



SCALING GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES: HOW MIAMI DADE COLLEGE BUILT A MORE SUSTAINABLE STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE WITH TERRA DOTTA



Summary

NAME:

Miami Dade College

LOCATION:

Miami-Dade
County, FL

OF STUDENTS:

- 120,000+ total students
- 60,000+ credit-seeking undergraduates
- 150 countries across the student body

As one of the largest institutions of higher education in the United States by enrollment, Miami Dade College (MDC) serves a remarkably diverse student population. Students represent 167 nations and 63 languages, bringing a wide range of experiences and perspectives to campus. That diversity is central to MDC's mission—and so is ensuring that students have access to opportunities that extend beyond the classroom.

Many Miami Dade College students balance college with full-time employment, family responsibilities, and other commitments. For these students, participating in a study abroad program often requires additional guidance, clear information, and thoughtful support throughout the process. “We want to give students the information, resources, and support they need to move through the process with confidence,” says Samila Sasic, Executive Director of International Education at Miami Dade College.

Supporting that mission requires systems that allow international education teams to communicate effectively, understand student needs, and make informed decisions. For Miami Dade College, Terra Dotta is an important part of that foundation.

450+

applications managed across eight approved programs in a single year

100%

consolidation of routine daily alerts into a single batched digest

Centralized

reporting and data visibility for programs, scholarships, grants, and institutional planning



As staffing changes occurred, the team saw an opportunity to revisit its workflows and identify ways to create more sustainable operations.

Opportunities

300+

degree pathways and career certificates

8

campuses and 2 outreach centers

99%

of students graduate debt-free via financial aid

60+

institutions with transfer agreements

30+

countries represented in study abroad programs

Building a stronger foundation for growth

MDC's Office of International Education (OIE) manages outbound global opportunities, including faculty-led programs, scholarships, and fellowship initiatives. Over the years, the team has expanded its use of Terra Dotta to support more of these processes. As staffing changes occurred, the team saw an opportunity to revisit its workflows and identify ways to create more sustainable operations.

Rather than simply maintaining existing processes, Miami Dade College focused on how technology could help the office continue delivering personalized support while managing increasing complexity. "We need to ensure that we can scale our use of Terra Dotta in a way that allows us to use the platform more effectively and better support our students," says Sosic. **"The Terra Dotta platform helps us manage the volume of applications, conversations with students, direct automated messages, and other processes."**

The need was clear. In one recent cycle, Miami Dade College had eight approved study abroad programs, with five programs ultimately running and approximately 450 applications submitted. Alongside program management, the office supported scholarship opportunities, including institutional awards and nationally recognized programs

Turning Terra Dotta into a strategic resource

Miami Dade College has used Terra Dotta Study Abroad since 2012, and Sosic brought more than 15 years of experience with the platform from two institutions. Still, she recognized that there were additional opportunities to unlock.

Earlier this year, MDC began working with Dottan Desk, Terra Dotta's personalized coaching program designed to help institutions maximize the value of their platform.

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Through recurring sessions with a dedicated advisor, Samila and her team began reviewing existing workflows, exploring underused features, and identifying opportunities to make their processes more efficient and scalable. ***“It’s like having an extra team member,” says Sosic. “Someone who can look at what we are doing and ask, ‘Is there a better way to do this?’”***

Through regular working sessions, the Terra Dotta team reviewed everything from email communication and application workflows to program design and reporting practices. *“I know there are resources where I can watch videos and learn, but the question is always when I will have the time,” says Sosic. “With Dottan Desk, I can ask how to improve something and have someone help me get there.”*

Creating a clearer student experience

One of the first areas Miami Dade College focused on was improving communication with prospective study abroad students.

Before programs open, students often reach out with questions about deadlines, availability, and application timelines. Previously, staff needed to respond individually to many similar inquiries. By creating automated responses, the team can now provide students with immediate information about upcoming opportunities, important dates, and next steps. Instead of waiting for a staff member to reply, students receive guidance right away and know when to return for additional information.

Miami Dade College also created more consistent program templates, making study abroad opportunities easier to navigate and simpler for staff to maintain. Program pages now provide a more cohesive experience across opportunities, including information about academics, faculty leaders, itineraries, costs, included and excluded expenses, and scholarship resources.



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For Susic and her team, one of the biggest opportunities has been creating stronger visibility into program participation and outcomes.



This transparency is especially important for students who may need to carefully evaluate the financial and academic impact of studying abroad. “We want students to understand the full picture,” says Susic. “They can see what the program includes, what the costs are, and how everything connects.”

The Miami Dade team is also simplifying application processes by improving document uploads and organizing required information more clearly, making the experience easier for students while maintaining the details the office needs.

Using data to support better decisions

For Susic and her team, one of the biggest opportunities has been creating stronger visibility into program participation and outcomes.

Previously, some information from campus- or department-specific programs was tracked separately through spreadsheets. While those processes supported individual needs, they made it more difficult to analyze trends and share a complete picture of global engagement. Susic’s goal is to continue centralizing more information within Terra Dotta, including participation data, scholarships, and future fellowship opportunities.

“With Terra Dotta, I can access the data I need in one place,” says Susic. “I can see student participation, track the number of programs we offer, and use that information to benchmark our progress and inform future planning.”

That visibility helps Miami Dade College support institutional conversations, including budget planning, grant applications, and external reporting such as Open Doors. “When leadership asks about student participation, the number of programs, funding, or outcomes, we have that information organized, accessible, and ready to share,” says Susic.

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Looking ahead, MDC is also exploring ways to bring additional scholarship processes into the system. By connecting scholarship tracking with student applications, the team hopes to create a clearer view of funding opportunities from the beginning of a student's journey through completion.

Building a connected support network

Another important part of MDC's approach is expanding collaboration with faculty members, advisors, and campus partners. Through Terra Dotta, the office is creating opportunities for faculty ambassadors and advisors to have appropriate access to student information and participate more directly in supporting applicants.

For faculty leading study abroad programs, this means having better visibility into their student groups and the ability to communicate more effectively. "They have a vested interest in selecting the strongest candidates, because they are the faculty and staff who will be traveling abroad with those students," Susic says. "Having the relevant information readily available helps them make informed decisions about who is best prepared for the experience."

The team is also exploring ways advisors and faculty partners can help students strengthen applications, including providing feedback on scholarship essays and helping students navigate opportunities, such as the Gilman Scholarship. By creating a broader support network, MDC can connect students with guidance from the people who know them best while maintaining appropriate access controls.



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A foundation for sustainable international education

Although MDC's Dottan Desk partnership is still in its early stages, the team has already identified meaningful improvements in communication, organization, reporting, and student support.

For Susic, the value extends beyond individual workflows. Terra Dotta serves as the operational foundation that helps the Office of International Education understand its impact and plan for the future.

As MDC continues strengthening its global programs, the team is focused on continuous improvement: reviewing processes, exploring new capabilities, and finding ways to make international education more accessible.

Future opportunities include further integrating scholarship workflows, exploring additional automation, and continuing to improve how students find and engage with global opportunities.

The goal remains consistent: create systems that support growth while preserving the personal connections that make international education meaningful.

"Students should not be affected by staffing changes," Susic says. "They expect consistent service each year, and Terra Dotta helps us maintain the support and continuity they need throughout the process."



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