a one-time $2,000 grant for study abroad, research or an internship.

In 2012, Augustana initiated a four-year study to ascertain what experiences most effectively improve intercultural competency among its students. All incoming freshmen were given the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI), a web-based assessment of individual experiences and the development of a global perspective. Prior to graduation in 2016, those same students took the test again as part of their senior survey.

UNIVERSITIES RELY ON A BEVY OF MEASUREMENT TOOLS AND STRATEGIES TO ASSESS—AND ULTIMATELY INCREASE— INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY.

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A team at Augustana spent the past year analyzing the data and are now deciding what changes, if any, should be made to increase cross-cultural competency. "The combination of data we received allowed us to look at all the different experiences that might contribute to intercultural competence—service learning, domestic study away, study abroad, cross-cultural experiences on campus, foreign language classes—in the context of each other," says Mark Salisbury, Ph.D., Assistant Dean

and Director of Institutional Assessment and Research at Augustana College.

Salisbury says the results of the four-year study indicate that mere participation in various experiences, including study abroad programs, isn't sufficient. "Instead, it is the nature of what happens within those experiences, and the degree to which those experiences are designed to address specific learning goals, that matters most," he says.

Three scenarios had the most powerful effect on intercultural competency gains:

- Out-of-class experiences that allowed students the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how to interact with someone who might disagree with them.

- Classes taken outside of the students' majors that helped them appreciate the way that different disciplines make sense of the world.

- The frequency with which faculty asked students to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their own views on a topic or issue.

ENGAGING FACULTY IN
ASSESSMENTS

Five years ago, Purdue University added intercultural competence and interpersonal skills to its core curriculum as an embedded learning outcome for all students. A recent study by Katherine Yngve, Associate Director of Intercultural Learning Outcomes at Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN, showed that students made greater gains in intercultural competence if required, through the use of a formative assessment instrument, to reflect on their ability to put into practice cross-cultural bridge-building skills. CILMAR, the university's new Center for Intercultural Learning, Mentoring, Assessment & Research, empowers faculty to select and conduct those assessments.

"We ask all of our study abroad directors on faculty-led trips to choose a measure and do either a quantitative or qualitative analysis, then report on what progress students have made on learning outcomes related to intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes," says Kris Acheson-Clair, Ph.D., Associate Director of Intercultural Pedagogy and Scholarship at Purdue.

One recent participant in the workshop is a civil engineering professor who regularly leads a three-week program to Europe to study transportation infrastructure. This year, he implemented backwards design and added increasing students' cultural self-awareness and openness to the stated learning outcomes for his course. The professor will assess students' learning with a rubric-based analysis of their study abroad journals and pre/post administration of the M-GUDS survey.

When professors propose a faculty-led trip, they complete a worksheet that requires them to select at least one intercultural competence as an outcome upon which the program will focus, along with at least one assessment tool that aligns with that outcome. The competencies are drawn from the American Association of Colleges & Universities' Valid Assessments of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubric for intercultural knowledge and competence. They include empathy, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, cultural self-awareness and worldview frameworks. Faculty can choose from nearly a dozen assessment tools. Three of the most commonly selected are the Intercultural Development Inventory® (IDI), the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale and the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (M-GUDS).

But professors aren't left on their own to figure out how to increase cross-cultural competency. "Faculty are busy and sometimes feel like intercultural competency and the softer skills aren't their area of expertise," says Acheson-Clair. "For those taking a group of students on study abroad related to a technical field, it may be a bit out of their comfort zone to work with students on empathy, for example."

To assist faculty, CILMAR instituted an Intercultural Pedagogy program. As part of the 10-hour workshop series, faculty are introduced to a range of experiential activities and formative assessments. They then use backwards design techniques to choose a learning objective, look for an assessment that's a good match for that objective and revise their syllabuses to build toward success on the assessment.

ADVICE FOR ASSESSING INTERCULTURAL
COMPETENCY

"Intercultural competency has a lot of different definitions, and there are a lot of instruments to choose from," says Acheson-Clair. "If you're not an expert in the field, it can be difficult to choose the right instrument for your setting and context."
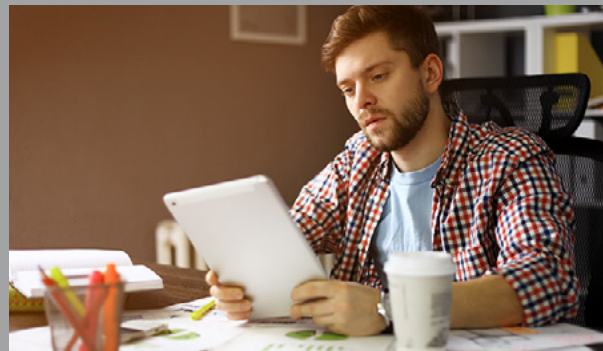
If you've recently decided to measure cross-cultural competency—
or you've decided to revamp your measurement process—consider the following:

