Maximizing Students’ Study Abroad Experiences Through Case Study Research

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Abstract

Study abroad programs have always been regarded as one of the most effective tools to help university students develop and practice professional skills necessary for their academic and professional success in this era of globalization. Of various study abroad programs, the short-term program is the most popular among university students and is often their first international travel experience. The Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences sends out around 200 students each year to participate in short-term study abroad programs. The actual long-term impact of these short-term programs on students’ learning processes and learning outcomes remains unclear, especially when compared to long-term study abroad experiences.

This poster describes the model for a summer 2007 short-term study abroad program that incorporated undergraduate student involvement in case study research in small rural Chinese villages. “Made in China: Iowa Students Experience Globalization” combined the active learning model of study abroad with the economic and agro-ecology themes that allowed for hands-on learning about globalization through case study research. U.S. students partnered with Chinese students from Zhejiang University to work through the process of developing a case study on one issue relevant to China’s economy or ecology.

The case study research component of the study abroad program was designed for students to gain the most from their international experiences. This poster explains the case study topics, describes the various activities designed to deliver the program, summarizes the student evaluations of the program, and assesses the impact of incorporating case study research activities into undergraduate study abroad programs. In addition, recommendations for the development and implementation of similar study abroad programs in the future are also included.

Key words: Study Abroad, Case Study, China