

the **LONG-TERM** IMPACT of **SHORT-TERM** STUDY ABROAD



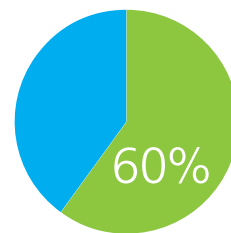
Programs as short as two weeks can leave a lasting impression.

In 2005, Shenandoah University in Winchester, Va., launched its flagship study abroad offering, the Global Citizenship Program. Each year during spring break, approximately 50 participants head to five destinations where they examine a pre-selected theme, such as power and sustainability. Travelers on the co-curricular trips include undergraduate and graduate students from all schools within the liberal arts university, as well as faculty and staff.

"The goal of the program is to open people's eyes to the world outside them, increase their curiosity and hopefully whet their appetite for longer-term learning abroad," says Bethany Galipeau-Konate, Director of International Programs at Shenandoah. "It's not your traditional study abroad program for credit, but it's also not a tourist trip. It's very directed, experiential learning."

Shenandoah University's Global Citizenship Program (GCP) is part of a growing trend toward short-term study abroad options. In 2012-2013, 60 percent of U.S. students who studied abroad participated in short-term programs during the summer or lasting eight weeks or less, according to the Institute for International Education's 2014 Open Doors research data.

"It's important not to discount short-term programs," says Galipeau-Konate. "They can be very transformative." In addition to the travel itself, GCP incorporates monthly pre-departure seminars covering basic intercultural concepts and the history and culture of the destinations. This year, participants traveled to Malaysia, Cambodia, the Philippines, Nepal and Fiji. The overarching theme was consciousness, and participants visited local schools, government agencies, rural and urban healthcare facilities, arts organizations and more.



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ATTRACTING NOVICE TRAVELERS

Galipeau-Konate is a proponent of short-term study abroad programs – even “micro-term” ones, such as her university’s 10-day GCP trips. As a tool to introduce novice travelers to the value of international education, short-term programs are attractive for several reasons:

Students typically travel in groups, allaying fears about the logistics of journeying alone to a foreign country. Shorter trips offer flexibility: They appeal to athletes who don’t want to skip a season to travel abroad or students in academic programs with stringent curriculum requirements. Short-term programs may be less expensive. GCP is an all-expenses-paid trip supported by the university.

“We can’t expect everyone to opt into the types of long-term experiences we have traditionally crafted,” says Galipeau-Konate. “You have to be creative and think about meeting people where they are, particularly underserved groups of students. Short-term programs offer a toolkit to help increase participation.”



While the immediate advantages of short-term programs are well documented, Galipeau-Konate wondered about the long-term impact of such programs. To find out, she conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study to examine whether past participants in GCP exhibited different global citizenship outcomes than those who did not participate. The study and its results formed the basis of her doctoral dissertation.

BOASTING GLOBAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Galipeau-Konate surveyed 248 people for her study, representing three distinct groups: past participants in GCP, applicants for GCP who did not participate in the program and non-applicants. She collected responses on the Global Citizenship Scale, a standardized instrument to measure social responsibility, global awareness and global civic engagement. She then combined statistical analysis and qualitative data to draw a few conclusions.

“The outcomes most clearly linked to participation in short-term education abroad are increased travel and global civic engagement,” says Galipeau-Konate. Students who went on trips were more likely to travel subsequently and have higher civic engagement on the scale than those who merely applied. There also were differences among the three groups in terms of global citizenship, defined as awareness of shared global responsibility and the choice to engage within a context of cultural empathy: People who hadn’t gone on the trip talked primarily about donating money to causes. Those who applied, but did not travel, tended to volunteer at local organizations. Finally, those who participated in GCP were more likely to go on subsequent mission trips or travel frequently. “It was a bit more hands-on, up-close-and-personal and internationally-focused,” says Galipeau-Konate.

In addition, the study showed that GCP participants tended to provide in-depth, multidimensional answers to open-ended questions about global citizenship, while those who did not travel gave brief answers. “People who went on the short-term abroad program used much more personal language rather than abstract concepts,” says Galipeau-Konate. “They used the words ‘I’ and ‘me’ a lot. They made personal connections to the term ‘global citizenship.’”

One of the most interesting findings for Galipeau-Konate was that passage of time did not diminish the effect of the GCP: Statistical differences between all three groups existed no matter how long ago they left Shenandoah University.



PUTTING SHORT-TERM PROGRAMS IN PERSPECTIVE

So what does this all mean to universities trying to decide if short-term education abroad programs have value? The main takeaway from Galipeau-Konate's study is that these programs do have real strengths if universities view them the right way.



"If the goal of the experience is to have significant intercultural development, then you will look at short-term programs and think they are failing or not as productive as long-term programs," she says. "You need to reframe your thinking and view short-term programs as capacity builders. They can equip

students with the baseline experiences they need to then opt into more immersive engagements that could lead to the intercultural development we all want to see."

Galipeau-Konate points to an undergraduate music major at Shenandoah University. The young woman participated in GCP as a freshman, traveling to Trinidad and Tobago. She was apprehensive prior to the trip, but enjoyed the experience so much that she subsequently participated in a month-long summer program to study Spanish. After that, the young woman took part in the university's International Student Exchange Program, studying Spanish independently at a university in Argentina. Concludes Galipeau-Konate, "It's a perfect example of how education abroad experiences can build on one another."

"I had never left the U.S. prior to my trip to Nepal. It completely changed the way I thought about everyday life. The Global Citizenship Program inspired me to pursue a career in international relations. I am in the application process for the Peace Corps now!"

2013 Participant in Shenandoah University's 10-day Global Citizenship Program



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