■ **Start with a design analysis of your programs.**
"Don't bother trying to measure intercultural competency first: Measure the design of what you're doing," says Salisbury, author of *Study Abroad in a New Global Century*. "If you haven't designed your college experience so every student is explicitly intended to make gains in intercultural competency, then any gains are random and can't be replicated."
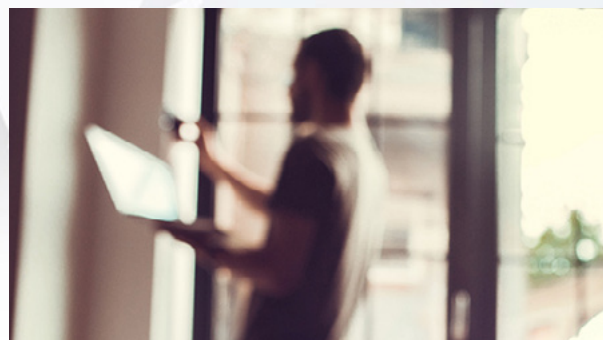
■ **Research assessment instruments.** Some are free, while others charge fees. Some assessments are more useful for different contexts and desired learning outcomes. "Each instrument has its pros and cons," says Acheson-Clair. "You may need to hire an assessment expert or have a trainer work with faculty and staff so you are better able to choose and use assessments."

■ **Involve faculty,** not just study abroad and ISS office staff. "Encourage individual faculty members to take ownership of assessments—to make it part of the culture not only of study abroad, but of the university as a whole so it becomes a natural thing for teachers to do formative and summative assessments," says Acheson-Clair.

Decide who will take the assessment. You may take a rigorous approach, like Augustana College, and track the same students through their four years on campus. Or, you may compare a large group of freshmen with a large group of seniors. Perhaps you survey specific students, such as those studying abroad or those involved in certain extracurricular activities.

Strive to increase response rates. "If you don't get a lot of students to fill out the assessment survey, then it's hard to take data to an individual department and ask it to make changes," says Salisbury. By embedding the GPI in its senior survey, Augustana College gets responses from the vast majority of students.

Use pedagogical tools. "A lot of instruments have wonderful pedagogical tools that help students become more self-aware and develop intercultural competence, but not everybody uses them," says Acheson-Clair. "If your faculty or staff simply gather data and use it for themselves, but don't actually pass the results along to the students who participated in the assessment, then you aren't realizing the full potential of the data."

Train faculty on intercultural competency. "Assessment is a piece of the puzzle," says Acheson-Clair. "You can assess all you want and your program effectiveness won't necessarily improve if your faculty aren't being trained to be better intercultural mentors to their students, on campus or abroad."

Gauging intercultural competency takes time and effort, but the potential for growth among students is well worth it. "Because of assessments, we are discovering a lot of new ideas about study abroad and on-campus efforts to increase cross-cultural competency," says Acheson-Clair.

"The possibilities are wide open."

5 TOOLS

FOR MEASURING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY

Picking a tool to measure intercultural competency can be overwhelming. There are an array of choices. Here are five common ones:

THE BELIEFS, EVENTS AND VALUES INVENTORY (BEVI)

The online short version of the BEVI includes 185 items, plus demographic and open-ended questions. It is a broad spectrum psychometric tool that measures 17 constructs—everything from social and emotional openness to beliefs about gender and religion, to environmental and global engagement. Administration requires certification and an institutional license.

THE INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INVENTORY (IDI)

This 50-item questionnaire assesses intercultural sensitivity—the ability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. It includes open-ended context questions and the ability to add six customized questions. The IDI has a per use fee and can only be given by Qualified Administrators.

THE INTERCULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS SCALE (IES)

This tool focuses on three dimensions of intercultural effectiveness: continuous learning (self-awareness and exploration), interpersonal engagement (global mindset and relationship interest) and hardiness (positive regard and resilience). It has 52 survey items. Like the BEVI and IDI, it can be used as a formative assessment and does have associated costs.

THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES INVENTORY (GPI)

A web-based assessment tool, the GPI emphasizes cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. The GPI is offered in three forms —a general form for students at any stage of their college experience, a new student form for those entering college for the first time and a study abroad form for students who have completed a study abroad program. The number of items vary between 67 and 76, depending on the form.

THE MIVILLE-GUZMAN UNIVERSALITY-DIVERSITY SCALE (M-GUDS)

The commonly-used short form of the M-GUDS is a 15-item multiple-choice questionnaire that measures student attitudes, cognitions and behaviors related to diversity. The tool relies on a 6-point Likert-type scale to assess a student's awareness and acceptance of similarities and differences among people. M-GUDS is also available in a 45-item version.

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